To: *Eoanna Goodwin - Project Manager, RPD Capital and Planning Division*

From: *John Romaidis - Disability Access Coordinator, RPD Capital & Planning Division*

Date: *July 7, 2025*

Subject: *Embarcadero Plaza - Accessibility Assessment*

Summary

The purpose of this assessment is to identify inaccessible areas and elements within Embarcadero Plaza and evaluate the extent of alterations needed to achieve compliance with current accessibility laws and regulations. This report focuses specifically on the following areas: the brick plaza itself, the monument stairs (plaza approach), surrounding pedestrian walkways and sloped walks, and the Vaillancourt Fountain.

Standard inspection practices were used to gather data; however, the findings should be considered a rapid assessment and not a definitive record of site conditions. For an official record suitable for design or permitting purposes, a detailed survey should be conducted by a California licensed civil engineer or other qualified design professional with expertise in accessibility compliance.

Regulatory Requirements

This report evaluates what improvements would be required to bring the plaza and adjacent elements into compliance with applicable accessibility standards. All recommended alterations are considered barrier removal under the California Building Code (CBC) however, it is important to note that any work falling outside the scope of this assessment could trigger path of travel obligations, which are not addressed in this report.

Site Layout

Embarcadero Plaza is a below-grade, non-directional brick plaza. Access is provided from the south via a sloped walkway from Market Street, as well as by a series of stairs located along the south and west edges, with a concrete apron serving as the top landing. From the north, the plaza is accessible via the sidewalk along Clay Street and a connecting walkway from Sue Bierman Park. On the east side, a series of walkways and landscaped areas provide access from The Embarcadero.

Three sloped walkways provide access for mobility device users between the plaza and the upper sidewalk. In the northeast corner of the site is the Vaillancourt Fountain, a prominent feature of the plaza. The fountain can be accessed via the plaza and adjacent pedestrian paths on its north and east sides (see Figure 1).

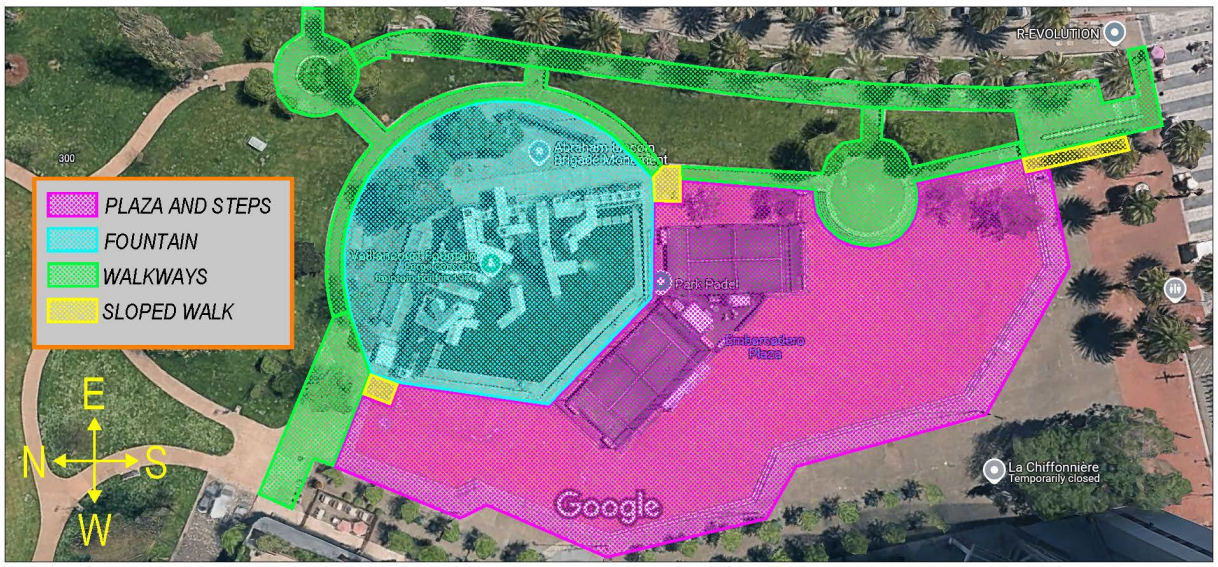

Figure 1. Site Layout

Pedestrian Walkways Overview

For clarity and consistency, the surrounding pedestrian walkways and connecting paths have been grouped and described based on their orientation relative to the central plaza: Northeast (NE), Northwest (NW), Southeast (SE), and Southwest (SW). Each section provides a summary of the general layout and accessibility considerations observed during the assessment.

Northeast Walk

Figure 2. NE Walk

From The Embarcadero, a roundabout section of concrete path leads to a bifurcation point, where the walkway splits, one leg heading west and the other south, both providing access to the plaza. In the roundabout section, several locations exhibit cross slopes exceeding the 2% maximum, with measurements up to 3.6%. Similar excessive cross slopes up to 3% were observed at both split paths. Running slopes were found to be compliant (not exceeding 5%).

Additionally, a short connector path links the NE walk to the elevated SE section. At this location, a depressed manhole cover creates a vertical change in the surface exceeding ½-inch.

Recommendation
Repair concrete paving as necessary to correct noncompliant cross slopes. Repair the area surrounding the manhole to eliminate the vertical surface deviation.

Northwest Walk

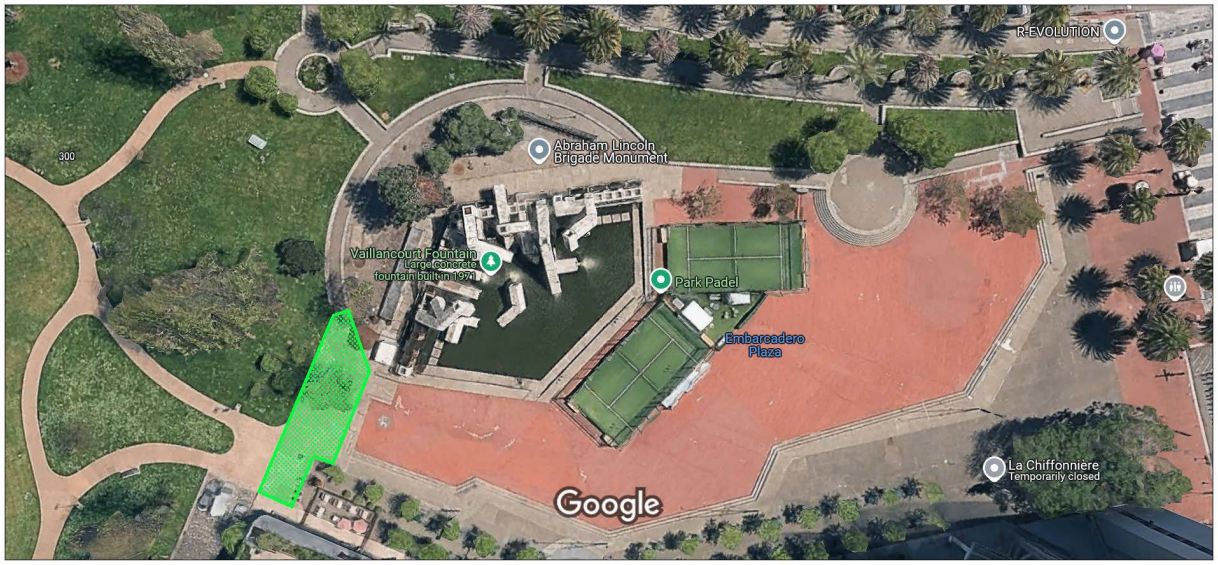

Figure 3. NW Walk

The NW walk is a primary access route connecting Clay Street and Sue Bierman Park to the plaza. This area is in severe disrepair. Significant concrete upheaval has resulted in extreme cross slope conditions and vertical level changes, creating major accessibility barriers.

Recommendation
Repair concrete walkways to correct excessive cross slopes and vertical displacements. Provide compliant transitions throughout.

Southeast Walk

Figure 4. SE Walk

The SE walk, located on the elevated edge of the plaza, is generally flat and accessible. It can be accessed via stairs and a sloped walkway from Market Street at the south, and by a set of stairs connecting to the NE walk at the north end. While the running slopes were within compliant limits, two issues were observed:

- *The lower handrails at the south entry do not include the required 12-inch horizontal extensions.*
- *The intermediate stair landing has a slope of approximately 3.6%, which exceeds the maximum allowed for a level landing.*

Recommendation
Repair stair landings to ensure compliance. Modify handrails to meet the 12-inch horizontal extension requirement.

Southwest Walk

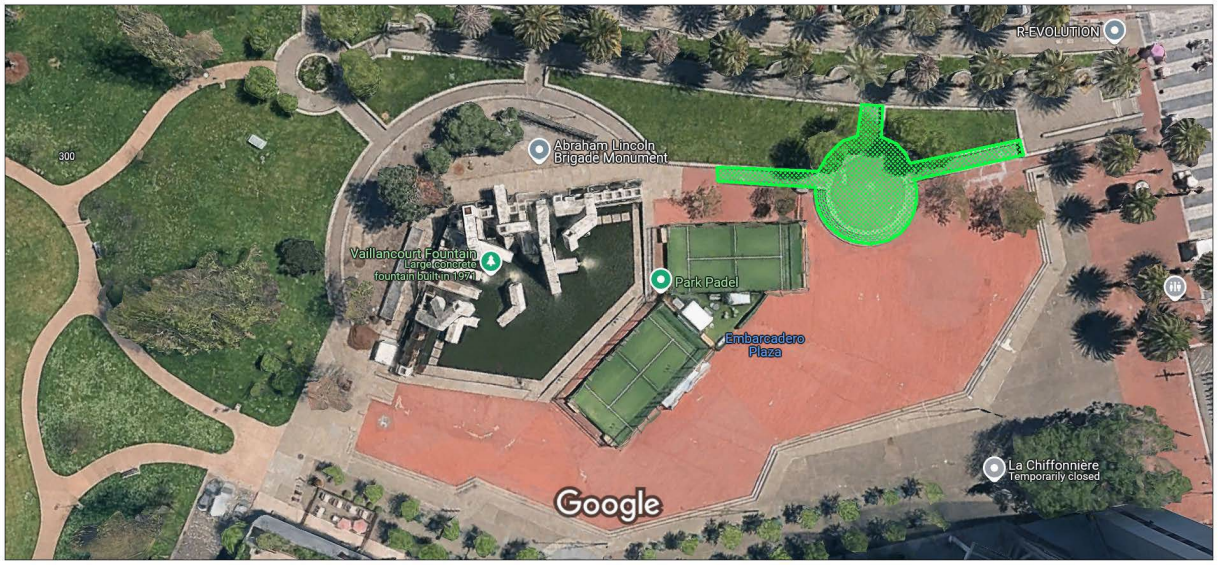

Figure 5. SW Walk

The SW walk consists of two sloped paths that descend from a semi-circular stair and raised platform area overlooking the plaza. Portions of the walk exhibit running slopes exceeding the 5% maximum (up to 6%). No cross-slope issues were noted. At the north end of the stairway, an electrical cabinet or device encroaches into the required 48-inch stair landing depth

Recommendation
Repair walkway segments with excessive running slope. Relocate the electrical equipment or reposition the handrail to maintain the required landing depth.

Sloped Walks

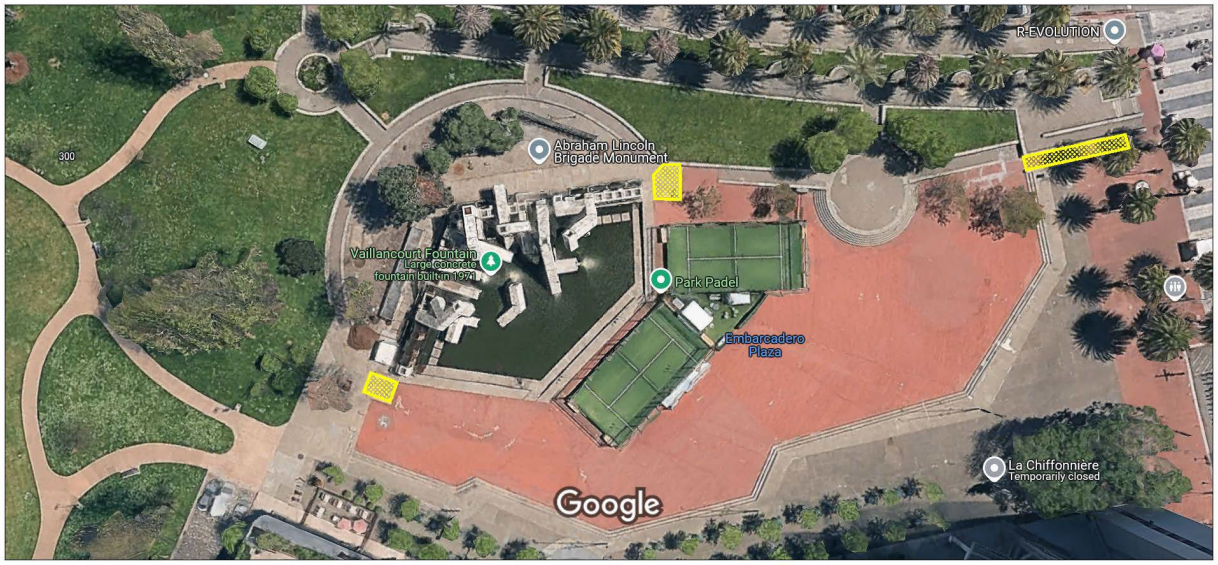

Figure 6. Sloped Walks

Three sloped walkways provide the main accessible routes into the plaza.

- *The north sloped walk is in poor condition, with significant cross slope issues and deteriorated surface conditions.*
- *The east sloped walk has a running slope measured at 9.9%, which exceeds the maximum allowable 5%.*
- *The south sloped walk, which connects from Market Street, was observed to be compliant in both slope and surface condition.*

Recommendation
Repair sloped walk entries as necessary to correct excessive cross-slopes and running slopes.

Plaza

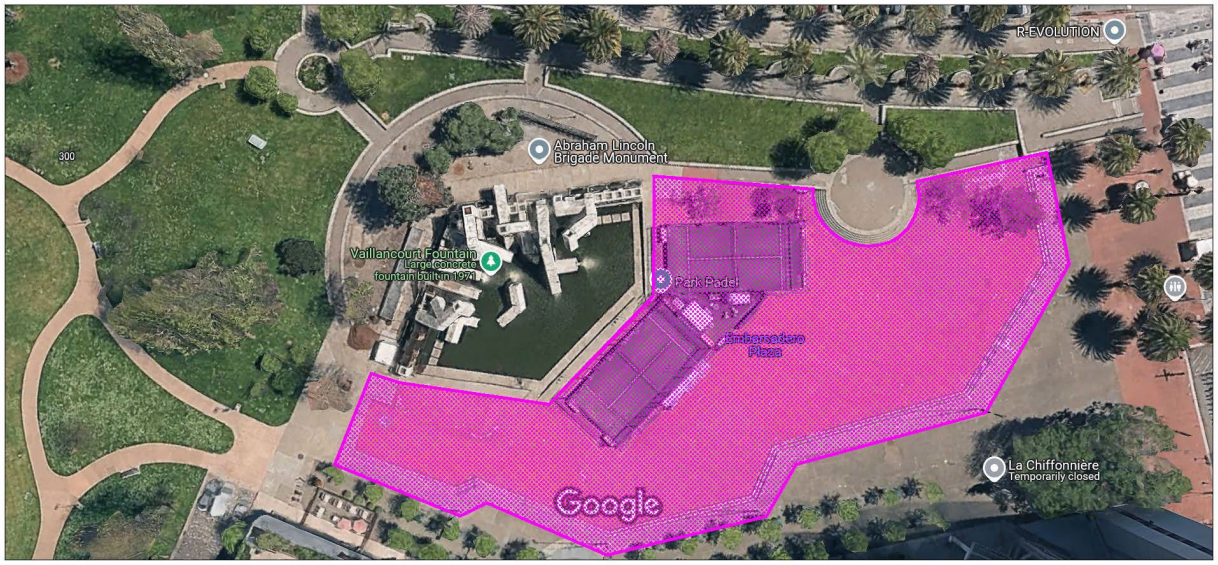

Figure 7. Plaza

The brick plaza is accessed via three primary sloped entries, as well as a continuous set of steps along the south and west edges. Overall, the plaza gently slopes downward toward the Vaillancourt Fountain. While much of the area appears relatively flat, approximately half of the surface exhibits accessibility issues due to localized non-compliant cross-slopes and irregularities caused by brick displacement and settlement.

Observed Issues Include:

- *Cross slopes ranging from 2.9% to 10%, primarily concentrated on the western portion of the plaza.*
- *Cross slope issues at fountain border*
- *Surface undulation and unevenness at the top and bottom approaches to the steps.*
- *Missing handrails at the stairways.*
- *Lack of visual contrast (striping) at stair treads*

Recommendation
Repair brick plaza surfaces as needed to correct excessive cross slopes. Repair approach areas at stairways. Install compliant handrails and provide visual contrast (e.g., contrasting stripes) on stair treads.

Fountain

Figure 8. Vaillancourt Fountain

The Vaillancourt Fountain is located at the northeast corner of Embarcadero Plaza. It is bordered by a raised concrete block, approximately 6 to 8 inches above the main plaza level, which separates the main plaza from a lower-level walkway surrounding the fountain. This surrounding walk is only accessible via two sets of stairs, effectively precluding wheelchair users or others with mobility aids from reaching the fountain's edge.

Historically, the fountain served as an interactive public feature. A series of concrete stepping pads—often referred to as "lily pads" allowed users to walk through or across portions of the water feature. Two observation decks are also located at the rear (north and east sides) of the fountain, accessible via additional sets of stairs.

Observed accessibility Issues include:

- *No accessible route to the edge of the fountain; access is only via stairs.*
- *Excessive gaps between concrete lily pads.*
- *No edge protection at the lily pads or along the fountain's water edge.*
- *No edge protection at the raised concrete block. Though it may function as a seating area, it connects to the plaza by a short ramp, making it a walkway under accessibility standards.*
- *Cross slope conditions along the walkway at the back of the fountain exceeds 2% (observed up to 2.5%).*
- *Raised path and cobblestone walking surface at the rear of fountain.*
- *Observation decks are not accessible, due to:*
    - *Open risers on stairs*
    - *Lack of handrail extensions*
    - *Absence of contrasting tread markings*
    - *Excessive openings in drainage grates on stair landings*
    - *Surface irregularities on deck platforms*
    - *Guardrail openings exceeding 4 inches*
    - *Non-compliant guardrails on the rear side of the fountain*

Recommendation

Provide an accessible route to the fountain perimeter by modifying or reconstructing approaches. Install edge protection where required along raised walking surfaces and water features. Modify or restrict access to the lily pad area unless fully compliant which could include filling the gaps between the pads as well as adding edge protection or another barrier such as a guardrail. Restrict access to or redesign the observation decks to eliminate barriers and ensure accessible use, including compliant handrails, stair treads, guardrails, walking surfaces and the addition of an alternate means of access. Repair the walkway behind the fountain including adding curb ramps at the raised walkway and reposition the cobblestones to provide a compliant path throughout the area.