UNIVERSAL DESIGN/DESIGN FOR ALL

Changes in access to our buildings benefit all of us . . . a child in a stroller, a person with a temporary cast, crutches, cane or wheelchair and people needing accessibility more permanently.

Universal design is design that works beautifully and seamlessly for as many people as possible regardless of disability or age. Universal design creates access that is beneficial to all rather than focusing on differing requirements for different people. For more information, visit The Institute for Human Centered Design and the Universal Design Institute.

Your state's accessibility code requirements may differ from the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). Where local codes are stricter, they take precedence. The following information is presented for educational purposes. Consult your state and local authorities for their requirements.

CONSTRUCTING A NEW RAMP

Ramps are the most common method of creating an accessible route of travel when bridging a height difference up to several feet. A straight rampis the easiest to use since it requires no turns by the user.
Ramps should include:

- curbs or railings on both sides of the ramp.
- 36-inch minimum width between the handrails.
- a slip-resistant surface.
- a slope as close to 1/2 inch of rise for every 12 inches of run is ideal–check with a person using a wheelchair or a walker.

CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE PASSENGER DROP-OFF

A safe, accessible drop-off area creates a place where all users can enter or exit their cars adjacent to an accessible route into a building. A facility that requires automobile access but doesn't have an accessible passenger drop-off can force a user with a disability to not use the facility at all.

CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE PASSENGER DROP-OFF (CONT.)

An accessible drop-off area includes:

- a level surface and a 5’ x 20’ access aisle adjacent to the vehicle space.
- curb cuts, if necessary, to provide access from the vehicle space to the sidewalk.
- clearly posted signs with the accessibility logo.
- location as close as possible to accessible entrances.

INSTALLING ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES

Parking spaces are often the first part of an accessible route of travel for people with disabilities. Proper design and location can create the difference between an accessible and an inaccessible facility and can ensure the safety of the people using them. One in twenty-five spaces should be accessible.

Accessible parking spaces for cars and vans should be:

- clearly marked with signs showing the accessibility symbol.
- 8’ wide with a 5’ access aisle (two spaces can share one aisle).
- 8’ wide with an 8’ access aisle for vans with side-mounted lifts or ramps. Van accessible spaces should be clearly marked with signs indicating the larger access aisle. One in every eight accessible spaces should be designed for lift equipped vans.
- designed so that a curb cut is located within the access aisle boundaries, not the parking space boundaries.