



August 8, 2012

Mr. John Weiss & Mrs. Lori Roddy
The Neutral Zone
310 East Washington
Ann Arbor, MI 481041

Dear Mr. Weiss and Mrs. Roddy,

Thank you for allowing us to visit the Neutral Zone. We appreciated the opportunity to assess how well the building meets the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. The Neutral Zone does many great things and we would like to continue to see the opportunities grow and expand for all participants of all abilities.

Getting into the Building

When entering your building some of us used the front door, which had a sheet a paper directing people to the alternate accessible entrance in the back. Upon entering the back entrance, we were pleased to see that it had level paving leading up to the entry way. The back door was wide enough but was but the door was locked. There was a doorbell to alert people to someone's presence at the door, but the doorbell was blocked by multiple garbage cans. We also noticed that the sign marking the door as the accessible entrance was not a permanent sign but like the front entrance, just a taped piece of paper. We would recommend that neutral zone move the trash cans as to not block the door bell, and to replace the taped pieces of paper in the front and back of the building with permanent signage.

Event Area

In general we like the open layout of the first floor which promotes accessibility; however there are some issues with the space inside the building. The sales counter for the event space was too high, and there was not much signage to clearly identify the different areas of the space. Also, when we visited the ramp to the stage was being used as a storage area and could not be used by someone who needed it. The slope of the ramp to the stage was too steep and does not meet ADA standards. The soundboard in the event space was on a cart that places too high for some people to use. The route to the bathrooms had a hallway that in design was wide enough, but had cleaning supplies in it which made it difficult to maneuver.

We would recommend that signage be added to clearly identify each space. We would also recommend that passageways not be used for storage purposes so that people are able to maneuver them. We know this is a new acquisition of NZ, however, if a sound technician needed to use that board they could not do so from a wheelchair seated position. The soundboard needs to be places on a cart or table that is low enough for people using wheelchairs. Lastly, we would suggest that during the next time you remodel, or work on improving your building, that you decrease the incline of the ramp to the stage, and the height of the sales counter to a level that meets ADA standards.

Recording Studio

We were pleased to see the removal of the sliding door and that both doorways were wide and accessible. In the voice recording area, it is small, but could fit a person using a mobility device. The table where the keyboard is in the recording studio is too low and could go up on one set of blocks.

Control Booth

The area outside the studio has a table that should also be raised on blocks. In the control booth area, the soundboard/amplifier is too low; the bottom needs to be a minimum of 15 inches from the ground for a person using a wheelchair. Also in this area a couch blocks clear access to a light switch.

Art Room

The space in the art room is tight and could be difficult to maneuver for a person using a wheelchair. Also under some of the workstations there were boxes blocking foot space underneath. The door entering this area was also partially blocked by a piece of art in the lobby and would not open completely. We suggest being mindful of space and moving things around to create more space and promote accessibility. The artwork in the lobby should also be moved to allow the door to open completely.

Entrepreneurial Area

The entrepreneurial area was a space that was accessible. All of the tables were the right height and the doors entering the space were light and easy to open.

Restrooms

The restrooms are up to ADA standards for the most part, but we did notice a few minor issues. The grab bar in the men's accessible stall was coming out of the wall and needs to be repaired. The clearance beneath the sink in the men's restroom was too short by an inch. In both restrooms there were areas near the entrance that were being used as storage space, and it made turning into the restroom difficult for those in our group using wheelchairs. Our recommendations are to fix the grab bar, to sand down the bottom of the wood on the edge of the sink, and to clean up the storage so that the entrances of the restrooms are more accessible.

Kitchen/Front Room

This space like the other space on the first floor is large, which again promotes accessibility. There is a nice large meeting table that is tall enough for people using wheelchairs to sit at. Thank you for adding the blocks to raise this table. The computer stations in this room were also tall enough for people using wheelchairs to use. We did find that the kitchen counter was too high, and the cabinets were hard to move around if using a wheelchair. The ramp leading into this area is too steep, but we did notice that the jukebox has been moved which was previously blocking the path. If remodeling we would recommend the lowering the incline of the ramp and the counter top being lowered, but otherwise any food served would need to be brought to the table for equal access.

Parking

We are glad to see that the parking lot now has an accessible entrance off of it, but there is no marking of spaces, and there is no designated accessible parking spot. We would recommend that an accessible space be added so that a staff or volunteer with a disability could use it.

Upstairs

If someone cannot use the stairs there is no way for them to go to the second floor. We were glad to hear that programs usually facilitated upstairs would be moved to the first floor if this accommodation is necessary for equal access. This may cause a problem if there are more things going on at once in your building. We would suggest installation of a platform lift on the stairs so people can access the second floor as well. We understand that you had a consultation with David Esau we would like to revisit this with you, and possibly with building code authorities. Should access be attainable upstairs, then the meeting table that is currently used in the board room would be difficult for people using a wheelchair to move forward and have space, and should be raised on blocks like the table on the first

floor. The printer is too tall for people in wheelchairs to reach things off the top, and there are similar concerns with the copy machine. Inside John's office, and the financial office, there are things by the door that would need to be moved to make it more accessible. The development office is very small. The board room had recycle bins that were blocking access; it would be beneficial to move those deeper into the room. The leadership area is very open, but be sure to make the circle of inclusive of all. The fire door weighed 15 pounds which is three times as heavy as the ADA standards, and it might be a good idea to reverse the door so it doesn't risk someone falling down the stairs.

It was a pleasure to come and be a part of the work that the Neutral Zone engages in, we are happy that you continue to work towards full inclusion and accessibility for all in your building and in your programming. We are available for any further assistance regarding accessibility; please contact Carolyn Grawi at 734-971-0277 x16 or cgrawi@aacil.org. We look forward to seeing you in the community in the coming year.

Sincerely,

The Ann Arbor CIL Youth Advocacy Team

Josh Schramm

Rachel Diskin

Brent Pav

Laney Hoatlin

Colin Northrup

Anna Dusbiber-Gossage

Carolyn Grawi