



## UNIVERSAL DESIGN (1986, R1994, R2000, R2001)

### Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) believes the natural and built environment should be accessible and usable by all people. ASLA also believes it is the inherent right of all people to develop their economic, social and personal potential through equal or appropriate access to the natural and built environment. The Society believes that the principles of universal design are essential in the design process for creating environments that can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities, assuring that they may attain a similar quality of life.

### Rationale

Universal design differs from accessible design in that it is inclusive rather than exclusive and provides for designs that accommodate the full range of physical limitations as well as the able bodied; integrates the accommodation of the disabled within the basic design concept of the facility; and avoids special places based on abilities.

In spite of legislation relating to accessibility dating from the 1960s, the physical environment of our communities continues to present barriers to access and use by people with disabilities. Accessibility to all areas of the environment is fundamental to each person's quality of life and ability to fully participate as independent and active members of the community.

The response to accessibility requirements is often merely standard driven, resulting in segregated facilities not meeting the level of aesthetics of other site features and lacking creativity and flexibility, thereby paradoxically limiting opportunities for both the disabled and able bodied. Through the application of the principles of universal design, barriers can be removed from existing facilities and new barrier free facilities can be constructed so that accessible features are an expected part of every place, and become an interwoven part of every facility, enhancing opportunities for the full range of users.

The Society believes that the following actions are necessary to ensure the complete application of universal design:

1. Research which will enhance and refine the body of knowledge regarding actual requirements and methods for environmental accessibility and usability and their integration into the fabric of the site.
2. The development of comprehensive environmental standards by which specific actions may be implemented, and desired objectives achieved.
3. Education of the general public on the basic concepts of universal design and its positive impact on the utilization of public facilities.
4. Basic core professional programs and continuing education on universal design for all design professionals responsible for the design of natural and built environments.
5. Education of governmental agency personnel responsible for the uniform interpretation and enforcement of standards, guidelines or regulations.

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