

# ACCESSIBLE ICON PROJECT

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEPICTION OF AGENCY FOR FOLKS WITH DISABILITIES

The significance of incorporating agency into icons featuring individuals with disabilities cannot be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in cultivating inclusivity and dismantling societal stereotypes. These icons, acting as potent visual symbols, convey not only the mere existence of individuals with disabilities but also emphasize their capacity for autonomy, empowerment, and active engagement across various facets of life. By illustrating people with disabilities involved in diverse activities or showcasing their agency, these icons challenge existing biases, dispel misconceptions, and contribute to a more accurate and positive representation of the disabled community.

The inclusion of agency in these icons conveys a profound message about the capabilities and aspirations of individuals with disabilities, underscoring the notion that disability should not be a determinant of one's potential or a hindrance to making choices and pursuing meaningful lives. Furthermore, these representations foster a broader understanding of diversity, contributing to a more equitable and accepting society by urging viewers to acknowledge and celebrate the unique strengths and talents of people with disabilities.

In essence, the importance of representation lies in its ability to shape societal attitudes, foster empathy, and catalyze social change. Icons that authentically reflect the agency of individuals with disabilities play a pivotal role in dismantling barriers, promoting inclusivity, and contribute to the creation of a world where everyone is acknowledged, respected, and afforded the opportunity to thrive.

Bolingbrook, IL has already demonstrated its commitment to agency, independence, inclusion, and the quality of life for those with disabilities through the codification of visitability. This serves as another avenue to underscore our values and lead conversations about the intrinsic value of each individual, irrespective of their physical capabilities or differences.

Allaina Humphreys  
Accessible Community Task Force of Naperville



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IMAGES OF UPDATES IN BOLINGBROOK, IL, JUNE - JULY, 2024



ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY TASK FORCE ★ EDUCATE. ENABLE. ENGAGE.

# ABOUT THE ICON

## *History, Adoption, and More Information*

On July 25th, 2014, New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed a bill (A.8193/S.6846) that amended existing laws, requiring the removal of the word “handicapped” from new or replaced state signage. The legislation also aimed to update and destigmatize the accessibility logo. The state will replace the word “handicapped” with “accessible” on signs and introduce a new logo called the “Accessible Icon,” depicting an ‘in-motion’ representation of a person using a wheelchair.

The new icon, created in 2012 by Sara Hendren, Brian Glenney, and Tim Ferguson-Saunders, began as a grassroots effort in Boston. It has been adopted by various organizations and municipalities in the U.S., including the NFL’s Jacksonville Jaguars, the State of New York, Tennessee License Plates, and several cities such as Boston, Phoenix, Cambridge, and El Paso. This global movement has gained traction internationally, with organizations like the Enabling Unit in India promoting its use, making it a symbol of inclusivity and accessibility worldwide.

Bolingbrook has now become the first suburb in the state of Illinois to adopt the new icon. This decision aligns with the town’s ongoing dedication to accessibility, which includes updating building codes to promote visitability and inclusion. Following recent meetings with resident Allaina Humphreys, Bolingbrook agreed to update all 46 accessible parking spaces at village-owned properties with the icon designed by The Accessible Icon Project which showcases a person propelling their chair, offering a more dynamic representation of individuals with disabilities.


This grassroots initiative involved several volunteers repainting accessible parking spaces, with valuable support from civil servants, police officers, public works employees, and the local government. Bolingbrook provided assistance, including power washing the sites, securing paint and stickers, and providing staff to aid in the effort.

Allaina Humphreys is in talks with the Bolingbrook Park District, which now plans to update the parking lots before the Celebration of Special Recreation on October 5th - an event she also conceived as Vice-Chair of the Arts Council three years ago in partnership with the NWCSRA and Park District. She has secured the participation of Fountaindale Public Library, and is also working on this initiative both in Naperville as a member of the Accessible Community Task Force of Naperville, where she has been a member since its inception in 2016, and state-wide with Senator Meg Loughran Cappel and Representative Natalie Manley.

# ABOUT THE ICON

Scan the QR Codes for More Information About the Accessible Icon Project

ELEMENT BREAKDOWN



- 1 Head Position**

Head is forward to indicate the forward motion of the person through space. Here the person is the "driver" or decision maker about her mobility.
- 2 Arm Angle**

Arm is pointing backward to suggest the dynamic mobility of a chair user, regardless of whether or not she uses her arms. Depicting the body in motion represents the symbolically active status of navigating the world.
- 3 Wheel Cutouts**

By including white angled knockouts the symbol presents the wheel as being in motion. Knockouts work for creating stencils and having just one version of the logo keeps things more consistent and allows viewers to more clearly understand intended message.
- 4 Limb Rendition**

The figure depicted in this icon is consistent with other body icons found in the ISO 7001 - DOT Pictograms. A different portrayal of the body would clash with these established and widely used icons and could lead to confusion.
- 5 Leg Position**

The leg has been moved forward to allow for more space between it and the wheel which allows for better readability and cleaner application of icon as a stencil.



## *Accessible Icon Project*

Website of the original creators of the icon, its history, examples of implementation, and free download of graphic.



## *Article about Michigan Adopting Icon into Law*

Information on the process for state-wide implementation, including language changes.



## *Article on Tennessee's Licence Plate Update*

Describes reasoning, backers, and process of implementation.



## *East Carolina University Icon Update*

Article celebrating the decision to update all 340 accessible parking spots on campus.



## *MOMA Features New Accessible Icon Project*

Information on the process for state-wide implementation, including language changes.



## *Standards as Social design Practice*

Paper by Justin Carone examining the role of social concerns in the development and enforcement of standards.