

Laguna Honda Hospital

Embarrassing “ADA-Accessible Pathway” Up Steep Hill to New “State-of-the-Art” Replacement Facility Still Concerns Patient-Safety Advocates



Photo: Patrick Monette-Shaw

Note: Safety handrails do not start until half way up the hill

What’s a “World-Class” and “Green” Hospital Doing, With a “Worst-Class” Minimum-Standards Pathway for Those Using Wheelchairs?

by:

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Report by LHH Rehabilitation Services in 2006 Documented Multiple Problems With Initial Sidewalk Construction

A report submitted to the LHH Replacement Project in 2006 noted many problems, including, but not limited to:

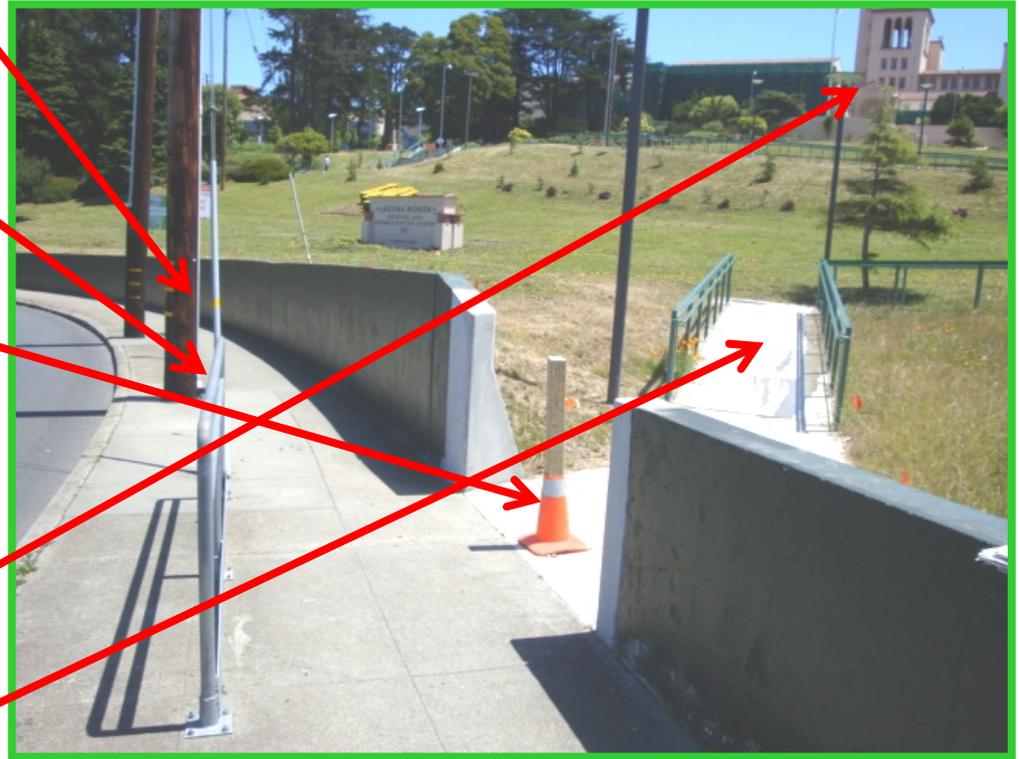
- Straight run up the hill, with no flat areas up the steep grade to rest on
- No raised safety curbs to prevent wheelchairs from leaving path
- No right-of-way pull out areas to rest
- Narrow width, making it difficult for wheelchairs going in opposite directions to pass one another
- No handrails for people using canes
- No high-contrast detectable warning strip at top of staircase



Entrance to ADA-Path (Called "Tree Allee") Faces Obstacles Along Laguna Honda Boulevard at Foot of Hill

A number of problems exist, including:

- Telephone poles on sidewalk adjacent to Laguna Honda Boulevard
- Metal barrier opposite entrance to path makes sidewalk very narrow
- Cone in middle of entrance difficult to navigate
- Wheelchair users who want to go to front entrance of old main building still have to use alternate sidewalks that remain ADA non-compliant
- Pathway too narrow for two wheelchairs to pass safely



Wheelchair Users Going to Old Main Building Face Many Obstacles on Non-ADA Compliant, Dangerous Sidewalks



Extremely narrow sidewalk to front entrance of old main building



Deficient curb cuts; no crosswalk stripping



More extremely narrow sidewalk to front entrance of old main building



Poorly marked cross walks; curb cuts without yellow warning strips



Makeshift "ramp" off sidewalk steep and dangerous



Narrow cracked sidewalks are greatly uneven, creating hazards

Rest Area Pull-Outs Are Difficult to Enter, Drain Poorly, and Are Wholly Inadequate

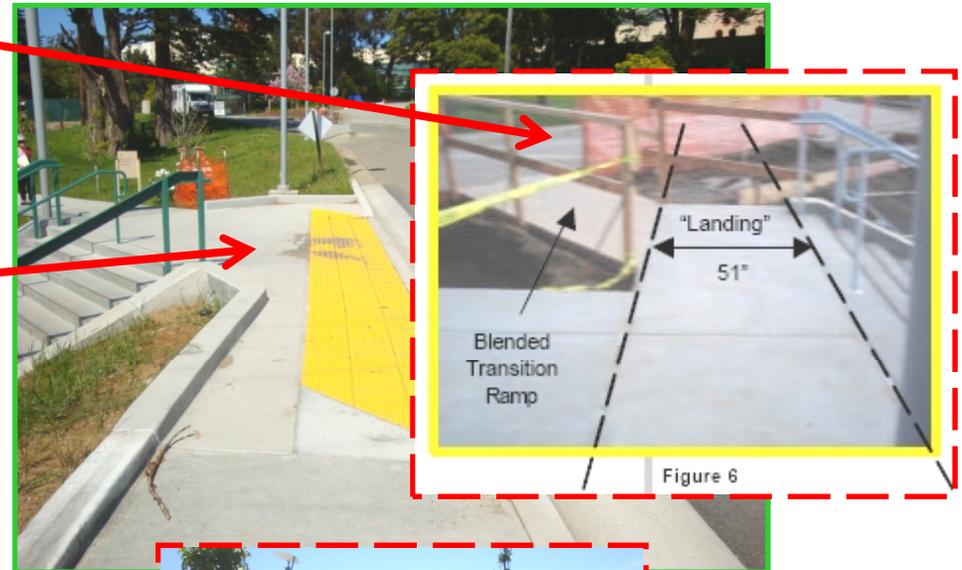
- Despite a recommendation by LHH's Rehabilitation Services clinicians to build turn-out rest stops every 200 feet along the 900+ foot long pathway, only two were eventually built, rather than four — and both were built in approximately the first 400 feet of the pathway, leaving a long 500 foot stretch without any rest areas or ways to pass others.
- The handrails installed on the pathway narrow the width of the path, making passing another wheelchair even more difficult.



The turn-out rest areas near the bottom of the hill do not drain well following rain storms and take days for pooled water to evaporate. They're a long way away for one wheelchair user unable to pass another wheelchair user at the top of the hill to have to go back to, in order for two wheelchairs to pass each another.

Though the Landing Between the Top of Staircase and Blended Transition Ramp Has Been Improved, It's Still Hazardous

- As shown in the initial sidewalk first built, the “blended transition ramp” between the top of the staircase and the street has been improved, but remains hazardous for wheelchair users.
- In addition, because no safety curbs were placed on the left-hand edge of the southern part of the ramp, a significant drop off from the sidewalk onto the adjacent grass might easily tip a wheelchair over, if wheelchair users with cognitive limitations and others aren't very cautious.



“World-Class” Hospital Is About to Open With the “Worst-Class” Staircase-and-Sidewalk Intersection in ADA History

- The ADA-accessible “ramp” on the lower half of the hill between Laguna Honda Boulevard and the new “Pavilion” building has a dangerous intersection at the top of a new hillside staircase.
- There is no barrier to prevent a wheelchair from falling down the steps with a person on board.
- A request to add a barrier to protect patients was denied, claiming foot **pedestrians would face an “unacceptable amount” of space** exiting the staircase.



Figure 1

Protective poles could prevent falls.

Crosswalk to Nowhere: The Tree Allee on the Lower Lawn Has a Crosswalk ... to an Inaccessible Upper Lawn

A March 2006 San Francisco Mayor's Office of Disability PowerPoint presentation¹ stated:

- “Buildings ... [and] sidewalks shall **meet or exceed ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) of the ADA.**”
- **“Designing to the minimum is not good enough.”**
- The crosswalk at the top of the staircase goes to another sidewalk that does not have a curb cut, which won't be constructed until 2011 or 2012, if then.



¹ What Architects and Access Specialists Need to Know: CA Title 24 Access Codes and ADA Conference.

Near End of Tree Allee, the Raised Safety Curb, Without Handrails, Suddenly Ends

- The reason handrails and safety curbs were denied on repairs to some sections to the ADA-accessible path was because handrails would have **“prove[d] a nuisance to getting mowing and other equipment across the ramp.”**
- Read: “Place operational needs above safety and **we’ll pretend we did more than the minimum.**”



Raised “safety curb” ends here.

The north section of the Tree Allee contains no handrails; grass on right.

At Terminus of “Tree Allee,” the Raised Safety Curb Ends Prematurely, Near a Sharp Ravine ...

- There’s no reason “mowing equipment” would go down this ravine; **it’s too steep for even the hardest of “equipment.”**
- The minimal cost of including a safety curb — or heaven’s forbid, a handrail — along this entire stretch would have gone a long way in demonstrating the City wasn’t just “**doing the minimum**” to comply with the ADA’s *Pocket Guide to the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)*. **Even Mayor Gavin Newsom knows this!**



Raised “safety curb” ends here.



And a steep decline into a bramble-bush ravine is just feet away.