

powered by feet first



feet first policy

taking a stance to advance walkability

Contact us for information about
Feet First policies

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Universal Design

Policy

where we stand

Advocacy is a major component of the work Feet First does. These policy papers, prepared by our Policy Committee, convey Feet First's position on key issues of interest to increase safe and easy ways for people to choose to go by foot.



background

Universal Design is the concept of designing everything to be usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or circumstance. Universal Design ensures accessibility through seven guiding design principles: equitable use, flexibility in use, intuitive simplicity, perceptible information, tolerance for error, minimal physical exertion, and size and space appropriateness.

Mission

who we are - what we do

Feet First promotes walkable communities throughout Washington. We envision people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.

why it matters to walking

Universal Design emerged from the barrier-free movement of the 1950s, which was a response to the needs of veterans with disabilities to allow them to participate in their communities and workplaces. The concept is particularly relevant today as the population ages, creating an increasing number of elderly people with disabilities who want to stay active. According to the Administration of Aging, the population over the age of 65 will increase from 13 percent of the nation today to 19 percent by 2030. Furthermore, the number of conditions previously seen as untreatable has drastically decreased, providing people with



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Universal Design

increased life expectancies, often coupled with needs for varied modes of living.

The reach of Universal Design is broader than the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), encompassing more than just the physical environment. Universal Design incorporates holistic standards for every aspect of public and private life that a person will experience, not just specialized facilities for those with disabilities. For example, multi-lingual signage allows for non-English speakers to find their way through a city, baggage and bike racks on the Seattle-Tacoma light rail allow for bikers and people traveling with large items to also use public transportation, and audio announcements are often added to a design to aid the visually impaired. This all-encompassing approach allows everyone to fully participate in all aspects of daily life without exception. So far, it has been a market-based solution adopted by the private sector, rather than a system of rules imposed by a regulatory structure, giving Universal Design great flexibility.

The use of Universal Design principles creates cities that work for all pedestrians. It improves walkability for non-English speakers, people with wheel chairs and strollers, and people with loss of motor function, hearing, and sight. Incorporating design principles that include all citizens in our cities strengthens communities and creates cities that combine market-based solutions with access for all citizens. This allows everyone to participate in their communities longer than was previously possible.

Photo courtesy of Walkable and Livable Communities Institute, Hot Springs Metropolitan Planning Organization, and tdcDesign Studio

feet first position

Feet First strongly supports the principles of Universal Design and its integration into all aspects of the pedestrian environment. By bringing the digital world, public infrastructure, and other aspects of modern life together under one rubric, Universal Design allows communities to accommodate aging populations and disabled members of society. Although meeting the standards of Universal Design can sometimes incur a high initial cost, the benefits to users are immense, allowing people of all ages and abilities to be fully-productive members of society.

resources

North Carolina State University Center for Universal Design:

<http://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/>

Department of Health and Human Services: Administration of Aging:

http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/aging_statistics/future_growth/DOCS/p25-1138.pdf

Universal Design: Planning and Design for All. Oslo: The Norwegian State Council on Disability, 1997.

<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1329&context=gladnetcollect>



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