

Universal Design in Policy, Codes, and Incentives



2026 PAW Conference | 04-22-26

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Session Agenda

- ◆ **Intro** to Inclusive Design, Universal Design, and Visitability

www.menti.com/al6ogap6thhm

Code: 5258 2272

- ◆ **Examples**

- ◆ Affordable Housing Agency Examples
- ◆ State Funding Opportunity
- ◆ SeaTac Project
- ◆ Seattle Deep Dive
- ◆ Redmond Deep Dive

- ◆ **Discussion**



Why does it matter?

- ◆ Inclusive design considers current and future needs of residents and visitors.
- ◆ Washington is aging! Most cities are in need of more accessible housing and visitable public spaces. Communities set up for “aging in place” will retain their older residents and could attract retirees.
- ◆ Public spaces and services that incorporate UD are more likely to be used by a wider swath of the public. This promotes other goals like increasing opportunities for healthy socialization among elders and youth. Offices that consider mobility, neurodivergence, and aging needs often see stronger staff retention and higher morale.
- ◆ Governments must serve all of their constituents. Inclusive design recognizes that design can be a way to recognize and honor the diversity of the communities we serve.

Universal and Inclusive Design Benefits All



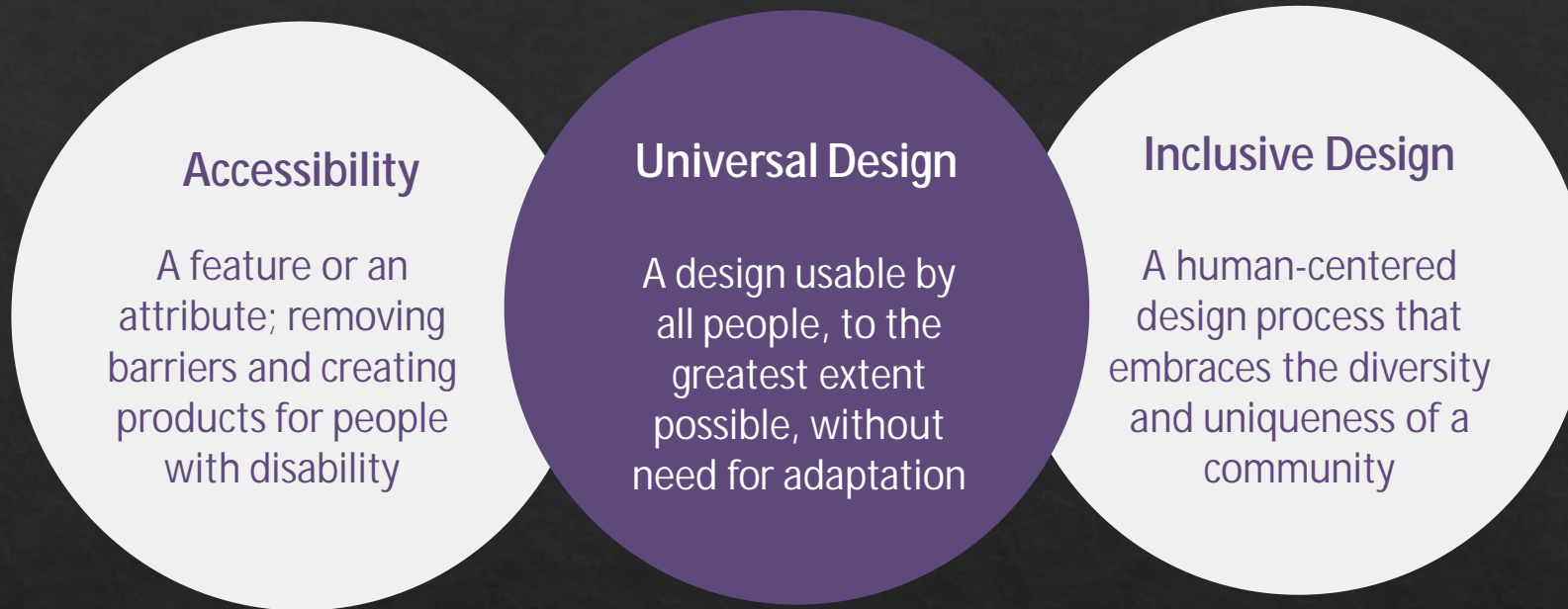


Designing for everyone pays off!

“Future-proofing” - Elimination of future retrofitting costs, avoids potentially complex code reviews and required upgrades – contributing to sustainability and resiliency of our communities

Universal design isn't just the ethical choice, it's the practical and fiscally conservative one. It keeps upfront costs in check, prevents expensive retrofits, reduces legal exposure, and most importantly, creates places that people genuinely want to use. The data is here: build inclusively now or pay more later.

Beyond ADA



Universal Design considers all aspects of the built environment – homes, landscapes, streetscapes and mobility routes, commercial developments, life space, including equipment and architecture – with the goal of making them accessible to every person regardless of age or ability.

Visitability Concept

Core **accessibility features** as a routine construction practice in newly built housing units



Visitability Features

The most essential features to enable a person with mobility impairments to visit or live in a home, at least temporarily.

- ◇ **A zero-step entrance.** A zero-step entrance, which is an entrance without a step or threshold that is on an accessible path of travel from the street, sidewalk, or driveway.
- ◇ **Minimum widths** for ground floor doorways and hallways.
- ◇ **Ground floor bathroom.** Basic access to a half bath or full bath on the ground floor.
- ◇ **Reinforcement in walls** next to toilets for future installation of grab bars
- ◇ **Light switches and electrical outlets** within comfortable reach for all

*The ICC
ANSI A117.1
standards
include criteria for a
Type C Dwelling
Unit (Visitable)
that details how these
features can be
implemented. 117.1
standards are
considered bare
minimum – based on
manual wheelchairs.*

Universal Design

- ◆ **Universal design** considers all aspects of the built environment — homes, landscapes, streetscapes and mobility routes, commercial developments, life space, including equipment and architecture — with the **goal of making them accessible to every person, regardless of age or ability.**

- *Accessibility is an attribute*
- *Inclusive design is a process/method*
- *Universal design is the construction*

Universal Design Principles

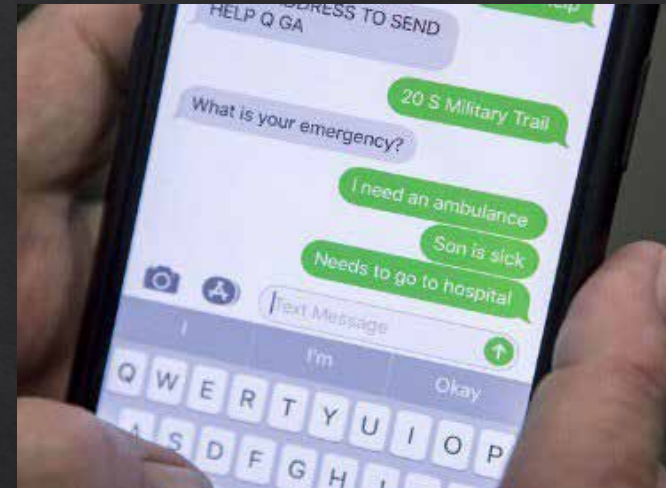
- Inclusive/Equitable
- Responsive
- Flexible
- Convenient/Comfortable
- Accommodating/Intuitive
- Welcoming/Perceptible
- Realistic



CLEARING A RAMP
CLEARS THE PATH FOR EVERYONE!

Universal Design In Practice

We use Universal Design everyday
and don't even realize it!



Examples of Universal Design



Well-lit transit stops featuring seating with arms are located along the light rail line that runs through downtown Portland, Oregon. The floor of the trains is even with the curb edge, offering a level crossing into and out of the train. ASLA 2011 Professional Award of Excellence, General Design: Portland Transit Mall Revitalization, Portland, Oregon, ZGF Architects LLP / ZGF Architects LLP

Inclusive Design

A process that considers the diversity and uniqueness of the community.

Includes **all demographic differences** such as the age, language, ability, gender, and others.

The needs of all community members should be considered.



Northwest Universal Design Council

Designing for Women and Girls



Designing for All Ages

- ◆ Inclusive Planning for Aging & Livable Communities (APA webinar recording)



Designing for Diverse Cultures



Examples



Implementing Universal Design

- ◆ Many communities start with **visitability** (some rename it to lifetime homes or other easier to use titles) - about 30 communities across the US
- ◆ A few communities have **ordinances that encourage UD**
- ◆ Redmond looking at **policies, codes, incentives**, and in some cases **requirements** for UD features; **Inclusive Design in community** – playgrounds, neighborhoods
- ◆ Regional conversations about **using UD in project ranking** systems for funding, etc. – especially for affordable housing projects.
- ◆ State funding / focus on expanding **IDD Housing**
- ◆ **Evergreen Standards** (mandatory for affordable housing projects) Category for UD points are optional, update underway that may make some UD component mandatory

IDD Housing

State priority for adding housing for individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (IDD) – funding available for qualifying units.

The DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration manages the IDD housing program. *Units must obtain a DDA's letter of support.*

State Requires:

- ◇ IDD units must be ICC A117.1 Type A, B, or C units. At least one accessible/roll in shower shall be provided in the unit.
- ◇ Onsite service providers must be DDA-approved.

Affordable Housing Agencies

- ◆ Adopted UD into agenda legislative priorities
- ◆ Incentives for projects with Universal Design Features
- ◆ Guidance for partner cities on how to incorporate universal design into comprehensive plan updates
 - ◆ Specifically, the Executive Board recommended that member governments planning under the Growth Management Act incorporate into the Comprehensive Plan periodic update the following goal/policy or one similar:
 - ◆ “Increase the supply of housing accessible for people of all ages, sizes, abilities, and disabilities by incentivizing the construction of housing designed with universal design principles.”



**South Sound Housing
Affordability Partners**



Equitable Transit-
Oriented
Development:

Creating Connection in Angle Lake

Mercy Housing Northwest

Connection Angle Lake

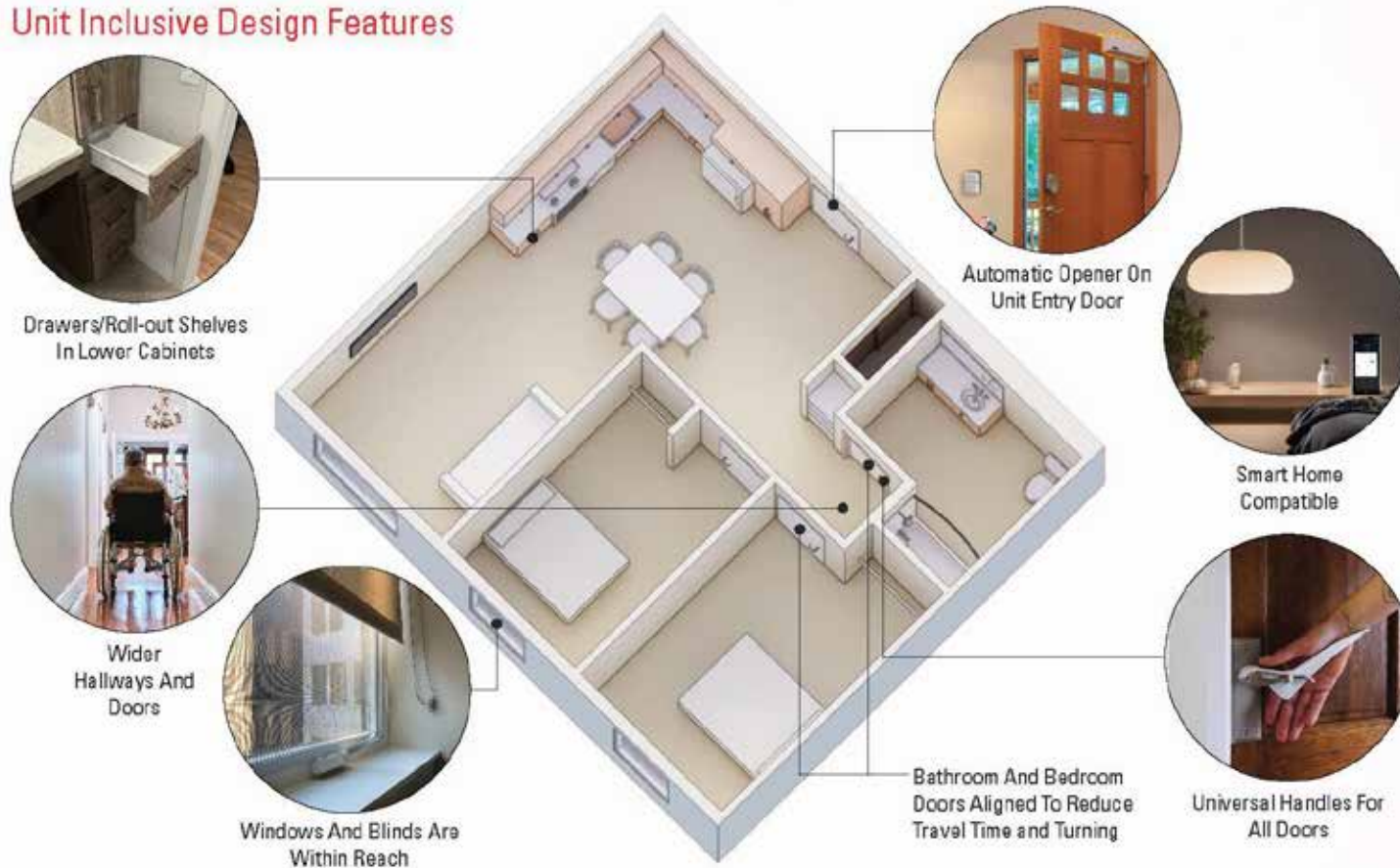
SeaTac, WA

Opened June 2025



- 130 Affordable Homes for households earning up to 60% AMI
- 20% of units reserved for people with disabilities
- Adjacent to Angle Lake Light Rail station in SeaTac
- Universal design and accessibility inspired by people with lived experience

Unit Inclusive Design Features



multicultural village housing | schemata workshops | 07.26.2024

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- Design focus groups to help solicit feedback from people with IDD, their families, and services providers
- Accessibility features and adaptability throughout building and units
- Accessibility matrix for each unit



Development Agreement

Increase the number of affordable units possible on the site, while contributing benefits like a new secure BikeLink facility, creating plaza spaces, and installing additional overhead protection for pedestrians

Sound Transit discounted the property value to support the project's affordable housing outcomes.

Mercy secured financing for the project from multiple public and private sources, including the Washington State Housing Finance Commission, King County, and the Amazon Housing Equity Fund.

City of SeaTac

Inclusive Neighborhood Improvements

Having a building that supports households with a disability requires a neighborhood around them that supports them.

- SeaTac Mayor Egal

- ◇ SeaTac Envision 2044 transportation element includes creating pedestrian access for all abilities.
- ◇ Other UD improvements in early discussion phases.

Universal Design in Seattle

- ◆ [Aging and Disability Services](#) is home to [Age Friendly Seattle](#). The [Northwest Universal Design Council](#) (NWUDC) is supported by our staff.
- ◆ Our staff led efforts to incorporate UD and an overall focus on the needs of aging residents
- ◆ Community Advisory Board members were active in comp plan development
- ◆ New plan acknowledges the need for not just more housing, but more accessible housing that allows people to age in place, with services nearby.
- ◆ New zoning changes that allow for more middle housing throughout our city will include incentives for housing that is more accessible to older adults, such as single-level stacked flats as opposed to townhomes with multiple flights of stairs.



Embedding UD in Seattle's Comp Plan

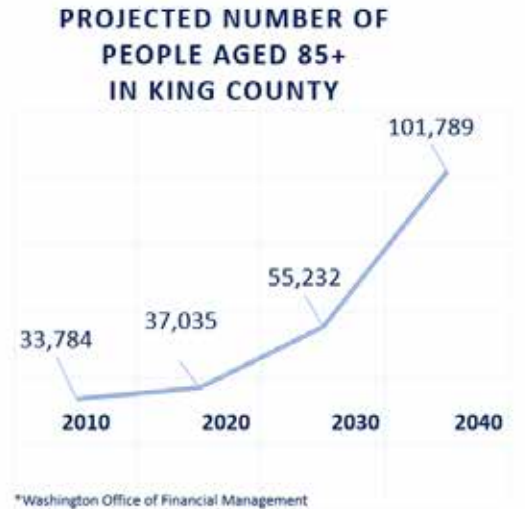
- ◆ Seattle's updated 10 year Comprehensive Plan passed in fall 2025.
- ◆ Age Friendly Seattle program manager represented Human Services in Comp Plan meetings.
- ◆ Demographics don't lie! The need to plan for increasing populations of older adults and younger adults with disabilities is clear and urgent.
- ◆ Community Advisory Board members were active in comp plan development
- ◆ New plan acknowledges the need for not just more housing, but more accessible housing that allows people to age in place, with services nearby.
- ◆ New zoning changes that allow for more middle housing throughout our city will include incentives for housing that is more accessible to older adults, such as single-level stacked flats as opposed to townhomes with multiple flights of stairs.

Next Steps

- ◆ Seattle's process involves development of multiple plans, one for each of many neighborhoods in need of changes. Each new plan refers back to the main Comp Plan, so there is a requirement for each to address Universal Design principles.
- ◆ The NWUDC continues to look for ways to connect with elected officials, developers, designers, and activists to spread UD concepts and insist on their use in public spaces and housing.
- ◆ New projects include assessing a local homeless shelter space and then developing a "low hanging fruit" guide for similar locations to use to accommodate aging residents.

Our Older Adult Population Is Growing

More people are living longer and aging with or into disabilities, for more years. The number of people aged 85+ in King County is expected to increase by 175% between 2020-2040.





Design Competition

NWUDC is sponsoring a design competition!

Seattle is focusing on designs for stacked flats, in keeping with the Comp Plan. These units are livable for most people, as opposed to multistory townhouse units. Local architects that NWUDC has worked with and a panel of people with lived experience will serve as judges. (YOU could also serve-talk to Caren or Beckye!)

➤ REDMOND 2050

From suburb to city

Major Comprehensive Plan revision and rewrite of Redmond Zoning Code

- ◆ Doubling city population
- ◆ Transition standards from suburb to city
- ◆ Implement transit-oriented development (TOD) on a large scale - opening 4 new light rail stations in 2024 and 2025
- ◆ Significant focus on improving equity and inclusion outcomes



What could be designed differently to enhance **belonging, independence, community connections and pride?**

How can Redmond become more accessible to **community members with disabilities?**

What would make you feel more **welcome, comfortable, safe, and included** in Redmond?



Accessibility Priorities - Housing

Accessible Housing

Incentives will be provided for housing with accessibility features (no step entry, wide hallways, etc.) and for fully ADA accessible housing units, to increase housing options for community members with disabilities.

IDD Housing

Redmond has an identified need for housing for community members with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Incentives will be provided for units added to the state's IDD housing program (design standards apply, and may be eligible for state funding opportunities).

Accessibility Priorities - Commercial

The City is developing checklists that include items such as:

- ◇ The main entry is the accessible entry
- ◇ Automatic doors or buttons on entry doors
- ◇ Areas for plugging in wheelchairs and other mobility devices
- ◇ Inclusion of an adult changing room for assembly uses.
- ◇ Wayfinding and signage
 - ◇ Includes building modulation and materials changes to indicate entryways, etc.





Community Development & Design Element

Contains policies related to implementing the community vision for where development and redevelopment will be permitted and what it will look like. It also contains policies related to preserving our history.

- I. Introduction
- II. Accommodating Growth
- III. Centers
- IV. Corridors
- V. Neighborhoods
- VI. Design
- VII. Preservation

The vision, guiding principles, existing conditions, and growth projections are found in the Introduction section for this Element, while each remaining section will have a set of policies specific to that topic.

Inclusive Design Policies

FW-CD-1 | Utilize design standards and requirements that maintain Redmond as a welcoming and inclusive community.

- CD-1 | **Adopt design standards that incorporate Universal Design principles...**
- CD-2 | Review policies, design standards and requirements, building codes, standard details, and other policies and regulations that impact the built environment to ensure they **consider the needs of all community members regardless of their age, gender, language, or ability...**
- CD-3 | **Increase the inclusiveness of housing and neighborhoods** through design requirements, standards, incentives, and partnerships that result in housing that is more resilient, flexible, and adaptable to meet needs that change over time...
- CD-4 | **Incentivize or require the incorporation of universal design features into community assembly spaces and uses...**

› REDMOND 2050

Policies

Inclusive Design

The Redmond community is committed to being a city that intentionally designs spaces and places to be inclusive and welcoming. The city utilizes a full range of inclusive design approaches and tools to enhance accessibility for community members with disabilities and to be inclusive of all ages, genders, and cultures.

FIGURE X. INCLUSIVE DESIGN SPECTRUM

- *Universal Design (UD) recognizes and accommodates the ordinary changes people experience over their lives due to aging and life circumstances. As such, universal design benefits people through all life stages, including children and adults.*
- *Inclusive Design recognizes the wide diversity of different needs including wheelchair users, but also sensory impairments, learning difficulties, mental ill health, hidden impairments, and the needs of children and parents, as well as the needs of different cultures.*

FW-CD-1 Utilize design standards and requirements that maintain Redmond as a welcoming and inclusive community.

CD-1 Adopt design standards that incorporate [Universal Design principles](#) that result in a built environment that is:

- Inclusive and equitable;
- Flexible and adaptable;
- Accommodating and intuitive;
- Welcoming and perceptible;
- Responsive and resilient;
- Convenient and comfortable;
- Realistic and appropriate; and,
- Culturally inclusive.

CD-2 Review policies, design standards and requirements, building codes, standard details, and other policies and regulations that impact the built environment to ensure they consider the needs of all community members regardless of their age, gender, language, or ability.

To enhance equity and inclusion in the built environment:

- Remove elements that may be exclusionary;
- Enhance or consider new provisions that improve accessibility; and

Centers Policies

- ◇ Design Metro Growth Centers, Urban Growth Centers, and Countywide Growth Centers to encourage accessible and active pedestrian, bicycle, and transit mobility for people of **all ages and abilities**.
- ◇ Design plazas, rooftop amenities, and open spaces to meet the recreational, social, and cultural needs of those who live in, work in, and visit the area while being **accessible to community members of all abilities**.

Centers Policies

- ◆ **OV-9 | Provide opportunities for accessible and/or universally-designed housing units ... for community members with disabilities through incentives, public-private partnerships, policies, and/or programs.**
 - ◆ Ensure that the housing types that support community members with disabilities (group homes, adult foster care, supervised residential settings, and independent living) and supportive services are allowed in the Overlake zoning districts.
 - ◆ Provide incentives for affordable accessible housing.
 - ◆ Seek out innovative methods and partnerships to increase availability of accessible and/or universally-designed housing units.
- ◆ **UC-11 | Consider universal design techniques when designing pedestrian spaces for people of all ages and abilities, including informal gatherings, through public and private investment in improvements in the public realm...**

Transportation policies

- ◆ Support the independent mobility of those who cannot or choose not to drive.
- ◆ Design streetscapes to be safe and comfortable for pedestrians, to feature connected bicycle networks for cyclists **of all ages and abilities**, to be attractive, and to **meet the needs of residents with physical and intellectual disabilities**. Ensure that all sidewalks and curb ramps are **accessible to all people, including those with disabilities**.
- ◆ Support equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient transit-oriented communities.
- ◆ Consider the needs of older adults, families with small children, and people with disabilities in the design of parking.



Housing Policies

- ◇ HO-8 | Shape regulations, incentives, programs, and more city tools to foster the creation of **accessible and visitable housing**.
- ◇ **Housing constructed with universal design principles.**
- ◇ **Housing for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**
- ◇ **Housing for populations with special physical or other needs**, which include: the elderly, disabled persons, people with medical conditions, homeless individuals and families, and displaced people.

Code Updates

- ◆ **Min standards for community requested UD features**
- ◆ **Mandatory UD features**
 - ◆ Parks, plazas, and open space amenities
 - ◆ Public or assembly spaces (community centers, education, etc.)
- ◆ **Incentives**
 - ◆ Accessible and flexible housing
 - ◆ UD features for buildings, sites, etc. – not just housing
 - ◆ Sensory spaces, adult changing rooms, co-location for service providers, inclusive play spaces, extra ADA parking spaces

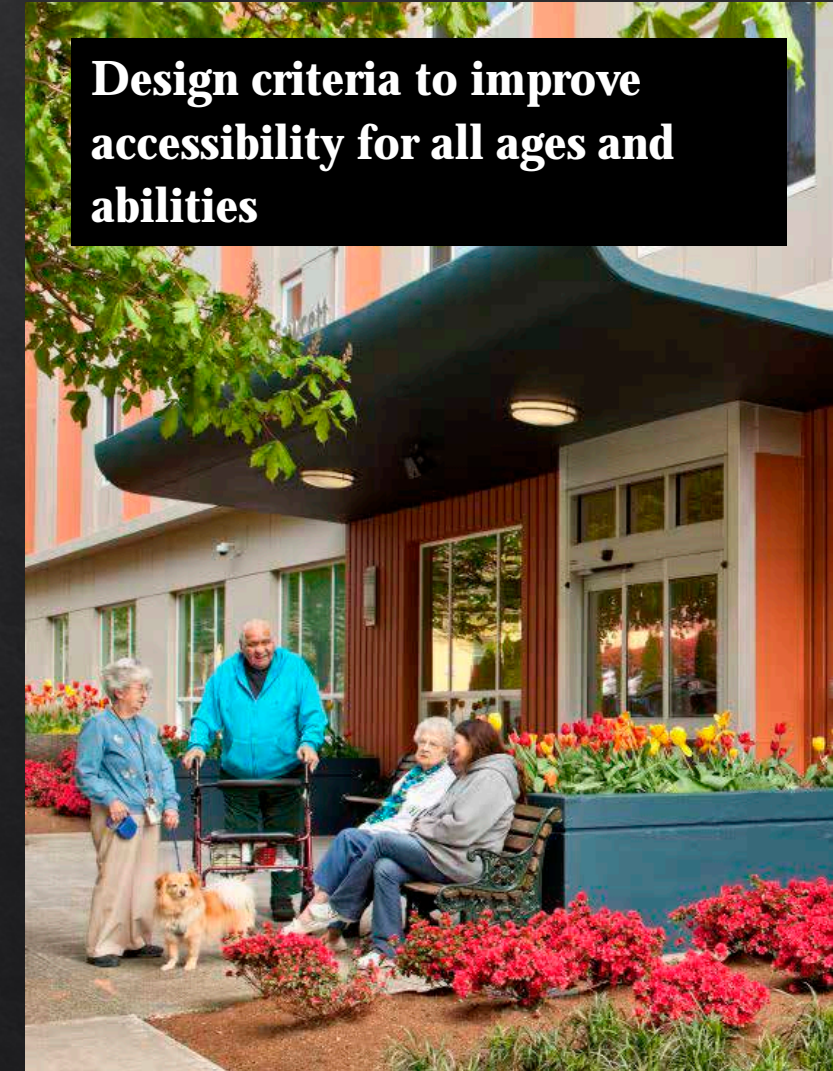


Universal Design incorporated into city design standards for new construction.

Mandatory design elements and incentives work together

Community Input Initiated Code Revisions

- ◆ Ensure **parking garages can accommodate ADA vans** and other vehicles for community members with disabilities that require a high clearance (public and private).
- ◆ Create **architectural emphasis at entrances, corner lots and key intersections** (creation of urban landmarks for intuitive wayfinding).
- ◆ Prioritize **ADA-accessible mid-block connections** to increase connectivity and accessibility to pedestrian plazas and open spaces. Includes regulations for signage, navigation, and accessible routes.
- ◆ Utilize **universal design techniques** to ensure all pedestrian plazas and open spaces are accessible to all ages and abilities. Consider wayfinding, light, color, sensory inputs, and general space and proximity considerations.
- ◆ **Minimum standards for assembly uses**, such as community centers, religious facilities, museums, including covered drop-off areas and other community identified priorities.



Incentives

- ◆ One of five mandatory categories for use of full incentive program.
- ◆ Must do at least one UD option in centers.
- ◆ Some incentives require the use of Universal Design Checklists with minimum standards (community center, cultural facilities, and other assembly or government spaces)

Child Friendly Inclusive Community Arts & Culture	Inclusive Design Incentive Options Description
	Accessible Housing Units - Type A or B Units in ICC A117.1
✓ ✓	1 to 4.9% of units
✓ ✓	5 - 9% of units
✓ ✓	10 - 25% of units
✓ ✓	more than 25% of units
	Visitable Housing Units - Type C Units in ICC A117.1
✓ ✓	2 - 4.9% of units
✓ ✓	5 - 9.9% of units
✓ ✓	10 - 24.9% of units
✓ ✓	25 - 50% of units
✓ ✓	More than 50% of units
	IDD Housing (min. cluster of 8 - 12 units)
✓ ✓	2 -5% of units
✓ ✓	6-10% of units
✓ ✓	11-15% of units
✓ ✓	16-20% of units
	Inclusive / Universal Design Features
✓ ✓	Universal/Inclusive Design Features in Building
✓	Universal/Inclusive Design Features in Site
✓ ✓	Universal/Inclusive Design Features in Residential Buildings
✓	Universal Design certification (isUD - see https://thisisud.com/)
	Sensory Spaces (see also open space and amenities section)
✓ ✓	Sensory Rooms, All ages
✓ ✓	Sensory Room, Child-focused features and furnishings (residential, mixed-use, and assembly only)

	Public Restrooms
✓ ✓	Permanent public restroom
✓ ✓	Restroom includes height-adjustable, adult-sized changing stations (see checklist)
	Public Art & Culture (may be used as part of category or stand-alone in same fashion as catalyst points)
C ✓	Creative or artistic play structure for multiple ages (2,000 sq ft min)
C C ✓	Outdoor performance stage, inc. cover / event area / amphitheater seating (1,000 sq ft minimum)
✓ ✓	Public art (more than required)
C ✓ ✓	Interactive sensory art (1,000 sq ft min)
C ✓	Sensory rest area (500 sq ft min)
	Employment
✓	Local Employment Agreement
✓	Supportive Employment Program Agreement (Disability)
✓	Agreement with School District(s) Transition Program (Disability, young adult employment training program)
	Accelerated Implementation
	Mass Timber Pilot Project
	Net Zero energy building
✓	Affordable housing and/or supportive housing includes on-site support services provided for residents
	Additional ADA parking (van accessible)
✓	Additional 0.1%-2% of ADA spaces
✓	Additional 2-4% of ADA spaces
✓	Additional 5-9% of ADA spaces
	Bonus Eligibility
	Table 21.55.3000.
	Community Priority Bonus Tracks Incentive Options Description
	Bonus Tracks
	Four or more child-centered options
	Four or more inclusive design options
	Four or more arts and cultural options

Marymoor Village

Inclusive Neighborhood Pilot Project

- ◆ Housing for community members with disabilities, with additional incentives for housing for community members with developmental disabilities.
- ◆ Intentional design for the neighborhood to be as accessible as possible – the buildings, site, and blocks, with a specific focus on housing and public spaces.
- ◆ Incentivizing jobs and services for the elderly and community members with disabilities.



Future Projects

- Inclusive wayfinding program. (2025)
- ADA Improvement Plan and ADA Transition Plan Updates (2025)
- Design Standards (2025)
- Standards for City buildings and assembly uses/spaces. (2025)
- Inclusive Design Study (2026)
- Streetscapes and public realm standards. (2026)
- Housing accessibility minimum standards.
- Building code Amendments.
- Ranking systems and funding prioritization.
- Design details and other engineering and development standards.
- Expanding inclusive neighborhoods project. Taking what is successful from what we learn in Marymoor and expanding that to other places in the future is a future opportunity.
- Outdoor amenities and events.



www.environmentsforall.org
redmond.gov/2057/Inclusive-Design

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