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COLUMN: City committed to fully implementing ADA standards

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The City of Punta Gorda takes the responsibility of providing access to government facilities and services for all individuals very seriously. This continuously evolving initiative dates back to 1990. In 1990 the Federal Government enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This act guaranteed that, “no entity shall discriminate against an individual with a disability in connection with the provision of public services.”

In order to fulfill the promise of this federal law, it is vital that federal, state, and local governments ensure that all facilities, programs, and services that they provide eliminate barriers to access. The City of Punta Gorda’s approach to ADA implementation is guided by the ADA transition plan.

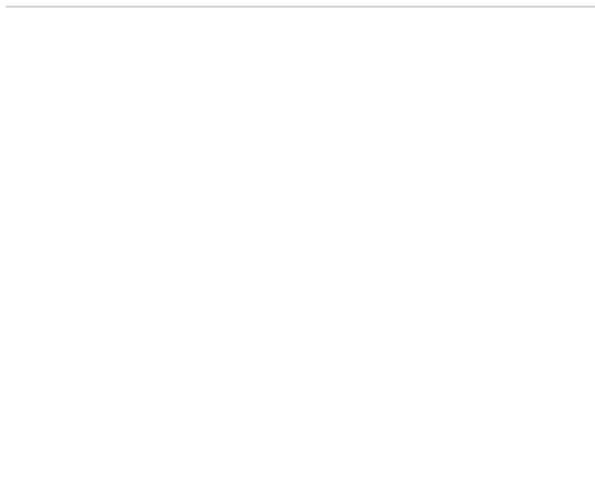


In October 2017 the City of Punta Gorda adopted the “Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan”. The ADA transition plan, produced by consultants Tindale Oliver, was based on an extensive data collection and analysis process that identified barriers to accessibility in various city operations, facilities, parks, and portions of the Punta Gorda Pathways system of trails. Even documents and the city website are subject to specific requirements. The plan serves as a roadmap for making improvements in these operations and facilities to reduce barriers to access, more fully comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and provide better service to our community. The initial plan started with a \$2 million need to accomplish these objectives.

To honor the importance of accessibility to the residents, visitors, and businesses, the city has made a commitment in its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) utilizing 1% sales tax and other funding sources to implement the plan for the past several years. In November of 2020 when Charlotte County voters elected to continue with the 1% sales tax funding this included \$125,000 per year of funding from that source for the dynamic ADA transition plan.

This year’s main projects include the addition of interior way finding signage to Fire Station II, Fire Station III, and Cooper Street Recreational Center. This includes adding tactile words to the signs and will also enhance the city’s branding while providing a consistent message when navigating city buildings. The city will begin the design process for accessibility improvements in Nature Park by resurfacing the nature trail entrances. Engineering and permitting will be necessary to replace the trail’s platform bridge, observation deck, fishing pier and site furnishings. Finally, the city will begin the design, engineering and construction of a pedestrian sidewalk along West William Street to connect the missing sidewalk to the adjacent shopping plaza. This project was requested by residents that live on the street to provide a safe route to accessing local businesses.





These projects, along with other sidewalk, passageway, and accessibility projects continue to improve our city and support routes easily passable by those using our infrastructure and services.

The city is committed to ensuring that all residents can enjoy the best of American, small-town attributes, in what may be Florida's most picturesque, enjoyable and accessible waterfront destination. To learn more about the city's accessibility efforts visit [hwww.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/about/accessibility](http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/about/accessibility) .

