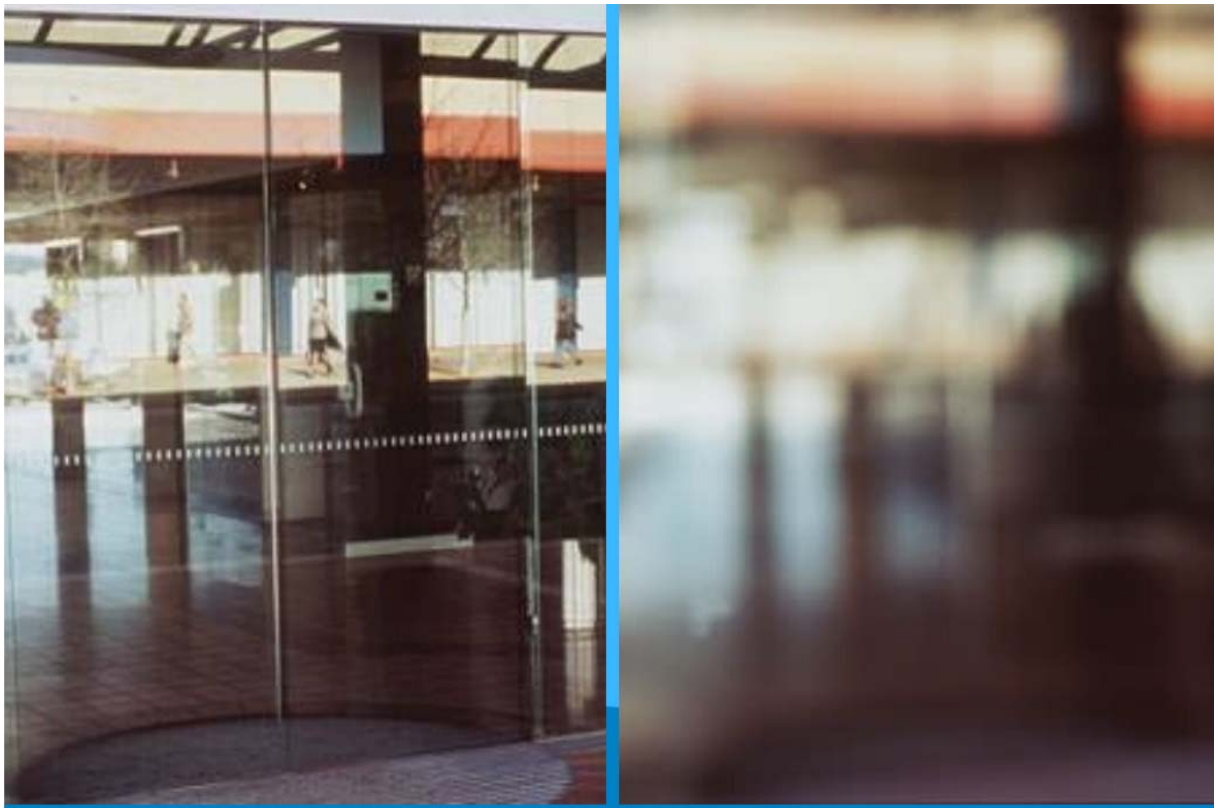
Accessibility Guide



Simple steps to make public places more welcoming for everyone.

Last reviewed 29 June 2020

Table of Contents

This document was created to support staff responsible for community facilities, and immediate contractors undertaking the work, to better serve the Nelson community. While the NZ Standards are a minimum requirement, aspects of some standards are not at a level to ensure Council facilities are as accessible as they could be for our population. Additionally, it is not easy to translate the requirements in the Standards in a quick and easy manner, preventing some easy changes to occur.

Please note, this was created as a Nelson City Council internal document and should not be relied on by community organisations, as the Standards may change and are the definitive resource. Relevant NZ Standards should be referred to regularly. Council has access for staff to access NZ Standards online via the Team Leader Building Consents.

ENTRANCES

Entrance steps are an obstacle for many people

Aim for level ground

The ideal situation is one entrance to a building that is suitable for everyone, regardless of their situation. This means providing an entrance with level ground.

If this isn't possible, the next best option is to ensure there is an alternative entrance with level ground.

Where an entrance with level ground cannot be achieved, provide both a ramp and steps leading to the door, to give people choices on how to enter the building.

Provide a mat or slip resistant tiles at the entrance

A mat at the entrance to a building needs to be:

- tightly fixed to the floor so there is no risk of people tripping on it
- large enough to dry wheelchair wheels properly. (A mat should have a width of 1.8m and as long as the circumference of a wheel.)

If a slip resistant walking surface is provided instead, this should extend 6 to 10m from the entrance.

Place seats near the entrance

Placing seating near entrances provides a safe place for people to wait while their vision adjusts to different lighting levels inside and outside of a building. The seating must not obstruct the escape route.

Measure the entrance lighting

The lighting at an entrance to a building should be half way between the brightness of the lights in the building and light levels outside of the building so that people can easily adjust to the different lighting levels.

This can be measured using a light meter (also called a lux meter). You can borrow a light meter from the Health and Safety Adviser.

DOORS

Glass doors can be difficult to see

Glazing bands are needed for people with vision impairment to alert them to a barrier created by clear glass, preventing them from walking through it. The image on the cover illustrates how a minor bit of distortion to an image may make a glazed facade undetectable for someone with minor vision impairment. Note how the glazing band becomes undetectable.

Add colour strips to make automatic glass doors easier to spot

You can make glass doors easier for adults (and for children and guide dogs) to detect by adding two horizontal colour strips to them:

- a 50mm or wider band with the lower edge placed at 800mm above the finished floor level for children and people in wheelchairs
- a 50mm or wider band with the upper edge placed at 1200mm above the finished floor level

Alternatively a solid band of 400mm could be placed between 800mm to 1200mm. Words should be in white to stand out on the bands, not left opaque.

Adding a 50mm wide colour strip to the moving parts (the edges) of automatic glass sliding doors (from the floor to the ceiling) will also be useful to people with low vision.

Where possible, use the blue colour used in Council's logo for these strips. Here are the colour specifications to hand over to your supplier (which all mean the same colour, in different formats):

- Pantone 3005
- CMYK C 100% / M 37% / Y 0% / K 0%
- RGB R 0 / G 129 / B 198
- HTML (hex) 0081C6.

These colour strips can be created in two ways:

- a coloured plastic strip that sticks on to the glass
- spraying a colour coating directly on to the glass.

Note: The default recommendation is to use a blue band, but the most important factor to consider is the need for the band to contrast with the background on either side of the glass door. For example, don't use a blue band if a blue swimming pool is visible behind the glass door.

Test door handles and locks to ensure they are easy to use

Doors need to be easy to open with one hand because people who use wheelchairs must have one hand free to propel the chair through the open door.

Handles, locks and latches with a lever action should be used rather door knobs with a twist or turn action, because these aren't difficult to use by people with hand impairments. (Pull handles or push plates are only acceptable where doors are not latched.)

Handles, locks and latches should be located between 900mm and 1200mm above floor level.

Try opening and closing any door which doesn't open and close automatically (including using the lock if there is one):

- with only one hand
- with a clenched fist
- with your elbow
- with your eyes closed
- from a seat (as if you are in a wheelchair).

If you have any concerns about how easy the door is to use, you can contact Parks and Facilities contract supervisors to discuss options for replacing the handles or the locks.

Measure the force required to open a door

You can measure the force required to open the door using a force tester available from the Health and Safety Adviser. The force required should be no more than:

- 38 N for an exterior hinged door
- 22 N for an interior hinged door
- 22 N for sliding or folding doors.

Fire and smoke control doors:

- which are 70 N can be handled by 80% of people with disabilities
- which are 21 N can be handled by 95% of people with disabilities.

If this force required is currently too high, the door closing mechanism may be able to be adjusted. In the first instance you can contact Parks and Facilities contract supervisors.

Consider whether the door is wide enough

Wheelchairs, mobility scooters and double buggies come in a range of sizes, so wide doors are needed, as well as enough space on either side of the door to manoeuvre when using scooters, wheelchairs, prams or buggies.

As a starting point, the door should have a clear opening of 760mm so that someone in a wheelchair won't be at risk of banging their knuckles on the side of the door.

FLOORS

Shiny and checkered floors can be confusing

Avoid shiny or highly patterned floors

Ways to do this are:

- purchase matt tiles rather than shiny tiles
- avoid or replace black and white checkered floors
- avoid or replace highly patterned or complex floor designs.

Use variations in floor textures to guide visitors

Examples include:

- a rubber floor area in front of a lift or a staircase
- a wooden floor in an entrance with a carpeted area to signal a seating area.

Note: The Waka Kotahi NZTA 'Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide' offers further information on tactile paving layouts and access for visually impaired persons at road crossings.

SEATS

One seat type does not suit everybody

Provide seating choices

Examples include seats:

- with arms to make it easier to get in and out of them
- which are designed for putting your heels under them, for better balance when getting in and out
- of different dimensions to suit people of different heights and sizes
- at angles, so people can easily face each other rather than sitting in rows.

Provide lots of resting places

Seats (and adjacent areas for wheelchairs) should be available:

- at regular intervals along streets
- at bus stops
- in reserves and playgrounds

Make space for wheelchairs and prams

Flat, concreted spaces alongside other types of outdoor seating ensure people in wheelchairs or in prams can easily take part in conversations at outdoor events and during informal meetings with others.

Providing for wheelchair and or pram spaces are also important considerations within buildings.

STEPS AND STAIRS

Steps need careful attention

Avoid single steps

Single steps are particularly dangerous because they are often not noticed, and stumbling over a single stair can cause serious injuries. For this reason:

- single steps are not permitted by the building code
- remove existing single steps where possible
- provide plenty of warnings for visitors about any single steps which are impossible to remove.

Make steps safer

Ways to do this include:

- providing handrails on each side of all steps (including areas with two steps)
- measuring the steps to ensure they are all the same height and all the same width, as minor variations in their dimensions can cause people to stumble (all step measurements should be the same throughout a building)
- checking that the edges of the steps are easy to see by having an edging strip of material of a different colour and texture along the front of each step
- avoiding patterned carpet, as this makes it harder to see the edges of the steps
- making sure the surface of the steps, and the landing areas above and below the stairs, aren't slippery
- measuring the lighting levels above the stairs, which should be no less than 20 lux at floor level. You can borrow a lux meter from the Health and Safety Adviser.

Provide a ramp nearby

Place ramps next to steps, to give people the choices about using steps or a ramp. Many people find it easier to use a staircase rather than a ramp, due to problems walking on a sloping surface.

RAMPS

Ramps which are steep, long, or curving are hard to use

Avoid steep ramps

Where the slope of a ramp is too steep, wheelchair users risk tipping forward when going down or falling over backwards when going up. For this reason, the gradient should be as low as possible (no more than a gradient of 1:14 wherever this is achievable), and the same gradient should be used for all ramps in the same building or area.

Note: specifications for outdoor kerb ramps are outlined in section 13.4 of the
NZ Standard NZS4121:2001.

Check the safety of ramps

Check that:

- the ramp is at least 1200mm wide
- a level landing is available at the top and bottom of each part of the ramp
- the floor surface of the ramp (and landings) isn't slippery
- there is a raised edge along the base of the ramp so there is no risk of wheelchair users falling over the edge of the ramp (this raised edging is also useful to people with low vision who are using a cane).

The raised edge of metal running along the ground on the right-hand side of this rail is called an 'up-stand'. This is needed for any ramp where the surface of the ramp is 25mm above the adjacent ground, and needs to be at least 75mm high.

The standards for the ramps (slope inclination, permanent or portable ramp) or simply mention "*according to New Zealand Standard NZS 4121:2001*

Provide handrails

Handrails need to be non-slip, and installed on both sides of a ramp and its landings, as users who have a weakness on one side may only be able to use the handrail on their strong side.

Most wheelchair users do not use handrails on ramps. However, they can help to steady a user, especially on existing ramps where the length or gradient might be excessive.

Provide steps nearby

Providing steps and step-free options (such as a ramp and/or a lift) in the same area allows people to make the best choice for their circumstances.