Using Public Amenities

Public amenities are resources, conveniences, facilities or benefits continuously offered to the general public for their use and/or enjoyment, with or without charge (e.g., restrooms, information displays, public telephones, rain shelters, drinking fountains, etc.).

As such, public amenities are expected to function around the clock, in adverse conditions such as inclement weather, high noise environments and in varying degrees of light and heat. Consequently, there are several key attributes that should be integrated into all public amenities to ensure universal usability.

General Requirements

Key attributes for usability include location, interactivity and safety.

Guidelines:

1. Public amenities must be located on a clear path of travel where accessibility is continuously maintained.

2. Locations of all amenities should be clearly marked at heights...
detectable by all users. They should be equally discernible to users with varying abilities.

Switches, controls, instructions, and dispensers must be understandable to the broadest audience possible, accessible from numerous heights, and usable by many alternative means.

Avoid placing public amenities in situations where users are isolated. Isolation, though not a physical threat itself, places the vulnerable user at greater risk to crime.

Reflective surfaces (e.g., mirrors) should be installed so that those using them may observe anyone approaching.

Provide emergency communications equipment wherever potential security threats exist.

Public amenities that require payment before use should accept multiple means of payment (e.g., cash, credit or debit card).

Restrooms

Restrooms are an amenity particularly in demand by all segments of the community. Lack of access can result in severe discomfort or embarrassment. Consequently, they should be available to everyone.

Guidelines:

- Use floor surfaces that are designed to drain and dry quickly.
- Provide automatic flush plumbing or a large flush activation switch placed so that it can be activated with the gross movement of a hand, shoulder, or elbow.
- Provide changing tables for care of infants in at least one restroom at a height usable by people of all statures whether standing or seated.

Figure 4.1e.2. This restroom provides an automated sliding door with controls that can be reached by everyone.

Figure 4.1e.3. This lavatory’s two counter heights and motion-activated faucets provide accommodations that are usable by a wide range of users.
Where clothing hooks are provided (e.g., stalls), they should be placed at or below 48 inches.

Wherever possible, eliminate doors in favor of a maze-type entry system.

Provide a single use or family style restroom in addition to gender-specific facilities.

Provide a floor-to-ceiling mirror to enable use by anyone.

Position handrails and grab bars so that they are not obstructed by soap or towel dispensers.

Provide a choice of heights for toilets to allow all users to keep their feet in contact with the floor and to facilitate transfers onto toilets.

Stalls should provide either a shelf or ledge to keep personal items off the floor and should be large enough to accommodate the user with packages or luggage.

Hand dryers and/or towel dispensers should be placed at heights that accommodate people of all statures whether standing or seated. Mount at least one in a lower position.

Consider providing a lavatory inside a large toilet stall.

Areas of Public Information Display

Public information displays should present information so that it can be accessed and understood by everyone.

Guidelines:

Information displays should be organized intuitively, making them simple to use and understand. Where a key or legend is necessary, it should be prominently displayed.

Figure 4.1e.4. Because this towel dispenser does not require the user to grasp controls or turn the wrist, it can be operated by almost everyone.

Figure 4.1e.5. These high-contrast illuminated signs are predictably spaced to make them easier for users to locate.
Information should be provided in as large a format as is practical.

Information should be provided in as many alternative formats as possible (e.g., raised letters, large print, Braille, voice, etc.) and be clearly marked.

Where activation switches are necessary, they should be easily identifiable and positioned so that they are operable by anyone.

Maps, directories, and information displays should be arranged spatially to accommodate all users.

Place repetitive displays of maps, directories, or information in a consistent manner so users can predict their locations.

**Public Telephones**

Using a telephone is a necessity rather than a luxury. Not everyone has a cell phone, so public telephones must be usable by everyone. They should be selected to ensure that their design features accommodate the widest possible range of users.

**Guidelines:**

- Use high contrast colors and materials to differentiate buttons, faceplate and key numbering.
- The layout for keypad numbers/buttons should follow the standard pattern.
- Where possible, a flat horizontal surface should be offered near the telephone for gathering change, writing notes, placing handbags, etc.
- For wall mounted or pedestal based telephones, provide sufficient space for approach and use by all users.
Provide a control for those who prefer a louder volume and to ensure listening capability over background/ambient noise.

Handsets should be compatible with portable text telephone (TDD/TTY) devices or the telephone should offer automatic passive access to an integrated TDD/TTY.

Public Rain Shelters

When bus stops are used as a refuge from rain or other inclement weather or as public resting areas, they become public amenities not solely related to transportation. In the universal city, such areas must also enable use by anyone.

Guidelines:

- Locate shelters on a flat paved surface rather than on dirt, gravel, or grass.
- Shelters should be constructed of transparent materials for security reasons.
- Provide sufficient space for those using strollers, carts, and wheeled mobility devices.
- Provide benches for long waits. Benches should not impede movement by those who choose not to use them.
- The floor surface should facilitate removal of snow, ice, rain, and debris.

Drinking Fountains

Public drinking fountains need to be usable by everyone. Therefore they should be selected to ensure that their design features accommodate the widest possible range of user requirements.
Guidelines:

1. Drinking fountains should be located along an accessible path of travel offering space to use the fountain from either a standing or seated position without being in the path of traffic.

2. All fountains should ensure approach and use by anyone. The activation switch should be conveniently located and its means of operation should be obvious, intuitive and usable by anyone.

3. The fountain should be positioned at a height that enables all users to reach the drinking stream.

4. The drain should facilitate rapid emptying of the basin.