

Designing Inclusive Spaces

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Overview of Inclusive Design

Inclusive Design, Universal Design, and Design for All represent the design of physical spaces and digital systems that may be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest possible extent in an independent and natural manner by any person. Any and all physical, sensory, mental health, or intellectual ability types should be able to experience space without the need for adaptation or specialized design to the greatest extent possible. Inclusive Design includes access to physical and digital products, services, and environments. Inclusivity, accessibility, and ergonomics are priorities for [UCSF](#) and should be integrated into the design of spaces within and around the project location. This resource provides a framework for designing inclusive spaces with specific examples and references to requirements, guidelines, and best practices. Because creating inclusive spaces requires a multidisciplinary approach, we encourage you to partner early in the design planning process with internal resources at UCSF including the Office of Disability Access and [Inclusion](#) and the [Ergonomics & Human Factors Program](#).

Integrating Accessibility

The interior experience of the project should be relatively similar for all user groups. There are simple ways to go above and beyond code minimums by thoughtful and empathic design thinking. For example, seating for relaxation or food services should include low-top tables. High-top tables and high seating can be offered as an additional, but not the only, option.

Design should avoid the segregation or stigmatization of any occupant or visitor. For example, plan for accessible restrooms with automated door openers to be available close to large event spaces and public areas. Privacy, security, and safety should be available to all users. Eliminate unnecessary complexity and strive for consistency with building occupants' intuition.

Mobility Inclusion and Accessibility

All spaces should be accessible by all building occupants, regardless of mobility status. Gathering spaces that are located near primary vertical circulation should be easily accessible to all. Atria and feature stairs should be designed with ramps and elevators, so that dynamic experiences are not restricted to a subset of visitors. Elevators should be close to building entrances when possible, to limit the length of travel for individuals with mobility disabilities. The project location and building should seek to go beyond the minimums of accessibility as described in applicable codes.

Consider bi-parting doors (main entrances) and/or automated door opening systems at entrances, exits, and restrooms. Consider automated door openers for at least one accessible restroom and, at a minimum wiring infrastructure for at least one set of restrooms on each floor or main areas of each floor in the event automated door operators require installation later.



Visual Inclusion and Accessibility

The design of interior spaces should take those with varying levels of visual accessibility into account. Wayfinding and signage strategies should use contrast, colors, font types, and sizes easily discernable by building occupants with colorblindness and low and blurred vision. Coordinate to ensure lighting, glare, signage and wall materials, colors, and finishes have good contrast during various building and lighting circumstances. Avoid using patterns with high cognitive loads and lines and patterns that can create a moiré effect. Braille and speech-to-text features should be considered on signage to allow blind or low vision individuals to easily navigate the building. Spaces should be designed to provide clear lines of sight of important elements.



Language Inclusivity

Wayfinding and signage should use standard icons and pictograms to convey main destination information in a way that is near-universally understandable. Digital signage can be explored for integrating multiple languages so that spaces feel equally accessible by building occupants of diverse backgrounds. Non-English languages on signage should be selected based on locally specific demographics of the region.

Privacy

When privacy is fundamental to a use, the design shall meet the privacy needs of people of all sizes and abilities.

Consider placing raised navigational dots or lines on the floor to assist users who use a guide cane to denote safety (street crossing, moving outdoors, loading areas) and navigation (lobbies, main paths). Provide individual control over lighting levels and occupancy sensors whenever possible so lighting levels meet individual needs.

Hearing Inclusion and Accessibility

For individuals with difficulty regulating high levels of auditory stimuli in common spaces, like lobbies used as event spaces, the option to seek adjacent quieter spaces should be provided. When designing auditoriums, lobbies, and conference rooms, create the option to control sound at different levels within the room so there are quieter and louder zones. Auditory announcements and alerts should also be communicated via visual means when possible. Well-lit spaces with interior finishes that are sensitive to acoustic reflection and reverberation can aid in perception. Occupants may use enhanced hearing devices, such as (but not limited to) assisted listening devices provided by UCSF.

Induction loop systems should be considered for hearing access in public areas e.g., reception desks, admitting areas security desks, lecture halls, theaters, classrooms, and food service areas. Induction loops are installed in-floor (large spaces) or under countertops (reception) with an accompanying microphone that can be installed on the desk or on security glass. The user can activate their hearing aid T-coil to access the sound, especially in environments with background noise. Assistive listening devices for users who do not have hearing aids should be available at these locations.

