



Office of the City Manager

ACTION CALENDAR
July 11, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Commission on Disability
 Submitted by: Martha Singer MD, Chairperson, Commission on Disability
 Subject: International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA) Change for City Signage

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution changing future signs indicating accessibility in Berkeley. The Berkeley Commission on Disability is recommending Council support a proposed change in signs that indicates accessibility.

The Commission on Disability supports a proposal from architect Erick Mikiten as an alternative to the standard ISA in the California Building Code, on projects reviewed by the City, and to allow the Berkeley Department of Planning & Development to use the attached "Active ISA" (International Symbol of Accessibility).

We feel that this symbol more accurately represents today's and especially Berkeley's, progressive perception of and spirit of people with disabilities, and should be accepted by the City under the building code's section 11B-103 allowance for Equivalent Facilitation.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Minimal. This will affect all future signs.

IMPACT ON ACCESSABILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHERS

Signage to indicate accessibility will convey a more positive image in the future in Berkeley.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The current sign used to indicate accessibility is a static appearing stick figure in a wheelchair. It is a bland and passive image of disability, and the alternative sign proposed is simply a more modern and active version of this symbol, imparting a more positive image.

BACKGROUND

This is what the old signs look like:



This is the proposed sign for Berkeley (Active ISA):



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This recommendation is for future signage, adopting a more positive image of mobility and accessibility. New signs should have no different lifespan than older signs, as the change is to the graphic.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

In addition to the explanation above and the visual improvement in the signs, we are attaching an article by architect Erick Mikiten that nicely explains the need for an update.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Continue using the old style signs.

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

Ella Callow, Disability Services Specialist and Secretary to the Commission on Disability
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Attachments:

- 1: Resolution
- 2: Mikiten ISA article

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL OF ACCESSIBILITY (ISA) CHANGE FOR CITY SIGNAGE

WHEREAS, the International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA) is the symbol used to indicate accessibility in public places, and has traditionally been a passive stick figure in a wheelchair; and

WHEREAS, there exists a modern version of this symbol that conveys a more positive image of accessibility, the "Active ISA"; and

WHEREAS, the California building code allows for the use of equivalent signage (section 11B-103 allowance for Equivalent Facilitation); and

WHEREAS, this "Active ISA" symbol more accurately represents today's, and especially Berkeley's, progressive perception of and spirit of people with disabilities.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the "Active ISA" will be used as the sign of accessibility in Berkeley, and by the Berkeley Department of Planning & Development going forward.

ArchNews - January 2016

WHAT'S IN A SYMBOL?

Erick Mikiten, AIA, LEED-AP

Let's examine something we see everywhere, but gets little attention: the International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA). This familiar symbol, created by Rehabilitation International (RI) in 1968, originally had no head! Thankfully, it quickly grew one, and became *the* icon for accessible features.



1968...oops

RI set protocols for applying the symbol in 1978, which were picked up by the UN, ISO, the ADA and building codes around the globe. Everyone agreed that the symbol would help people navigate the environment; a powerful idea.

As a wheelchair rider, when I travel, especially to countries with different accessibility requirements, the ISA gives me immediate cues as to how to access a building or service. Without this guidance, one flounders around, knocking on doors, asking strangers, searching for access.

While the ISA is powerful (RI claims that it is one of the five most recognized symbols in the world), it is tired and ready for an upgrade.



1969-2015 R.I.P.

Look at the familiar image on the left. The figure (even *with* a head) is angular and stiff. It's static, immobile, and passive; it says "Push Me."

Now examine the alternative symbol on the right. It's active and self-determined. Rounded like an actual human. It says "Coming through - out of the way!"



2016: Movin' On

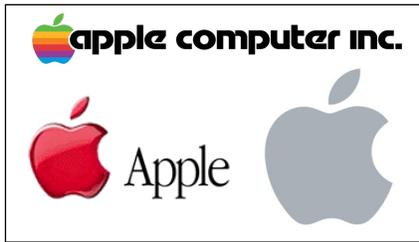
This symbol reflects the reality that disability means something different than it did even ten years ago, not to mention in 1968.

Perceptions are shifting. High tech advances in prosthetic limbs and mobility equipment are changing the game. Images like these photos are all over the media. Focus is shifting from disability to expanding abilities. And the perception of disability is turning the corner from marginal, to mainstream cool.



Consider how omnipresent the old ISA symbol is. It's in every parking lot, on building entrances, street parking signs, bus doors, restroom doors, pathways, and more. If this was a corporate symbol, would it have remained unchanged for so long? No way! The advertising industry of Madison Avenue would have been all over it.

In comparison, think about the changes Apple, Inc. (or AT&T, or UPS, etc.) has made over the years, reflecting their style and updating their image with the times:



It's time to apply this thinking to accessible design, to create a more accurate expression of people with disabilities. Section 103 of the ADA and 11B-103 of the CBC are rarely-used sections about Equivalent Facilitation, and read: "Nothing in these requirements prevents the use of designs, products, or technologies as alternatives to those prescribed, provided

they result in substantially equivalent or greater accessibility and usability." This new symbol reads as clearly as the old one, and should be accepted by any building official.

Our firm uses this symbol, and building departments have loved it. We're distributing the graphic and signage details in PDF and DWG in hopes that other architects will do the same. Submit a request on www.MikitenArch.com and we'll share it with you. It just makes sense.

Madison Avenue teaches us that symbols carry a lot of meaning. And as it gets out there in the public view, so will this one.

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