Preface

Universal design aspires to create products and environments that are usable by all of us. Not only can universal design help our own citizens but also the almost 40 million visitors who come here every year.

This book was developed to help the community of people who develop the City’s real estate and infrastructure learn about universal design. When implemented properly it removes many of the problems associated with trying to meet requirements of both the NYC building code and the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act. In fact, when designing from this paradigm, some regulations are met with ease. For example, a pedestrian pathway that is gradually sloped from the curb to the entrance eliminates the need for a ramp. Another example would be installing automatic doors instead of manual doors. Distributing and integrating accessible seats throughout a theater is yet another. These examples demonstrate how access and regulations come together to create a better environment for everyone when using universal design criteria.
This book contains many examples that make accessibility easier for the general population. When all aspects of designing in a space are universal, everything becomes easier for everyone. Children, people who have learning/cognitive, vision or hearing impairments, people who use wheeled mobility devices, senior citizens, people of short stature, parents carrying children or packages – we all benefit from universal design.

**Universal Design New York** is intended for two audiences. Public agencies and environmental design and construction professionals hired by the City make up the first group. They can use it to design sidewalks, street crossings, parks, community centers, shelters, museums, and any of the many other types of buildings and facilities that the City builds. The second audience consists of developers and designers of privately constructed facilities in the City. These include hotels, office buildings, restaurants and theaters, to name just a few. Any designer can apply the principles of universal design to any project.

By issuing this book we hope to accomplish three basic goals:

- Raise awareness about the value of universal design.
- Provide practical examples of how universal design can be implemented.
- Encourage the adoption of universal design.

Information in this book demonstrates how demographic trends will increase demand for universal design. Looking to get ahead of that trend, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) and the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) believe that now is the time to implement universal design practices. Many of the
products the City buys and virtually all of the buildings the City builds today are going to be here for a long time. We should be planning today for the time when the need for universal design will be obvious to all.

We ask that the managers and designers in City agencies read this guidebook carefully and adopt the universal design approach in addition to meeting the requirements of life safety and accessibility codes and other related rules and regulations. We believe that you will find the ideas in this book to be practical and highly beneficial. We also ask that you communicate your experience with the ideas presented in this guidebook to the MOPD and DDC so that we can identify new issues that need to be addressed and new ideas we can incorporate in the future. Our hope is that all will see the value of this effort and treat the guidebook as a living document that can help advance the cause of good design in the City for many years to come.

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