MEMORANDUM

To: **Planning Commission**

From: Beckye Frey, Principal Planner   425-556-2750
             Planning and Community Development

Date: July 28, 2021

Subject: **Redmond 2050 Monthly Briefing – Introduction to Inclusive Design,
             Universal Design, and Visitability Principles**

PURPOSE

This month's staff briefing on Redmond 2050 will provide
an introduction to Universal Design, Inclusive Design, and
Visitability principles --- why they're important and how
they will be incorporated into Redmond 2050 community
discussions. We anticipate this discussion will result in
policy and regulatory updates that will impact our built
environment.

BACKGROUND

One of the main themes of Redmond 2050 is Equity & Inclusion. When looking at the built
environment and how we'll accommodate our future growth, we'll be looking at Universal
Design, Inclusive Design, and Visitability principles to determine what needs we have in our
built environment and what policy and regulatory changes we should be adding or revising to
achieve the desired inclusive built environment. As we look at the changes that we will be
making around our four new light-rail stations, this topic will be addressed as part of our
discussions about equitable transit-oriented development (TOD).

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Redmond 2050 Monthly Briefing – Inclusive / Universal Design

This memo provides an introduction to these topics; additional resources are provided in **Attachment A**, including several local organizations that have been working on implementing inclusive design / universal design concepts in our region.

Accessibility is an attribute, while inclusive design is a method.[1]

DEFINITIONS

Universal Design and Inclusive Design terms are often used interchangeably and both terms apply broadly to buildings, neighborhoods, amenities, and products. For the purposes of this community conversation, we will make a distinction between the two – where Inclusive Design is a process (more like a verb[2]) and Universal Design is the outcome.

- *Inclusive Design* is designing an environment so that it can be accessed and used by as many people as possible, regardless of age, gender, and disability. An environment that is designed inclusively is not just relevant to buildings; it also applies to surrounding open spaces, wherever people go about everyday activities. This includes shops, offices, hospitals, leisure facilities, parks and streets.[3]

  Inclusive design originated with product design and focuses on choosing an appropriate 'market' for a design and maximizing the 'performance indicators' for that market. In city planning, that means looking at the community demographics, involving the impacted community members (particularly those that are typically underrepresented or underserved), then identifying and meeting the needs of that specific community.[4] Inclusive Design can include identifying and considering the removal of exclusive design features.

- *Universal Design* increases the potential for a better quality of life for a wide range of individuals by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation. It creates products, systems, and environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability or situation.[5]

  "Universal Design considers all aspects of the built environment—homes, mobility routes, landscapes, commercial developments, products and life space, including equipment and architecture—with the goal of making them accessible to every person,

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[1] Kat Holmes, Mismatch: How Inclusion Shapes Design (MIT Press, 2018);
    https://www.fastcompany.com/90243282/the-no-1-thing-youre-getting-wrong-about-inclusive-design
[2] https://www.fastcompany.com/90166413/what-youre-getting-wrong-about-inclusive-design
[3] http://inclusivedesign.scot/what-is-inclusive-design/
[4] http://www.inclusivedesigntoolkit.com/whatis/whatis.html
[5] http://universaldesign.com/what-is-ud/

regardless of age or ability."[6] **Appendix B** is a brochure from the NW Universal Design Council with some helpful information on Universal Design and the benefits of UD.

Planning staff use a Universal Design approach when looking at the zoning code rewrite to ensure the language, formatting, and usability features all make the code easy to use for many different audiences. [7]

Universal Design (UD) recognizes and accommodates the ordinary changes people experience over their lives due to aging and life circumstances. As such, universal design benefits people through all life stages, including children and adults.[8]

- *Visitability* refers to integrating a few core *accessibility features* as a routine construction practice into all newly built housing units. These features allow the home to be visited by relatives, friends, and others who may have disabilities, accommodate short term occupancy by people with disabilities, and facilitate additional adaptations that may be needed in the future.[9]

    Visitability features include a zero-step entrance, wider doorways and hallways, ground floor bathroom, light switches and electrical outlets within comfortable reach for all, and reinforcements in walls in bathrooms to facilitate future installation of grab bars.

Redmond 2050 has adopted Equity & Inclusion as one of our main themes, so we will be **using the term Inclusive Design for our community conversations as our process** and will be **referencing Universal Design principles, resources, and tools that will help us achieve the built environment outcomes** that our community desires.

Visitability differs from the broad Universal Design and Inclusive Design concepts because it refers to *specific design features* incorporated into *housing units*. You'll see Visitability used in plan, policies, and regulations conversations when referring to those specific features.

Equity & Inclusion

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[6] Northwest Universal Design Council, https://www.environmentsforall.org/files/2018/11/NWUDCbrochure_110818.pdf
[7] Barrier-Free Design is often used interchangeably with Universal Design.
[8] Dr. Sandra Hartje, Recommendations for Essential and Advanced Universal Design Features and Product Characteristics in New, Single Family Housing. August, 2009
[9] https://www.wbdg.org/resources/visitability and http://idea.ap.buffalo.edu/projects/visitability/

INCLUSIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES[10]

- **Places people at the heart of the design process** | Inclusive design seen as an essential component of sustainable communities.

- **Acknowledges diversity and difference** | Recognizes the wide diversity of different needs including wheelchair users, but also sensory impairments, learning difficulties, mental ill health, hidden impairments, and the needs of children and parents.

- **Offers choice for users in acknowledgement that a single solution that fits all users is not possible** | Accommodating for all people regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity, or circumstances.

- **Flexibility in use** | Link to sustainable principles by acknowledgement of the need for adaptability in design to meet different needs at different stages.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Over the past several decades several different organizations have assembled lists of universal design principles. In General, they fall into the following categories:

- **Inclusive/equitable** – so everyone can use it safely, easily and with dignity

- **Responsive** – taking account of what people say they need and want

- **Flexible** – so different people can use it in different ways

- **Convenient/comfortable** – so everyone can use it without too much effort or separation

- **Accommodating/Intuitive** - for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances

- **Welcoming/Perceptible** – easy to understand and with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people

- **Realistic** – offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognizing that one solution may not work for all

Appendix C has a more detailed look at specific measures – such as specific guidelines for how to implement design elements that are simple and intuitive.

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[10] Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment CABE (2006) The principles of inclusive design (they include you). http://dcfw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/InclusiveDesign_traininghandbook.pdf

NEXT STEPS

We'll be using the tailored approach of Inclusive Design to identify the policies and built environment design features that are the best fit for the needs of our community. We will also be looking at ensuring a better quality of life for a wide range of individuals who live, work, or visit Redmond. Since not all tools and techniques work for everyone, and something may be helpful for one group but problematic to another, this process will require broad and inclusive participation (honoring the "Nothing About Us Without Us" slogan). *We've begun that process this year and anticipate it will go through both phases of Redmond 2050* and potentially continue beyond into other planning processes and programs.

We will develop a collection of options and alternatives, based on community demographics and priorities, and will seek community input to identify tradeoffs and tension points where a decision will need to be made between one or more options. When developing policy recommendations, we will evaluate impacts to both private development and public infrastructure and identify strategies for implementation including:

- Development incentives,
- Community awareness information and stakeholder buy-in;
- Potential funding sources including grants; and
- Development regulations where appropriate.

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Upcoming events, activities, and opportunities:

- Community conversations on our themes[11], Inclusive / Universal design principles, and equitable TOD options will occur over the summer and fall. Staff is developing information for our web site and our Redmond 2050 LetsConnect site.
- We will continue to outreach to our BIPOC community members and business owners to ensure community needs are identified.
- A disability stakeholders' group has been assembled and will meet approximately quarterly throughout Phase 1 & 2 of the Redmond 2050 update. We will also be meeting with other stakeholder and focus groups and the other Redmond boards and commissions,
- We will be scheduling focus groups and stakeholder meetings as visits to other boards and commission throughout the summer.

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[11] Many of the Inclusive / Universal design principles and options fall under all three of the Themes (Equity & Inclusion, Sustainability, and Resiliency).