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My name is Christina Koch and I am the Director of the Thompson-Hickman Madison County Library in Virginia City, Montana. This is our beautiful library. The part on the left was built in 1918 to be a library on the top floor and a museum on the bottom floor (which you can't see in this picture because our building is on a hill.) The addition on the right was built onto the library in 2015.

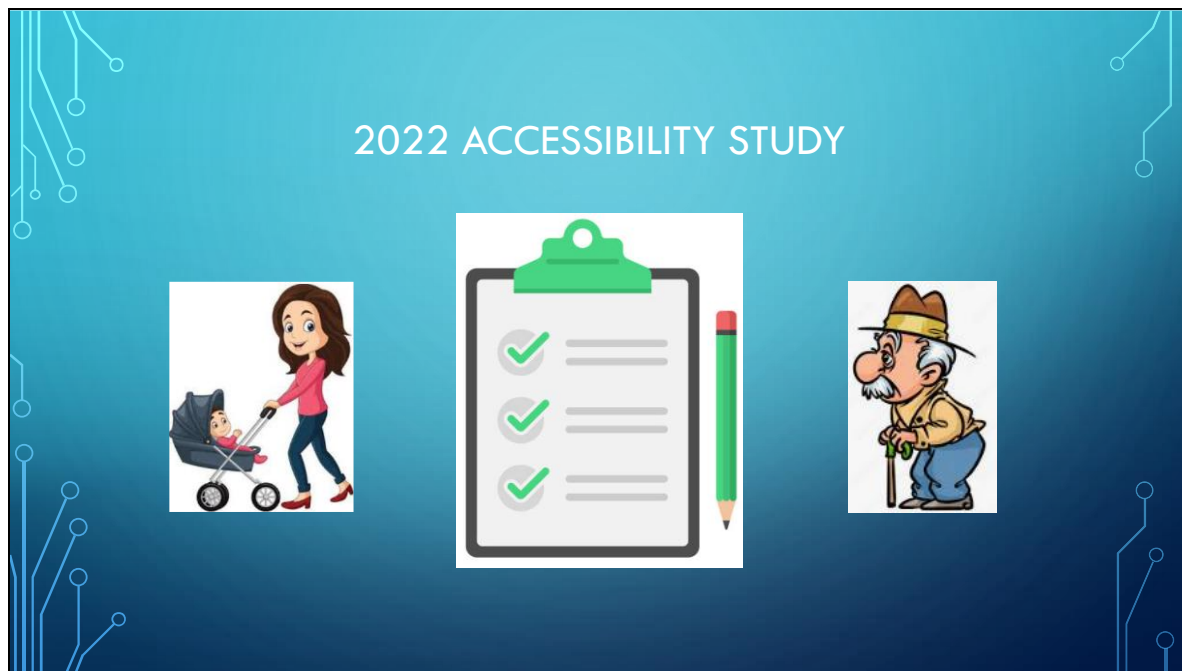
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It is a beautiful and historic building, but being on a hill, it is impossible to visit the museum without ascending or descending multiple stairs, outside and inside the building. It is also difficult to access the library without ascending or descending multiple stairs. We do have two handicapped parking spaces in the alley that allow ADA access to the library level, but they are hard to find and the area is cramped as it also serves as the UPS & FedEx delivery area.

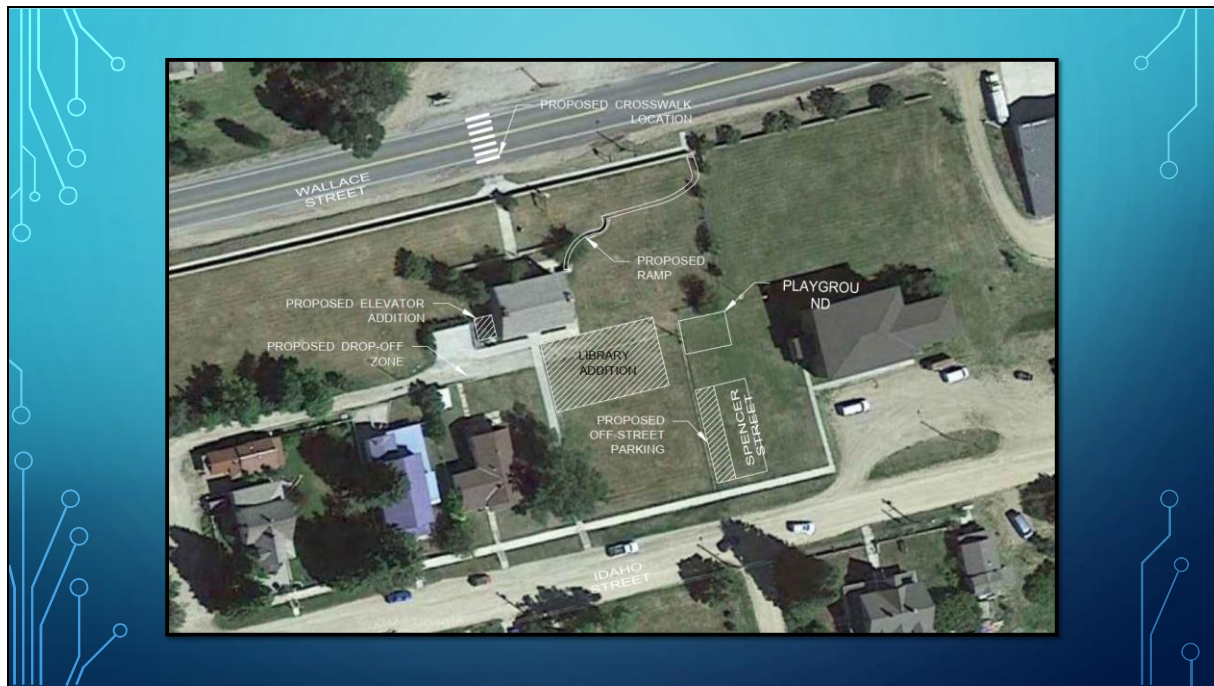
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In 2022, the library board retained a planning consultant to conduct an accessibility study. The study was funded by a grant from AARP. We interviewed local stakeholders, held public meetings, and created a survey that we distributed around the county to the senior centers, had available in the library, and advertised online access to as well. The findings revealed that people were frustrated that they couldn't visit the museum but even more frustrated about the lack of easy access to the library. Not only mobility challenged individuals, but parents with young kids as well. We do a lot of children's programs and staircases make it difficult for people with young children and strollers. We held many planning sessions and developed a three-phase plan.

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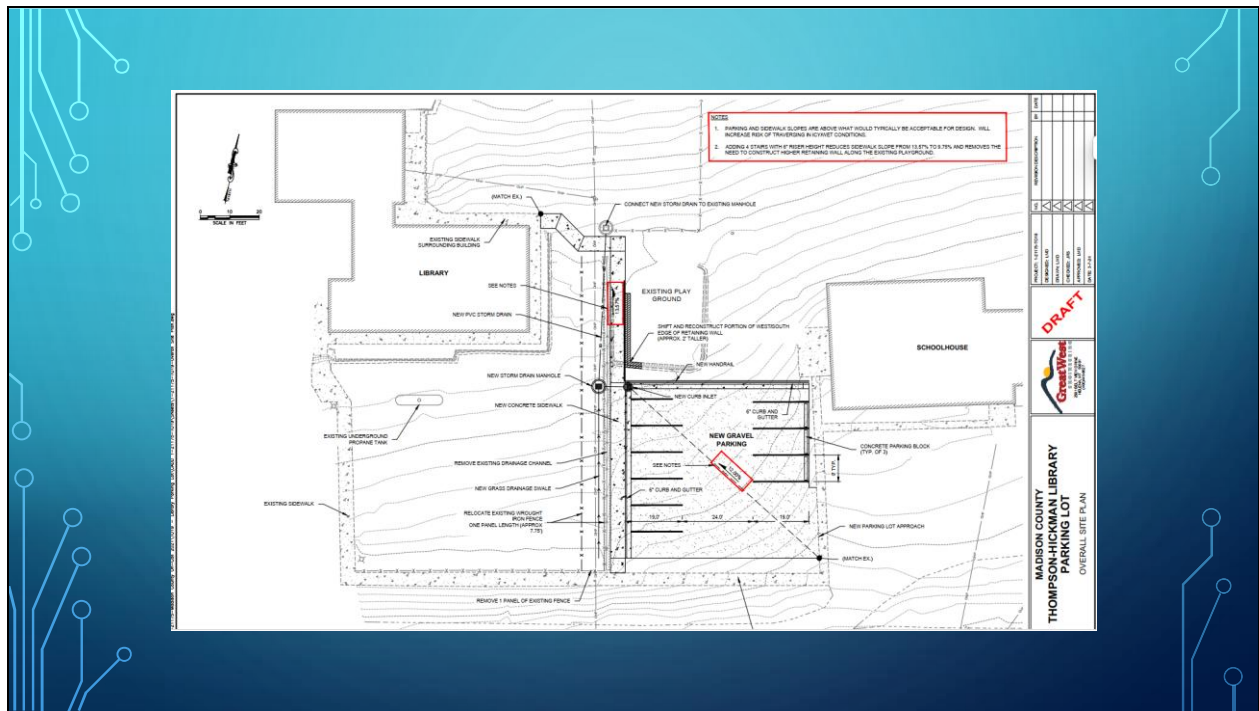
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Phase 1: Build an ADA compliant parking lot near the library.

Phase 2: Install a ramp leading from the highway to the museum.

Phase 3: Build an elevator from the top floor to the bottom floor of the building.

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Through grants, fundraising, and contributions from the County government, we hired GreatWest Engineering to design plans for the new parking lot. Unfortunately, the amount of money needed to do all of the excavation, back-fill, and retaining wall work to make the parking lot flat enough to be ADA compliant was extremely pricey, near \$300,000. So, we had to pivot.

GreatWest Engineering designed a non-ADA compliant dirt parking lot that can be built with a sidewalk leading to the east entrance of the building. The sidewalk will have four 4" high steps, spaced quite a

few feet apart from each other, making the approach much easier for people with mobility issues and strollers etc. but not fully ADA compliant. That project will be going out to bid in February 2026.

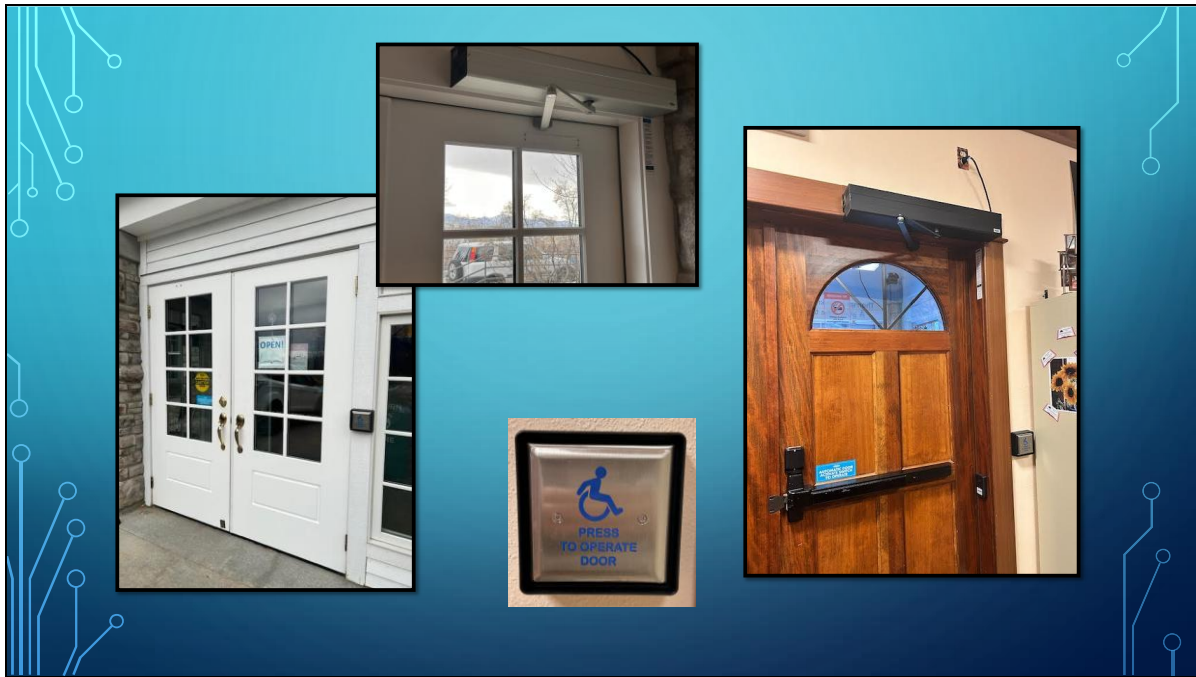
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At that point, we knew we needed to focus on improving the current handicapped parking area. These are the two handicapped spaces in the alley.

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We applied for and received ALA's \$10,000 "LTD: Accessible Small and Rural Communities Grant" in 2024. We purchased ADA compliant door hardware and actuators for the vestibule door and the main door of the west entrance. We used The Door Guys and paid \$8,782.00.

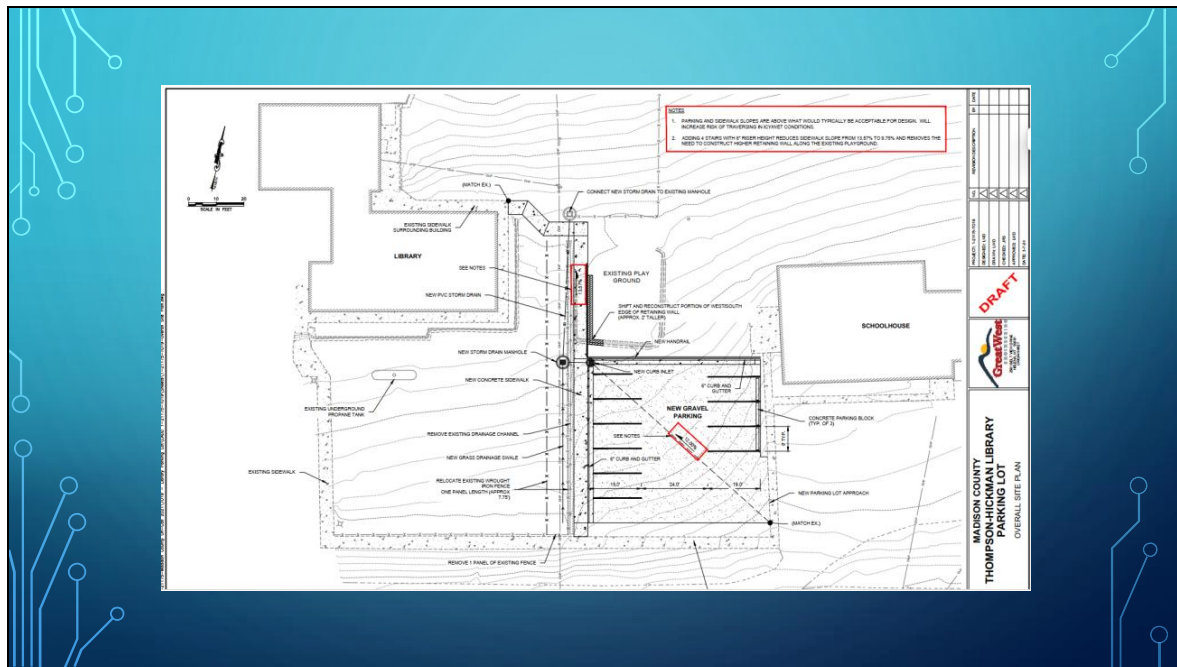
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With the remaining funds, we purchased three signs directing people to the handicapped/easy access parking area. I had to work with HPAC (Historic Preservation Advisory Council) and the Town of VC to design acceptable signage. VC doesn't have handicapped signs, so I had to research what is required for national ADA guidelines and what is acceptable according to VC's sign code. I designed these signs and they were approved and installed in June of 2025. There are three signs, one leads from the regular street parking area to the first turn, from the first turn to the second turn, and from the second turn to the parking area.

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We are applying for another ALA Accessible Small and Rural Communities Grant to help us install a handrail along the new walkway from the parking lot to the east building entrance, new lighting, signage for the new parking lot, and ADA hardware on the east entrance door.

Expanding the alley handicapped parking area to provide easier access, constructing a ramp from the highway to the museum, and adding the elevator are still on our radar for the future.