





Curb ramps make navigating easier and more comfortable.



Texture and colour differences on a walkway enhances wayfinding for pedestrians.



Signs that include pictures and words and are both tactile and clearly worded welcome people of all sizes, sensory abilities and language skills.

Create a More Accessible City

Universal Design has been embraced by Plan Winnipeg 2020 and the City of Winnipeg's Universal Design Policy passed by Council December 2001. This design practise has become integral to the vision of a "pedestrian first" Winnipeg downtown. Universal Design is the practise of designing environments that can be efficiently used by people with a wide range of abilities operating in a wide range of situations. It is about putting people first, providing the same opportunity for accessing City of Winnipeg services, landscapes, buildings and information to young and old, with or without disabilities regardless of life circumstances. This document applies to the entire City of Winnipeg.

Universal Design builds on the following ideas:

- That all people in a community must be considered and understood when providing an integrated public service. Diverse and inclusive communities are what make us an exciting and vibrant community.
- That providing people with choices that help them use their environment in a functional and respectful way creates an inclusive city.
- That ensuring our environment is easy to navigate and clearly understood creates a welcoming city.
- That safety is integral in an accessible city.
- That Winnipeg is a comfortable place for everyone to live, visit, do business and play in.

Guiding Principles

Universal Design is cost effective if integrated into the earliest planning stages of a design. Universal Design makes life easier and more comfortable for us all...it makes good business sense. Although the City of Winnipeg ensures that the Barrier Free Building Code is taken into account when designing a new environment, it encourages consideration of the following guiding principles:

1. Inclusive Design

Providing people with the flexibility to choose how they use their environment adds to a creative and inclusive design.

- Does your design work for children, adults and older people?
- Have you developed readable signs for people who are unable to read English or print material? Do you have any international symbols or pictures on your signs?
- If you have a long entrance ramp, does it include a flat resting platform, graspable handrails and a non-slip surface?
- Could you use landscaping to provide a gradual grade change to a level entrance so you avoid ramps and steps?
- Do you have railings on both sides of your ramp or stairs so a left or right-handed person can comfortably use it?

2. Easy and Clear Design

Your design should make sense even to the youngest, inexperienced user. It should be simple to understand and use for a citizen who has reduced hearing or significant vision loss.

- Would a person new to Winnipeg be able to locate your building?
- Is your entrance door easy for people to identify?
- Is the sidewalk at your entrance marked with texture and colour differences that will help guide people to your door?
- Can people easily locate your washroom(s) using cues from well-designed signs?

3. Safe Design

Reducing the risk that an accident might occur makes good design sense. Ensuring the safety of pedestrians and patrons as they enter and leave your environment can be achieved using good design practises.

- Can people enter and leave your building safely no matter what their level of physical strength, their size or how well they can see or hear?
- Do you have levered handles on your doors making it easier to get in or out?
- Are there any unexpected level changes that should be clearly marked with contrasting colour and texture (edges of stair treads)?
- Do you have railings on your stairways that would accommodate a small child and a tall adult (dual level handrails)?
- Do you maintain your shrubs and trees so they are off the sidewalk and trimmed at a branch height that would be safe for passers-by to stroll under?

4. Comfortable Design

Your space should be comfortable to use without over exerting or straining.

- Can your doors be opened with little effort?
- Do you have a sensor activated automatic door or a push button automatic door opener?
- Are your shelves and counters at a height that are reachable without straining for a person of shorter stature?
- Does your outdoor furniture adapt to people's needs and abilities?
- Are people able to manoeuvre through your walkways without knocking into obstacles along the way?
- Is your entrance free of obstacles and wide enough for two people to pass one another comfortably?
- Is there space to examine exhibits, store front displays or retail products whether seated or standing?
- Are children considered?
- Do you have an identified accessible parking stall?
- Is the walkway from your parking facility to your entrance clear, safe and comfortable for people to navigate?



Universal Design principles strive to help people of all age groups.



Weather protected walkways provide an accessible transition from outdoors to businesses and services .



Universally accessible public places allow for barrier free gathering and movement.



Accessible parking should be wide enough for side-loading vehicles and deep enough for rear loading vehicles.



Encouraging full community participation through good design makes Winnipeg a welcoming place.



Smooth solid surfaces with safety curbs provide ease of access for everyone.

Inquiries

For further information please contact:

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Resources

- Access: A Guide to Accessible Design for Designers, Builders, Facility Owners and Managers, 2000, Universal Design Institute
- City of London – Facility Accessibility Design Standards 2001, Designable Environments Inc.
<http://www.london.ca/Planning/accessibilitystandards.htm>
- City of Winnipeg Universal Design Policy
http://www.winnipeg.ca/ppd/epc_univdesign.pdf
- Universal Design Building Survey: Incorporating the ADA and Beyond in Public Facilities, Global Universal Design Educators Network 2004
http://www.udeducation.org/teach/course_mods/survey/SurveyAccessible1.pdf