



Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities End of Year Report 2023

The following is the year in review report from the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities for 2023. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) aims to ensure equity, inclusion, and opportunity for residents with disabilities throughout our community. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities houses the Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities and the Office of ADA Compliance. Both offices work to make Philadelphia a better place for people with disabilities.

The Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities advocates for policies, programs, and systemic changes that maximize independence and community integration for Philadelphians with disabilities. The Office of ADA Compliance writes policies and procedures and develops resources to ensure equal access to City-provided services, programs, and activities for people with disabilities.

As 2023 ends, The [Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities \(MOPD\)](#) is looking back at the moments this past year that brought our mission into action for the disability community. 2023 was all about breaking barriers, making disabled history, and leading with universal designed projects to lift our collective vision for a more equitable and accessible Philadelphia into action. Learn more about the specific 2023 projects and accomplishments of the MOPD below. Our office will continue to be dedicated to uplifting the voices of all members of the disability community and continuing to foster an inclusive city for all Philadelphians in 2024 and beyond. Be sure to [sign up for our newsletter](#) to stay connected to our work in 2024.

Highlights Captured in this Report

Page(s):

- ADA Unit Project 2-3
- The Philadelphia Disabilities Characteristics Map 4-5
- Sensory Inclusion Project and Sensory Inclusive Designation of the City 6-7
- Legislative Action on the Office 8
- Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities 9-10
- Department Engagements 11-12
- External Engagements 13-17
- Expansion and Looking Ahead 18

ADA 33



Americans with Disabilities Act

Celebrate the ADA! July 26, 2023

The Logo for the ADA 33 Americans with Disabilities Act Logo. The ADA celebrated 33 years in 2023 and the ADA Unit propelled our work around the ADA. Learn more about the ADA: [ADA Anniversary Tool Kit](#)

The ADA Unit Project

The evaluation phase of the ADA Transition Plan was completed prior to Adrienne Moore (formerly Ewing, Director of ADA Compliance) and Amy Nieves (Executive Director) joining MOPD. After joining the MOPD team, they reviewed the Transition Plan and determined that 1. A significant amount of time had passed since the first evaluation was completed in 2019 and 2. The ADA Transition Plan could be propelled forward by addressing low-cost or no-cost corrective actions which may not have been prioritized since they were smaller tasks.

The Mayor's Office For People with Disabilities applied for the Operations Transformation Fund in 2022 and was awarded \$300,000 to provide an updated evaluation of City Hall, Rec Centers and Libraries, and to address the low-cost or no-cost corrective actions (i.e. grab bars, accessible signage, door handles, removing/relocating furniture from blocking access in hallways, emergency exits, door speeds, door weights) from the ADA Transition Plan. Although individual departments are responsible for providing the funds to address ADA compliance in their respective budgets, this project is helping to alleviate some of those costs. An RFI and an RFP were published during the Spring and Summer of 2022 to engage a vendor for the project. Using an equity lens and data from the Disability Characteristics Map and the American Community Survey, a local MWBE Alexander Perry, Inc. was selected for the project. Once the contract was approved, the project officially launched in January 2023.

ADA Unit Public Updates expanded the work of the MOPD that has provided updates to the community since the 5-year ADA transition plan was created in 2020 via town halls, public meetings, newsletter, listserv, email and the MOPD website. The ADA Unit was recently presented at the Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities February

and April public meetings in 2023. In addition, a presentation on the ADA Unit was held on June 7th, 2023, in the Mayor's Reception Room at City Hall. [WHYY](#), [Philadelphia Tribune](#), [NBC 10](#) and [Billy Penn](#) and others covered the event in the press.



Adrienne Moore (formerly Ewing), left, director of ADA compliance for the city and Susanne Erb point out one of the new high contrast signs. (Tom MacDonald/WHYY)

ADA Focus Group

This focus group was created to support the work of the next Transition Plan in 2025. It was composed of volunteer participants and started in March 2023. There were three meetings in total (March, April and May 2023) with an average of 21 participants per meeting. Participants also participated in the ADA Unit and provided valuable insight.

ADA Unit Phase 1

Phase 1 included City Hall which was originally slated to be addressed in 2025 as per the Transition Plan; however, the MOPD prioritized it with the goal of making it more accessible and leaving a legacy for the Kenney administration which established MOPD. The entire City Hall building was surveyed during the winter of 2023 and more than 600 new ADA accessible signs (raised, tactile letter with Braille) were installed with the updated "in motion" wheelchair icon.

ADA Unit Phase 2

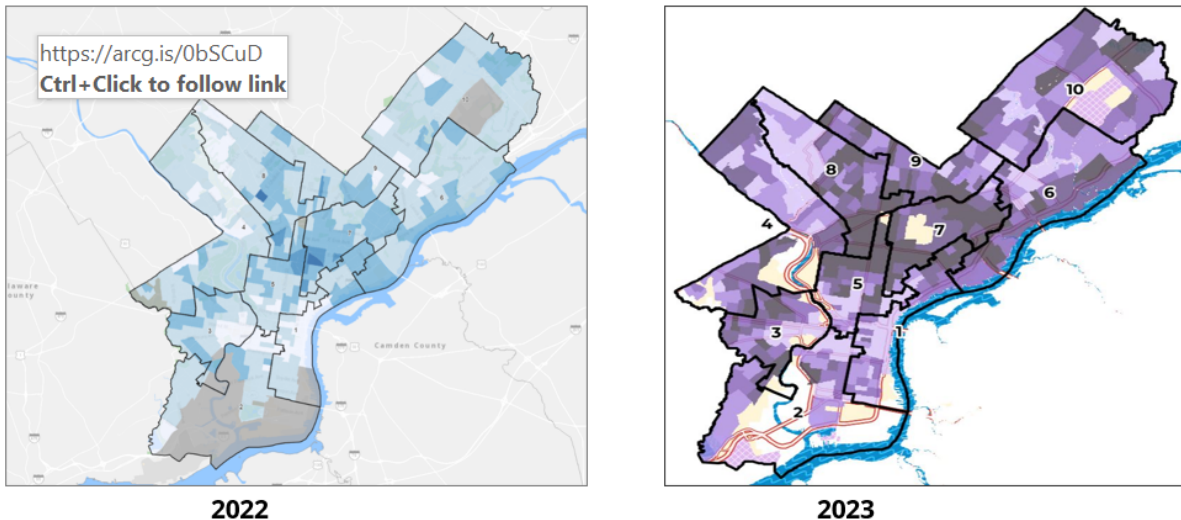
Phase 2 included the completion of low-cost and no-cost corrective actions at 55 Free Library branches. The low-cost or no-cost corrective actions at these locations include: door handle issues, door speed and door weight, grab bars, removing furniture from blocking access (i.e. hallways, counters, emergency exits) and accessible signage.

ADA Unit Phase 3

Phase 3 included a physical survey and low-cost or no-cost corrective actions for 10 Parks and Recs locations and the conclusion of the focus group and unit work for all sites.

Philadelphia Disability Characteristics Map Paved the Accessible Way in 2023

What it was...Where it is



What it was...Where it is: Images of the Disability Characteristics Map from 2022 and the updated version with increased accessibility features in 2023.

The initial version of this map was created in 2019 as a tool to assist the [Philly Counts'](#) Disabilities Subcommittee in strategic planning around methods to promote participation in the 2020 Census within the disabled community. Since then, the map was adapted into a publicly accessible tool, in partnership with the [Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities](#), and [Philly Counts](#) and publicly launched in 2022.

This map utilizes [GIS](#) (geographical information systems). GIS is a spatial system that creates, manages, analyzes, and maps all types of data. The data utilized in the map comes directly from [Census Bureau](#). It can be challenging to see all demographic data side by side when looking at Census data on its own as the demographic categories are tracked in different tables through the [American Community Survey](#). This map brings them all together in an easy to navigate map, leading with disability representation. This map is truly the first of its kind and has quickly made an impact not only for Philadelphia but nationally.

In 2023 the map underwent an extensive accessible overhaul and update in partnership with the [U.S. Access Board](#), the [Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities](#) and the [Environmental Science Research Institute \(ESRI\)](#). Now with an accessible base map, keyboard functionality and updates to the symbols and navigation elements of the map, the Philadelphia Disabilities Characteristics map is considered one of the most accessible data maps available globally and was featured in [GovTech](#).



Staff members of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, joined with City leaders, Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities Members and Board Member Ben Nadolsky of the U.S. Access Board at the unveiling of the Disability Characteristics Map in 2023.

Additionally, the map now includes a land acknowledgement to honor the Lenape people and the land that the map was created on. A data acknowledgement is also present to recognize that the language and ways in which the data are categorized by the U.S. Census are antiquated and do not fully represent the vast and vibrant diversity of people.

When visiting the map users can view:

- The total population of people
- The total population of those with disabilities
- Types of disability and cross disability representation
- Race, ethnicity, gender, and age demographics
- Data by Census track, neighborhood, City Council District, and more!

The data is shown in narrative form to better tell the story of the people this data represents. There are currently no other maps of the U.S. Cities that include all these demographics together in an accessible format for all people to access. While on average 17% of Philadelphians identify as having a disability, some neighborhoods have over 40% of people with disabilities. This map is vital in understanding the disability representation and diversity of our city so that we can better serve and represent our city.

All are welcome to explore the [Philadelphia Disabilities Characteristics Map](#) and see where it takes you!

Sensory Inclusion Project and Designation of Philadelphia as the first-ever Certified Sensory Inclusive City by KultureCity:



The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, in partnership with [KultureCity](#), has successfully led Philadelphia to become the first certified Sensory Inclusive City! A [press conference](#) was held on December 19, 2023, where the city was presented with the designation and joined by KultureCity, community partners, Actor Stephen Kunken, the Philadelphia Phillies Phanatic, Philadelphia Eagle's Swoop and residents.

Earlier this year, the [Innovation Fund](#) awarded the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities a grant to launch the city's first-ever Sensory Inclusive Project to provide training and supportive elements to increase the awareness, understanding and available support to become a sensory inclusive city. Through the project's partnership with [KultureCity](#), the city was able to provide accessible, multilingual, and role-based training to its workforce in October and November 2023 as the first stage of the project.

To date, more than 16,200 (and growing) City of Philadelphia workforce members across all departments have successfully completed the training, contributing to the creation of an inclusive city for all residents, visitors, and staff. The [KultureCity Sensory Inclusion training](#) embodies a universal design that is fully accessible, granting individuals autonomy and the freedom to choose their preferred language and role specific training. With nine different versions available, this diverse approach has been a key factor in the program's success among the workforce. Philadelphia is now better prepared to assist residents and guests with sensory sensitivities and foster a more welcoming workplace culture for our employees.

Philadelphia's journey to become a certified Sensory Inclusive City is a testament to its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in action. Philadelphia is better positioned

to ensure all visitors, residents and members of its workforce feel welcomed, supported, and have more equitable engagement opportunities regardless of how they move their bodies, communicate, use their minds, or share their voices.

The Sensory Inclusive Mobile Lending Program:



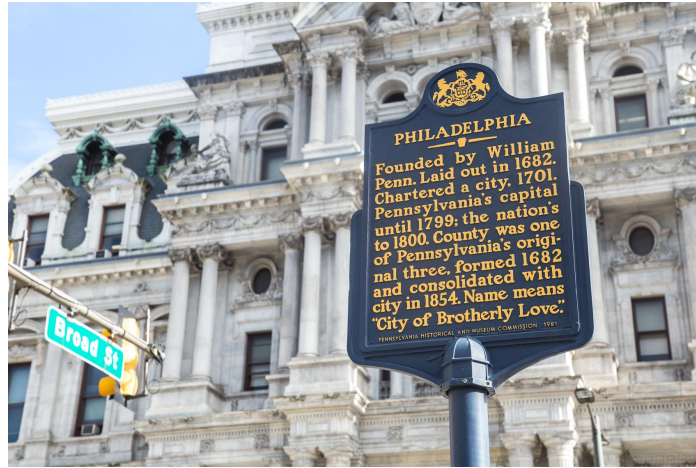
Mayor Kenney at the Sensory Inclusive Press Conference beside the mobile Sensory stations and some of the Sensory Bags that will be available to departments in early 2024 to better support and serve members of the workforce and our community at large. Sensory Bags Contents include noise-reducing headphones, fidgets, visual cue card and information card on the program.

Through this grant, the city of Philadelphia secured 3 mobile Sensory Stations and 100 Sensory Bags that include noise canceling headphones, fidgets and more. The Mobile Sensory Station is an on-the-go sensory room and an alternative for organizations that don't have a dedicated space for a sensory room.

The Sensory Inclusive Mobile Lending Program will be available to departments that demonstrate a 50% and above completion rate of the training. This further encourages departments to fully engage with the training offered to them in the fall of 2023. Departments who complete the training successfully would get their own sensory bag on a permanent basis and have access to borrow more bags on a short-term basis and 1-3 of the mobile units for department meetings, public outreach, and engagement events with the community.

The lending program will be managed by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. Having a lending program with the mobile units provides a larger reach by bringing it to the community at events, meetings, and programming. This project and commitment are building blocks in our many efforts to create a safe, accessible, and equitable city for all. Read the full post on this project on our [website](#).

Legislative action related to Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities



Philadelphia City Hall and the Historical Marker of the City's Founding in 1682 and chartered in 1701.

Mayor Kenney created the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities through Executive [Order 7-17 in 2017](#). The office oversees the Office of ADA compliance that is responsible for the city's first ever [5-year ADA transition plan](#) that began in the Kenney Administration. Additionally, the office supports the ongoing advocacy and community engagement of the [Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities](#) and meets the needs of residents through Constituent Services.

In the spring of 2023, Councilmember Brooks, in collaboration with the MOPD executive director, introduced a resolution to [transition the office to a permanent office within the city's charter](#). In June 2023, the resolution was unanimously passed by city council and was included on the ballot for the November 2023 election. This charter change marks the first time in the city's history that we have a permanent office dedicated to the disability community and removes harmful antiquated language to give more autonomy to how we describe people with disabilities in our city charter. The ballot question was approved by about 86% of voters who cast ballots and said yes to making the Office for People with Disabilities a permanent office. One of the many news features on this historical and important ballot question was featured by several local news sources including the [Inquirer](#).

We will mindfully and intentionally transition the office from the MOPD to the Office for People with Disabilities in early 2024. What a historic and meaningful moment for the disability community!

Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities

Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities



Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities Headshots of the 16 members of the Commission

The Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities is one of the longest standing commissions, beginning in the late 1980's. Today, 16 residents serve as volunteer commissioners to bring forward the diverse voices of the disability community to work in collaboration with the administration to ensure equal access to all areas of public life in the city of Philadelphia. In January 2023, the Commission took the time to move their bylaws to [guiding principles](#) and outline their own [community agreement](#) for more equitable engagement.

The commission continued to host quarterly public meetings virtually and tackle a wide range of issues with a commitment to information equity when it comes to resource sharing in 2023. In addition, the Commission hosted several Community conversations on key issues. In March of 2023, the Commission hosted a session on Housing Modifications with community partners: [Liberty Resources](#), [Inglis](#), and [PA Assistive Technology Foundation](#). In August 2023, the Commission hosted a Community conversation on Voting Accessibility in partnership with [REVUP Philly](#) (Register, Educate, Vote, Use your Power) and the [Mayor's Internship Program](#) to ensure that all people have what they need to head to the polls in the next election. In October 2023, the Commission hosted a conversation focused on Civic Engagement with [The Arc of Philadelphia](#). From voter registration, poll accessibility and mail in ballots, this session was not only informative but engaging. In November of 2023, the Commission joined all the Mayor's Commission for a [joint celebration](#). The 2023 Chair of the Commission, Cecelia Thompson shared the commission's [hopes and most impactful accomplishments](#) for the new Administration in a [video message](#) at the event.



The Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities members at the Commission celebration in October 2023 with Mayor Kenney in the Mayor's Reception room.

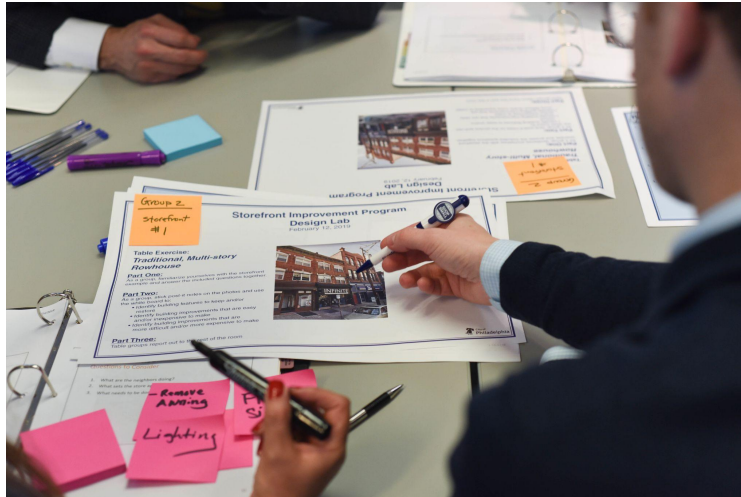
As the Commission looks forward to welcoming the new administration, they believe that their most impactful contributions under the Kenney Administration have been:

- Supporting the city's first ever ADA self-evaluation and transition plan.
- Leading the way in accessible inclusive engagements particularly through our regular community conversations with city and community leaders on critical areas of public life such as transportation, voting, police engagement, housing, and more.
- Supporting the launch of the first ever Disability data map of a U.S city that is also one of the most accessible data maps in the world. Representation matters and this map brings that forward around disability.

The Commission also has hopes for the new administration going forward for the City of Philadelphia:

- That the incoming administration is committed to additional funding and support for the Commission and the Office for People with Disabilities to build and expand the work we are doing around accessibility and disability inclusion.
- Desire to see an increase in disabled representation in city leadership and on all Mayoral Commissions.
- To ensure the city continues and expands its commitment to equitable and accessible hiring, events, meetings, and processes across all departments and Commissions.

Department Engagements



City Employees gathered around project proposals collaboratively

MOPD's goal is to support efforts for the City to be inclusive and equitable for everyone by centering on accessibility and disability. MOPD collaborates with city departments in advocating for policies, programs, and systemic changes that increases independence and community integration for residents with disabilities. One of the strategies is to participate in various internal workgroups to elevate disability representation and accessibility in all the city's operations and programs.

MOPD staff and Commissioners participate in steering committees, workgroups, and departmental meetings from accessible restroom planning of the [Philly Plush program](#), the [hazard mitigation steering committee](#), to supporting the [Equitable ToolKit](#) creation, and the joint disability health forum with the [Philadelphia Department of Public Health](#) and many more. These collaborating efforts aim to ensure that disability and accessibility have a seat at all decision-making tables. Departments are additionally provided regular and ongoing accessibility training from the MOPD staff throughout the year. Below are some of the many workgroups and workforce focused programs that the MOPD leads.

ADA Liaisons

In September 2017, Mayor **Jim Kenney** signed [Executive Order 7-17](#), officially establishing the **Mayor's Office For People with Disabilities (MOPD)**. The office, housed under the **Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI)**, is meant to establish "a permanent office operating to advance strategic policies and programs". MOPD continues to provide connection and training to all department ADA Liaisons on the policies and positive practices of the Americans With Disabilities Act on a regular basis. Currently, there are 60 ADA Liaisons across city departments that serve as a

peer-to-peer support and ADA resource for their department. In 2023, the liaison program grew in size and the MOPD provided regular training to the Liaisons.

ADA Unit Workgroup

This workgroup was comprised of staff from several departments providing guidance, feedback and support of the ADA Unit Project from its inception. Departments include Libraries, Property, Parks & Rec, Rebuild, Labor Relations and Human Resources. Through this collaborative group, the proposal for an ADA Unit was formed. The workgroup was instrumental in structuring the unit, identifying goals, and obtaining the needed funding through a grant with the Operations Transformation Fund of \$300,000 for 2022-2023.

Sensory Inclusion Workgroup



Members of the Sensory Inclusion Workgroup helped assemble the 100 Sensory Bags at their latest meeting. Working with partners across departments leads to increased impact for all.

The Sensory Inclusion Workgroup was formed as a part of the grant application process in the spring of 2023. There are members from cross departments including Fire, Libraries, Parks and Recreation, Public Property and the Office of Talent and Employee Success. The workgroup meets monthly to support the ongoing efforts to provide training and support to all departments around the Sensory Project. The Sensory Inclusion Workgroup also discussed strategies to increase equitable engagement across departments for those with disabilities both internally and in our community.

External Engagement

MOPD's goals for a more inclusive and equitable city would not be possible without our many community partners and engaging with the disability community directly. Alongside departments and community partners, the office focuses on advocating for policies, programs, and systemic changes that increase independence and community integration for residents with disabilities.

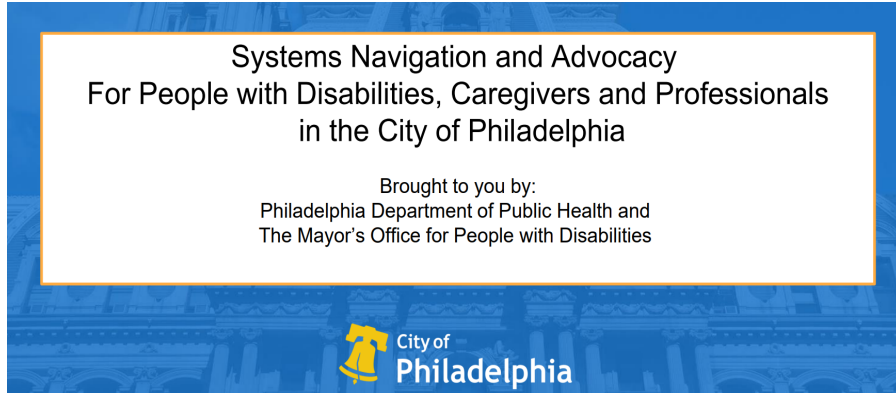
The MOPD provides resources and referrals to local organizations, such as housing, employment, homelessness, and legal support based on residents' needs. In addition to advocating and providing resources, MOPD works with the Office of ADA Compliance in responding to residents' accommodation and Title II grievances requests directly. Both offices work together to ensure that people with disabilities have equal and equitable access to employment opportunities, accessible and affordable housing, government services, buildings, activities and events.

Reasonable ADA accommodation requests can be made by individuals with disabilities who require aids or services to facilitate communication or a change in a program, service, or activity offered by the City. Residents can fill out and submit an online [Accommodations](#) form in order to make a request. Additionally, individuals who feel that they have been discriminated against based on a disability in City-operated programs, services and activities may submit a Title II ADA [Grievances](#) request online as well. Alternatively, residents who wish to submit an accommodation or grievance request, or for information on miscellaneous resources, can email our office at ADA.Request@phila.gov, or call us at (215) 686-2798.

In 2023 the office transitioned to utilizing a new technology platform, QuickBase, in order to better track and address both accommodation requests and grievances. This transition has been orchestrated by MOPD's Constituent Services Administrator. We will now be able to gather critical data on what are the most requested accommodations, grievances, and or resources residents need to better inform the city's planning, policies and programs across departments to better serve our residents.



City Hall with Spring Flowers



Systems Navigation and Advocacy For People with Disabilities, Caregivers and Professionals in the City of Philadelphia title slide with City of Philadelphia logo.

Systems Navigation Project

Finding connections and resources can be challenging, which is why the MOPD was driven to bring together community partners to support systems navigation through a video project that began in 2022 and was finalized in 2023. TThe MOPD partnered with the [Department of Public Health](#)'s Division of Maternal, Child, and Family Health to create these [resources](#). Through this project, we hoped to increase accessibility and awareness of resources. We provided interpretation in American Sign Language and closed captions in English and Spanish for the [videos](#). We've also provided accessible downloadable [resource guides in English and Spanish](#). This project received funding from the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP).

In addition to providing resources and support directly to residents, just a few of our many public engagements from 2023 included the following partnerships and events:



[REVUP](#) (Register, Educate, Vote, Use Your Power) Logo

Partnering with the [Philadelphia Coalition of REVUP](#) (Register, Educate, Vote, Use Your Power) a disability led voting and civic engagement initiative to ensure accessible voting access for all residents in Philadelphia and to empower voters with disabilities to exercise their rights to vote.



Amy Nieves with Kelley Buckland and Secretary Pete Buttigieg discussing accessible transportation for Americans with Disabilities.

Collaborating with Other Cities to advocate around accessible transportation with the U.S. Department of Transportation in D.C. In June the collective MOPD offices from across the country gathered to meet with USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg in Washington, D.C. to advocate for more funding, regulatory oversight, and disability community engagement around transportation.

Community Conversations continued in 2023 with [The Arc of Philadelphia](#), [Inglis](#), [PA Assistive Technology Foundation](#), [Liberty Resources](#) and more partners on important topics impacting the Disability Community from Home Modifications to Voting. Bringing leaders and residents together propels information equity and connections.

Keynote and Conference Presentations at the 31st annual [Brighter Future Awards with DBHIDS](#) (Department of Behavioral Health and Disability Services) on Belonging and the work of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in June of 2023.

Conference Panelist at the [PA Human Relations Disability Summit](#) in Harrisburg, PA in July of 2023 where accessibility and universal design benefit everyone related to employment.

Celebrating Disability Pride's 11th year here in Philadelphia with our community partners at Disability Pride PA in June of 2023. Be sure to stay connected with them all year round at [Disability Pride Pennsylvania \(disabilitypridepa.org\)](https://disabilitypridepa.org).



Disability Summit Flyer for 2023 with hands raised in unity around self determination and shaping our own lives at the Temple University Student Center.

Lunch Keynote and Conference Presentation at State Representative HoHenstein’s annual [Disability Summit](#) hosted at Temple University in September 2023 on leveraging disability data for equity and belonging.

Conference Panelist on Accessible Technology at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s Accessibility Summit in June of 2023. This [Summit](#) brought healthcare and industry leaders together around accessible technology.



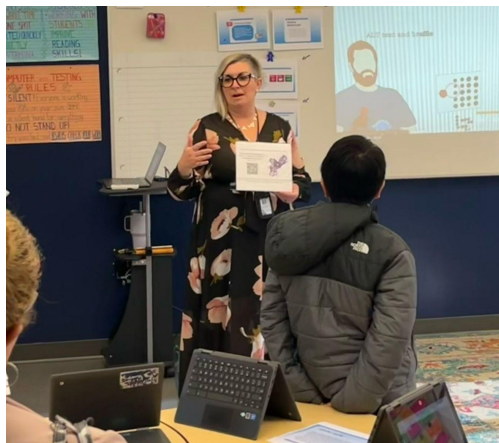
Amy Nieves and Dan Warner at their GIS & People with Disabilities: Changing the Conversation in Philadelphia and Beyond Conference presentation

Conference Presentation at the [Esri User Conference](#) in San Diego, California on the Philadelphia Disabilities Characteristic Map with Amy Nieves and Dan Warner. This session was centered on engaging more than 24,000 data science professionals on leveraging accessible technology in their data mapping processes and ensuring disability representation in the data science spaces.



GIS Day logo with a globe with trees and buildings all around it.

World GIS Day Celebration in November of 2023 brought the disability community and GIS (geographic information systems) together to go over the Disabilities Characteristics Map and introduce GIS to residents and community partners. [Esri](#) provided 5 one-year subscriptions to their GIS platform that were awarded to 5 community members to expand the use of GIS within our community.



Amy Nieves congratulating the students at Frankford Friends for their universal designs for City Hall at the Universal Design Expo.

A Student-Led Universal Design Expo was hosted in December 2023 at Frankford Friends that saw 5th grade students bring accessible design to life in their projects that were inspired by the Disabilities Characteristics Map of Philadelphia and their virtual and in person field trips with the MOPD and at City Hall.

What a year it has been! We are so grateful to our community partners for their partnership, leadership and collaboration as we strive for a more equitable Philadelphia.

Expansion and Looking Ahead



Amy Nieves with interns Ellie Spasova and Larry Pear (left), Disability Equity Vista Ava Campbell with Adrienne Moore (formerly Ewing) and 2024 Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities Chair Nico Meyering (center), MOPD's Constituent Services Administrator Khalia Jackson (right).

2023 was a year of staff expansion with the addition of Khalia Jackson, the office's Constituent Services Administrator in June of 2023. Also in June, the MOPD team was paired with two dynamic interns through the Mayor's Internship Program, Larry Pear and Ellie Spasova. They created [plain language guides](#) to several public comments around changes that directly impacted the disability community at the local and national levels.

In July 2023, the office welcomed its first ever [Vista](#) through the city's partnership with [Serve Philadelphia VISTA Corps](#). Ava Campbell joined the office as our Disability Equity Vista. He has been instrumental in supporting the ADA unit, ADA liaisons, office engagements, and supporting our Director of ADA Compliance, Adrienne Moore as the 5-year ADA transition plan begins to wind down in 2024.

In 2024 the office hopes to onboard an ADA Coordinator to support the internal facing work of the office and support our efforts to effectively and efficiently address residential accommodation requests and grievances. As the office continues to grow and expand, we are filled with gratitude to all that have come alongside the MOPD team and Mayor's Commission on People in 2023 to help us propel equity, inclusion and accessibility. We especially want to thank Mayor Kenney for creating the MOPD and all his support throughout his administration. What an astonishing year it has been for accessibility and the disability community here in Philadelphia! Here's to an accessible and more expansive 2024 as we welcome our transition to the **Office for People with Disabilities** and the Parker Administration. The future is accessible!

Be sure to stay connected with us in the New Year by signing up for our [email list](#) or reach out to us at 215-686-2798 or email at ADA.Request@phila.gov.