Memorial Union Reinvestment
Accessibility Fact Sheet
July 15, 2014

Improving accessibility throughout Memorial Union is a priority of the renovation project. The central and east wings of Memorial Union opened in 1928 and the Theater Wing opened 11 years later. This was many decades before the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed so the design at that time did not accommodate patrons with varying needs.

Over the years, additions and transformations resulted in an astounding 27 different levels, some of which can only be reached by stairs, completely inaccessible to guests in wheelchairs. As the first comprehensive renovation in the building’s history, the Memorial Union Reinvestment will bring the entire structure up to ADA compliance.

- The original Class of 1925 Gallery was only accessible by stairs. Located outside the Fredric March Play Circle, the new Class of 1925 Gallery is accessible to all.
- There is a level change on the second floor between the central east wings but currently not enough room there to install a ramp that meets ADA standards. Phase II renovations will allow enough space for a ramp.
- The former Craftshop space was almost completely inaccessible to any patron with mobility challenges. The new space has been reimagined as Wheelhouse Studios, and features elevator access.
- The west wing previously featured a level change on every floor, but no elevator. Phase I corrected this issue by reconstructing the connecting portion of the building between the central wing and Theater wing, as well as adding a new elevator.
- Prior to the project, there was not an easy or accessible path to get from Langdon Street through the building to the Theater. A Theater patron had to loop around the outside of the building. Theater events in the winter further compounded these issues. Phase I has constructed a new entrance off Langdon Street with direct access to the Theater.
- The new Langdon Street west entrance will also make access to the Terrace easier.
- The Wisconsin Union Theater previously featured zero wheelchair accessible bathrooms. The new designs corrected this issue.
- A number of the doors in the building, including into the Fredric March Play Circle, were not wide enough to allow powered wheelchairs to pass. All doors will now be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs.
- Although beloved by all, the Terrace is very difficult to enjoy for those with mobility challenges. Full accessibility will finally be achieved by adding ramps and raising the grade of the east end to meet the first floor of the building.
- The west end of the Terrace has also been raised and is now level with Park Street.
- Directional signage will be improved throughout the building.
- Great Hall will be outfitted with an updated lift system, allowing patrons in wheelchairs to access the space easily.
- Beyond patron accessibility, design improvements will expand accessibility for staff members, particularly catering staff who use carts. New elevators and ramps will allow for easier service routes.