



## **STAFF REPORT** **ACTION ITEM**

Item # 12.b.

**SUBJECT:** VisitAble (D. Mekarski) pg. 20-31

**DATE OF MEETING:** July 13, 2021

**STAFF CONTACT(S):** David A. Mekarski, AICP, Town Manager

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### **SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS:**

As a former ADA Transition Coordinator working for over one year with a 10 member panel composed of individuals with unique differing abilities, all challenged by impediments denying their equal access to public facilities, I do not see the value of Visit Able. They primarily focus on differences in mobility and do not adequately cover the other “Differing Abilities” addressed by the 1990 ADA. Further, if the placard was issued by the Justice Department, who is responsible for enforcement of the ADA, or a state/national organization recognized by the differing ability community, I may see this of greater value.

### **BUDGET IMPACT:**

As the new initiatives were not included in the FY22 Budget appropriation, BA 22-003 proposes use of unassigned fund balance (reserves) to support the new program expenditures.

### **MOTION(S):**

“I move that the Town Council approve BA 22-003 in the amount of \$3,000.00, to appropriate funds for the new VisitAble program.”

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

**Town Council Presentation**  
**BA 22-003**



Enabling a better experience for visitors with mobility challenges.

## The Problem: The ADA Is Not Working

**1 in 7**

American adults have a mobility challenge

**15%**

Of American adults affected by mobility challenges are satisfied with the effectiveness of the ADA

**\$4 billion**

In aggregate discretionary income from Americans with mobility issues

### What's Wrong?

The ADA has a **failing enforcement system, loopholes, and missing guidelines.**

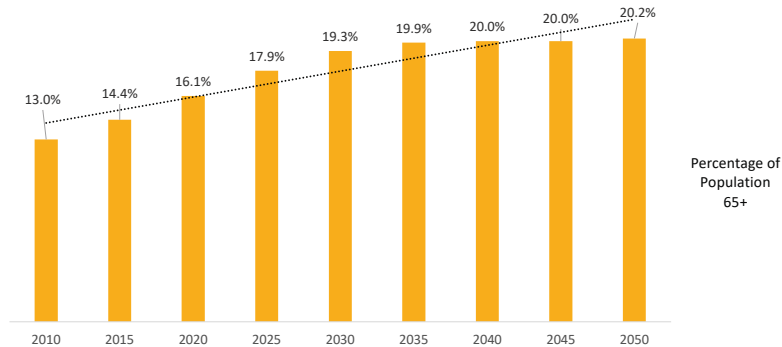
Visitors with mobility challenges are often **ignored or mistreated** by employees.

**There is no efficient way to know accessibility and customer service** of a location before visiting.

Sources: CDC: 1 in 4 US adults live with a disability; BraunAbility: 2020 Drive for Inclusion Report Card; AIR: A Hidden Market: The Purchasing Power of Working-Age Adults with Disabilities

# Growing & Relevant Need for Access

**55% growth** in Americans 65+ in 40 years  
(**40%** have at least 1 disability)



**Two-thirds of adults** are experiencing social isolation and anxiety during the pandemic

**Equity is an increasing emphasis in the US right now**

Sources: US Census Bureau: Mobility is Most Common Disability Among Older Americans; Vespa: The U.S. Joins Other Countries With Large Aging Populations; US Census Bureau: Projected Percent of U.S. Population Aged 65 and Older: 2010 to 2050; AARP Foundation: Two-Thirds of Adults Are Suffering From Social Isolation, Reveals AARP Foundation and the United Health Foundation Report: The Pandemic Effect

## What is VisitAble?

VisitAble is empowering organizations to attract and provide the best experience possible to visitors with mobility challenges.

### Boosting DEI, PR, & Marketability of Organizations:

- A **Training Certification** to teach etiquette, accessibility information, and industry-specific best practices
- Eliminating barrier of uncertainty for potential customers

### Building a community:

- Providing an interactive **database** to explore and rate mobility access and etiquette
- Hosting a **forum** to allow for questions and conversations about equity and access



# We're Already Working with Over 30 Business Locations



"VisitAble helped us think through how best to serve our customers with mobility limitations...We're proud to be an early adopter of this innovative idea."

-Director of Operations at Grit Coffee



We have now been provided with an excellent foundation for better understanding and assisting our guests with mobility issues. I highly recommend this program for every type of business."

-General Manager at Hyatt Place Charlottesville

## And are securing our first government contracts!

# OUR CERTIFICATION PROCESS

# Phase I - Disability Etiquette Training

*Training can be switched to the second phase if requested.*

## E-Learning

- Staff train in general disability etiquette guidelines, accessibility information and guidelines to look out for, and industry-specific best practices.
- Upon request, one employee receives a separate training to incorporate lessons into the onboarding process.
- Once 80% of the staff trains and a trainer is designated (if applicable), Phase II of the certification process begins.



## We cover important topics for all disabilities & chronic illnesses

What terminology and verbiage is outdated and no longer acceptable?

What do you do when someone has a seizure?

How are you legally allowed to tell if a dog is a service dog?

How to interact with individuals with speech differences?

## Optional In-Person Training

- If accessibility testing is completed first, location-specific feedback can be incorporated.

# Phase II - Accessibility Test



A mystery guest (who has a mobility challenge) visits the site, testing the disability etiquette of the staff and leaving the first review. *It is possible for mystery guests to look at non-public facing spaces upon request.*



On a separate occasion, either a subcontractor, VisitAble employee, or employee of the location conducts the accessibility test and takes pictures and measurements.

## Phase III – Personalized Feedback and Listing on Database

VisitAble delivers a report with:

1

Results from Mystery Guest Experience

2

Feedback on accessibility strong points and areas of opportunity

3

Suggestions on how to improve

**AND**

The location is added to VisitAble's interactive database  
(Can add information to organization's website upon request.)

## Phase IV – Certification

*On a yearly and a facility-by-facility basis.*

**Training Certification** – By going through the process, the entity will receive the Training Certification with a sticker for the location and a virtual badge.



## Included with Certification

If the entity make any physical or policy related improvements in the year of certification, VisitAble will display and promote the changes and the entity on a variety of platforms.

## Add-ons

- Order on the database (being listed higher on the list)
- Re-training quarterly or semi-annually
- Re-testing a location
- Re-listing a location on the website
- Further consulting

**Feel free to mix and match  
any of our services!**

## Long-Term Relationship

### Early-adopter Benefits

- Discounts & locked-in pricing options
- Social media highlights
- Access to our rapidly-growing following:
  - 2,500+ followers on social media and growing
  - 100+ monthly website visitors
- You can expect massive growth:
  - We are developing relationships with high-profile partners such as AARP and various advocacy organizations
  - We are constantly improving the user experience of our database



### Long-term Goals of Relationship

- A certification that indicates awareness of accessibility for all disabilities and chronic illnesses
- Comprehensive certifications for: whole Town government, Town as a region (including businesses), and/or all governments in Loudon County
- Increased offerings
- A more autonomous certification process
- Longer certification lifecycle with yearly fees/tasks



# Why Become Certified?

## Likely Outcomes

- Improve Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
- Increase PR & marketability
- Attract tourists and new residents
- Increase tourism spend at local businesses

Mobility information and accreditation are not only helpful for those with mobility challenges, but also for older adults, parents with strollers, caretakers, and family members and friends of individuals with mobility issues.

## Now is the Time!

### *COVID-19*

Visiting parks and other public facilities safely is an important way for many to maintain their mental and physical health during this pandemic. Even if facilities are closed, now is a great time to prepare employees and make any necessary improvements for when many will start to become comfortable visiting. Not too mention: vaccines are coming out and summer is right around the corner!

### *Social Equity*

There is an increasing emphasis on equity in the United States right now. Stand out and show you are taking an extra step to be more equitable to your patrons.

## Why Become Certified – The Numbers

### Accessible Tourism is Growing

**\$17.3 B**

Spent by American adults with disabilities on travel each year

**45%**

Of this travel spend is on food & beverage, retail, transportation, and other activities

**22%**

Annual growth of the accessible travel market

### Studies shows organizations that champion accessibility and disability inclusion are more profitable and create more value

**12%**

Increase in business for hotels and motels that made accessibility improvements

**2x**

Net Income over 4 years for “Disability Inclusion Champions”

**30%**

Higher economic profit margin over 4 years for “Disability Inclusion Champions”

Sources: eHotelier: Accessible tourism has huge potential for more growth; Forbes: People with Disabilities Want to Help Make Over the Travel Industry; Eastlake, Derry & Associates, LLC: Home; Children’s Disabilities Information: The Travelers Disabilities: The Unmet Needs – The Untapped Market; Accenture, AAPD, and Disability:IN: Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage



## Our Advantage

VisitAble is the only firm offering this comprehensive approach to test, improve, and broadcast mobility access and customer service.

What sets us apart?

- There are firms that do testing or training, but there are no other firms that broadcast these tests and trainings to make an impact on the bottom line
- We're focused on the impact on the disability community in order to make a difference, not just the minimum standards to check the boxes
- We involve people with mobility challenges in our testing so you can put our training into practice
- We broadcast mobility information to answer crucial questions from potential visitors to eliminate the barrier of uncertainty, which otherwise would cause many to stay home or visit the same places that they usually do
- We recognize you to help you stand apart from other local governments

**All people deserve the opportunity to reap the benefits of local government facilities and programming.**

## Usual Pricing

We usually charge entities for the certification process as follows:

Location-specific services (all-inclusive):

- \$500-\$4,000
  - Includes audit, mystery guest experience, listing on both websites, and creating a report to send back
- Price varies depending on space to cover, size of buildings, & number of buildings

Pricing of Training (all-inclusive):

- \$300-\$3,600
  - \$1,000 for each in-person training session (unlimited people)
  - One-time access to virtual training:
    - Without Q&A: \$20 per person (minimum of \$300, maximum of \$2,400)
    - With Q&A: \$25 per person (minimum of \$375, maximum of \$3,000)
  - \$3,600 per year for access to virtual training at any time

## Early Adopter Package Deal

### Proposal for Town of Purcellville:

\$3,000 for certifying 5 facilities (all-inclusive price: \$500/facility and \$500 for virtual training one-time access for up to 50 people):

1. Train Station
2. Tabernacle
3. Fireman's Field Park
4. Haske Field
5. Town Hall

**Go beyond ADA guidelines.  
Become VisitAble!**

Contact us at [joe.jamison@visitable.org](mailto:joe.jamison@visitable.org) or (703) 731-7963.



The ADA is not working. VisitAble is creating a database of mobility information and a certification process to test, improve, and broadcast mobility access and disability etiquette.

**15%**

Percentage of those affected by mobility challenges that are satisfied with the effectiveness of the ADA

**\$4 billion**

Amount of aggregate discretionary income of Americans with mobility issues

**1 in 7**

Ratio of American adults that have a mobility challenge

### The importance of accessibility is growing.

As the baby boomer generation continues to age, this population and aggregate discretionary income will continue to grow. There is also an increasing emphasis on equity in the US. Furthermore, two-thirds of adults report experiencing social isolation and high levels of anxiety during the pandemic and with vaccines coming out and summer around the corner, people are getting ready to visit!

### What can you do?

Even if facilities are closed, now is the time to refresh employees on best customer service practices and make any necessary physical layout improvements for when many will start to become comfortable visiting.

## Certification Process

*On a yearly and a facility-by-facility basis*

- 1** Training, in-person and eLearning offered, on disability etiquette guidelines, accessibility best practices, and customer service advice - this covers important information for all disabilities and chronic illnesses
- 2** On-site, in-person facility assessment on practical mobility accessibility – includes a mystery guest experience from an individual with a mobility challenge
- 3** Report with feedback and suggestions from standardized assessment on mobility accessibility and the mystery guest experience, and a listing on VisitAble’s database to show detailed mobility information
- 4** Sticker for the facility, virtual badge for the website, and a social media post from VisitAble about the location being certified

## Why Work With VisitAble?

- Eliminate** the barrier of uncertainty preventing those with mobility challenges from visiting your facilities
- Learn** how to be practically mobility-friendly to inform operations, inexpensive solutions, and future projects
- Stand out** and be recognized for your accessibility efforts over other local governments
- Increase** facility usage, PR, & marketability
- Attract** new residents and tourists
- Increase** tourism spend at local businesses

## Proposal

**\$3,000 for certifying 5 facilities:**

1. Train Station
2. Tabernacle
3. Fireman’s Field Park
4. Haske Field
5. Town Hall

Contact us at [joe.jamison@visitable.org](mailto:joe.jamison@visitable.org) or at (703) 731-7963 to learn more.

**TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE  
FY 2022 BUDGET AMENDMENT**

**ATTACHMENT**

<b>BA 22-003</b>	<b>Town Council Special Programs</b>	<b>7/13/2021</b>	
<b>General Fund</b>			
<b><u>Revenue Side</u></b>			
<u>Account #</u>	<u>Title of Revenue Account</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
10300000 398100	Reserves (General Fund)	3,000	
<b>Grand Total Revenue General Fund</b>		<b>3,000</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Expenditure Side</u></b>			
<u>Account #</u>	<u>Title of Expenditure Account</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
11110000 405820	Town Council Special Programs	3,000	
<b>Grand Total Expenditure General Fund</b>		<b>3,000</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Appropriation to increase the FY22 Town Council Special Programs Budget by \$3,000 for VisitAble.</i>			

Town Council Approval Item # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
PH Date \_\_\_\_\_ n/a

**Finance Staff Only:**

Processed by: Linda Jackson	Date Processed:	
Munis BE #: BA 22-003	Period:	2
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