General Studies 420: Disability & Society

Spring 2019

# Assignment #3

# Community Accessibility Evaluation

1. The place I will be evaluating is Villa Nueva Apartments located in San Ysidro, California. This apartment complex supports low-income families by providing an income-based living that is federally funded; it has a six to eight-year waitlist. I have been living in these apartments for the past five years. Within this gated community, you can find several laundry mats, a few small parks, several parking spaces and various trash disposal areas. Each apartment building is composed of three floors with two different apartments on each floor. It is a fairly large property that sits on top of a hill, housing over 398 units.
2. Villa Nueva Apartments is extensively more accessible to those with unrestricted mobility. In other words, it is most accessible to those individuals with hidden disabilities or individuals that can walk. There are stairs every which way you turn. On each step, there is a bright yellow line as well as handrails to prevent slipping or falling for able bodied individuals. However, the lack of ramps is definitely noticeable. Just a few months ago, a new ramp was built in front of my designated parking spot that facilitated the way individuals with disabilities were able to access a certain apartment building. Although it is a step in the right direction, it is sad that these changes are barely getting implemented since Villa Nueva Apartments has been established since the 70s. Due to the lack of accessible ramps, individuals with certain disabilities—particularly those that limit mobility—have a harder time traveling around each apartment complex. Furthermore, another aspect of this apartment complex that is lacking, in regard to accessibility, is the ratio of parking spaces to accessible parking spaces. There is about 1 accessible parking space for every 40 parking spaces. According to the ADA National Network, there must be at the least one accessible parking space per every 25 parking spaces. Additionally, the number of the building and the range of apartment numbers is displayed on the side of each building near the second floor. This does not make it accessible for those that are blind to be able to identify what building they are near or for them to have a sense of direction and autonomy. Lastly, in each laundry room, all of the washing machines are mounted and levitated on a three-inch block of cement. This would not be an issue if the washing machines were operated through the front. However, the machines utilized in these laundry rooms are operated through the top, which would make it extremely difficult for someone in a wheelchair to reach over and do their own laundry.
3. If I can make Villa Nueva Apartments more accessible, I would undoubtedly begin building more ramps. If there is enough funding, I would lean more towards building elevators to discard the limitation of those with disabilities to only the first floor of each apartment building. Not only is there a lack of ramps by the entrance of each apartment building but also, the majority of the sidewalks found on this property do not have accessible walkways for those with disabilities. Furthermore, there should be more accessible parking spaces because the ratio, as it appears, is inaccurate in accordance to the state law. All residents only get one parking spot so, having more accessible parking spaces will allow those individuals with disabilities to have more accommodations since the surrounding area has terrible parking availability. Additionally, there are no visible signs or displays that guide individuals towards the accessible ramps that are available around the property. As mentioned in my previous paragraph, the building numbers and the range of apartment numbers is displayed on the second floor of each building which is promoting exclusiveness to those lacking visual capabilities. I would change this by demonstrating that information at a height that is visible to all and incorporate the braille interpretation to promote inclusiveness towards the blind community as well. Another aspect of this apartment complex that I would alter is the laundry room. I would install washing machines that have the opening in the front, as compared to on the top, to ensure everyone has the same access to washing their clothes.
4. Villa Nueva Apartments does have a few ramps cut into the sidewalk and a few ramps leading down from the first floor of some apartment buildings. Additionally, there are a handful of accessible parking spaces scattered throughout the property. As mentioned earlier as well, there are handrails available where there are stairs which is a feature that makes it accessible for those that can climb stairs. One big challenge that I believe is a barrier that prevents this location from being more accessible is funding. Because these apartments are federally funded, there are certain things that become a priority over accessibility. Just recently, the concrete on all the roads within the property was renovated and the paint used to partition each parking space was rejuvenated. Additionally, Villa Nueva Apartments also switched over to a new and different security company that takes care of the surveillance that goes on throughout the day. Lastly, they also spend the funding on regular fumigations, bathroom fungi removal, plumbing renovations and utility maintenance. Another barrier that I think may cause an issue in terms of the engineering aspect of it, would be that the entire property sits on top of a hill. Therefore, implementing ramps or elevators may cause an issue due to the imbalance of the ground, however, it should not be impossible.

A picture containing indoor, wall, building, table

Description automatically generatedA large room

Description automatically generatedA picture containing indoor, wall, building

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Stairs to get to the first floor.

One of the few ramps there is but behind the door there are stairs to get to the first floor.

A close up of a brick building

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The apartment building label