



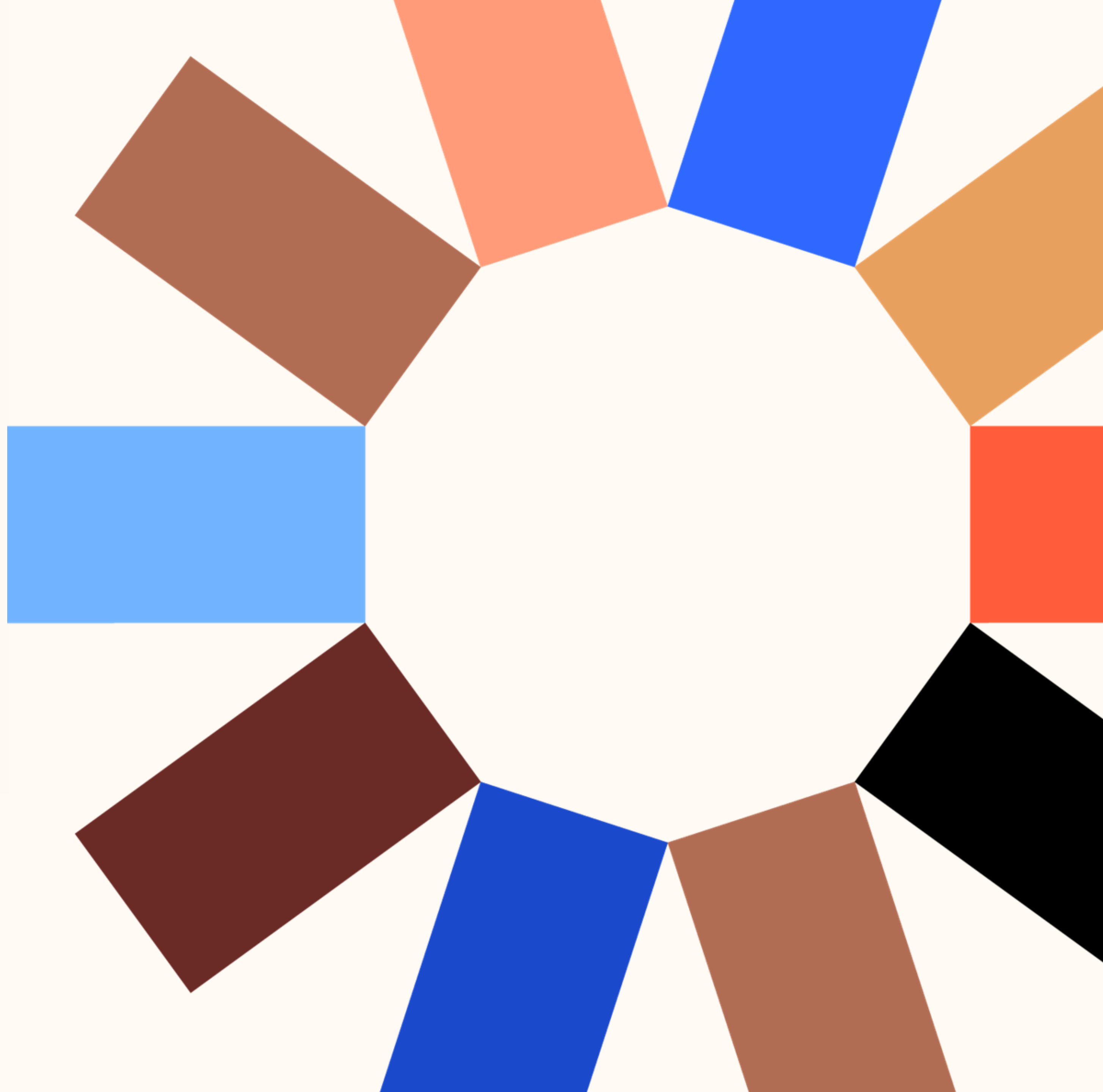
Inclusive Housing 101

Strategies for embedding more inclusive, accessible design into local housing



Allie Cannington and Kyle Seem
The Kelsey
May 6, 2026

**The
Kelsey**



Today

Understanding the Need

The Solutions

Inclusive Design

Elements In Action

Opportunities for Local

Government

The Kelsey advances disability- forward housing solutions that open doors to **homes and opportunities for everyone.**

More **affordable** to all incomes – from the very lowest up to market rents.

More **accessible** to meet diverse access needs and more person-centered design.

More **inclusive** for people with and without disabilities to live in true community with access to the supports they need.



Understanding the Need

Over 1.6 million adults with disabilities in the Bay Area face barriers to housing



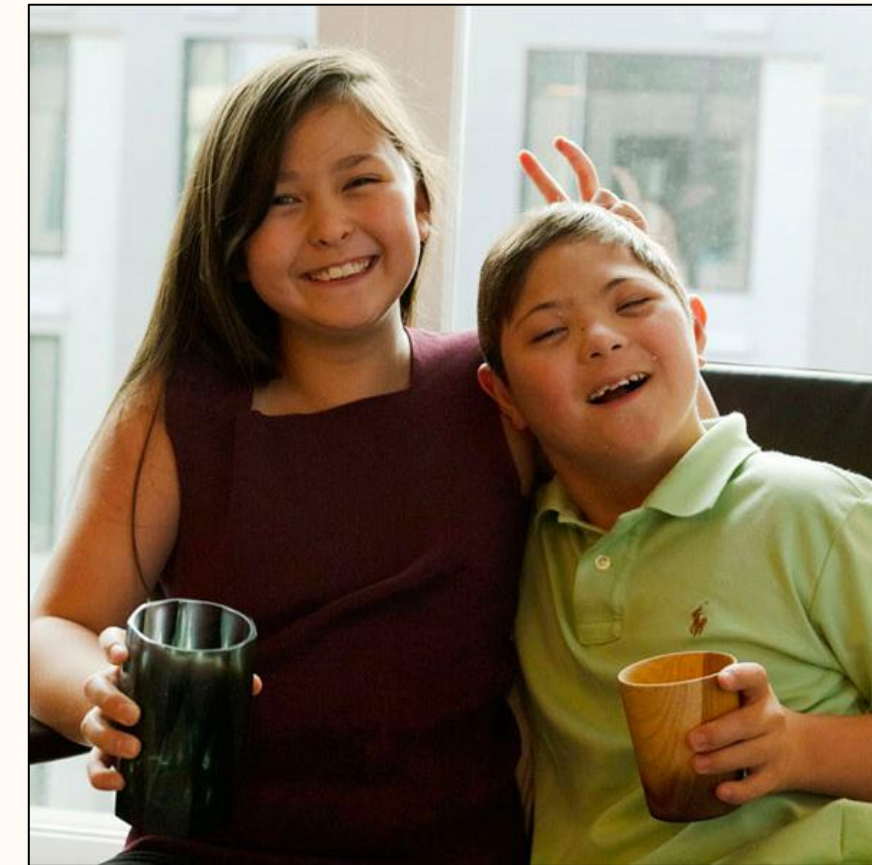
Cost

People with disabilities reliant on SSI would need to spend 180-246% of their entire income to afford basic housing.



Discrimination

Over 55% of housing discrimination is based on disability, more than any other type of housing discrimination.



Access

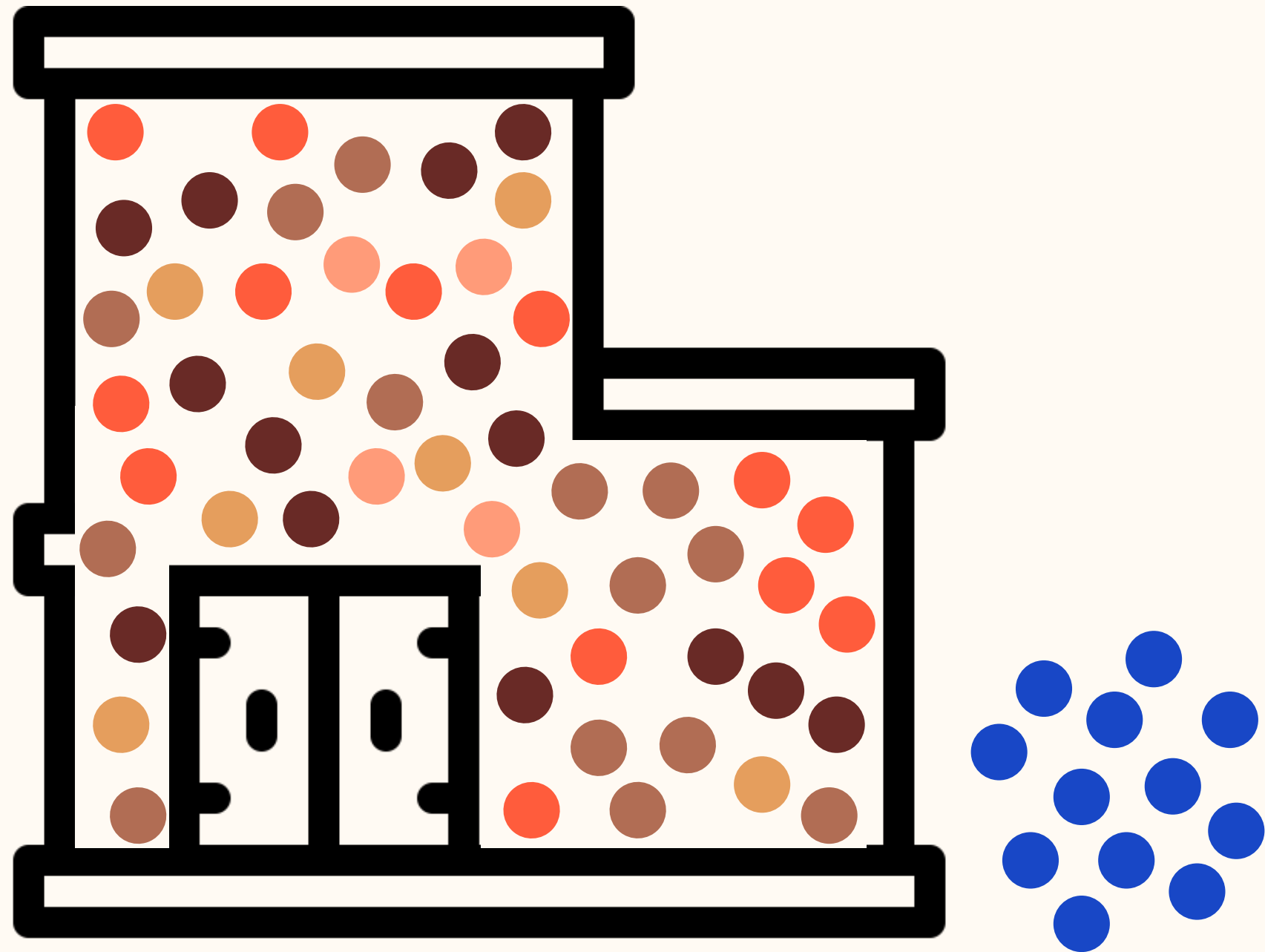
Less than 6% of the housing market is accessible to people with disabilities.



Supply

Only 12% of adults with disabilities who use LTSS rent or own their own homes; people with disabilities are 4x more likely to experience homelessness.

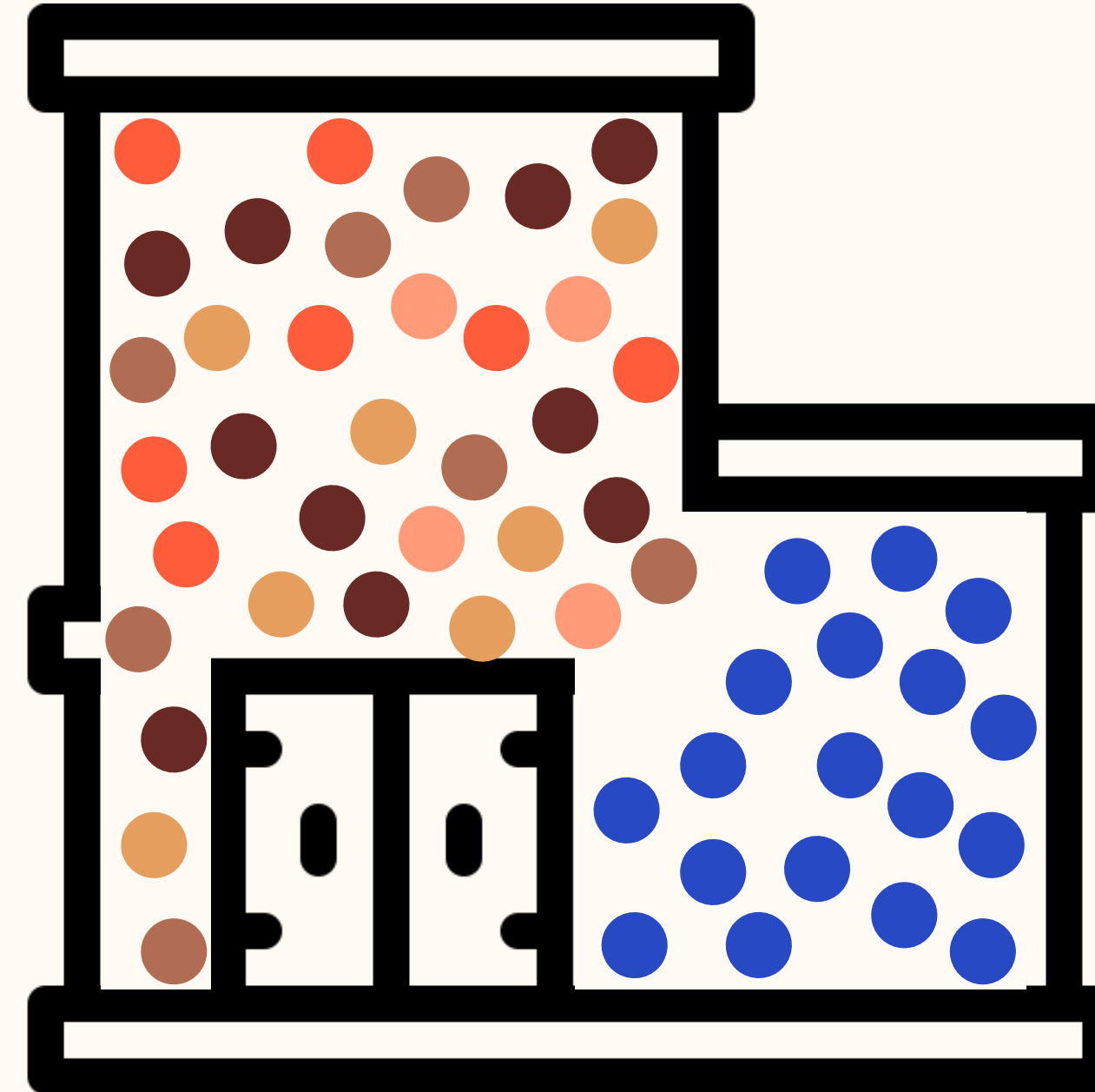
Segregated



People with disabilities segregated in:

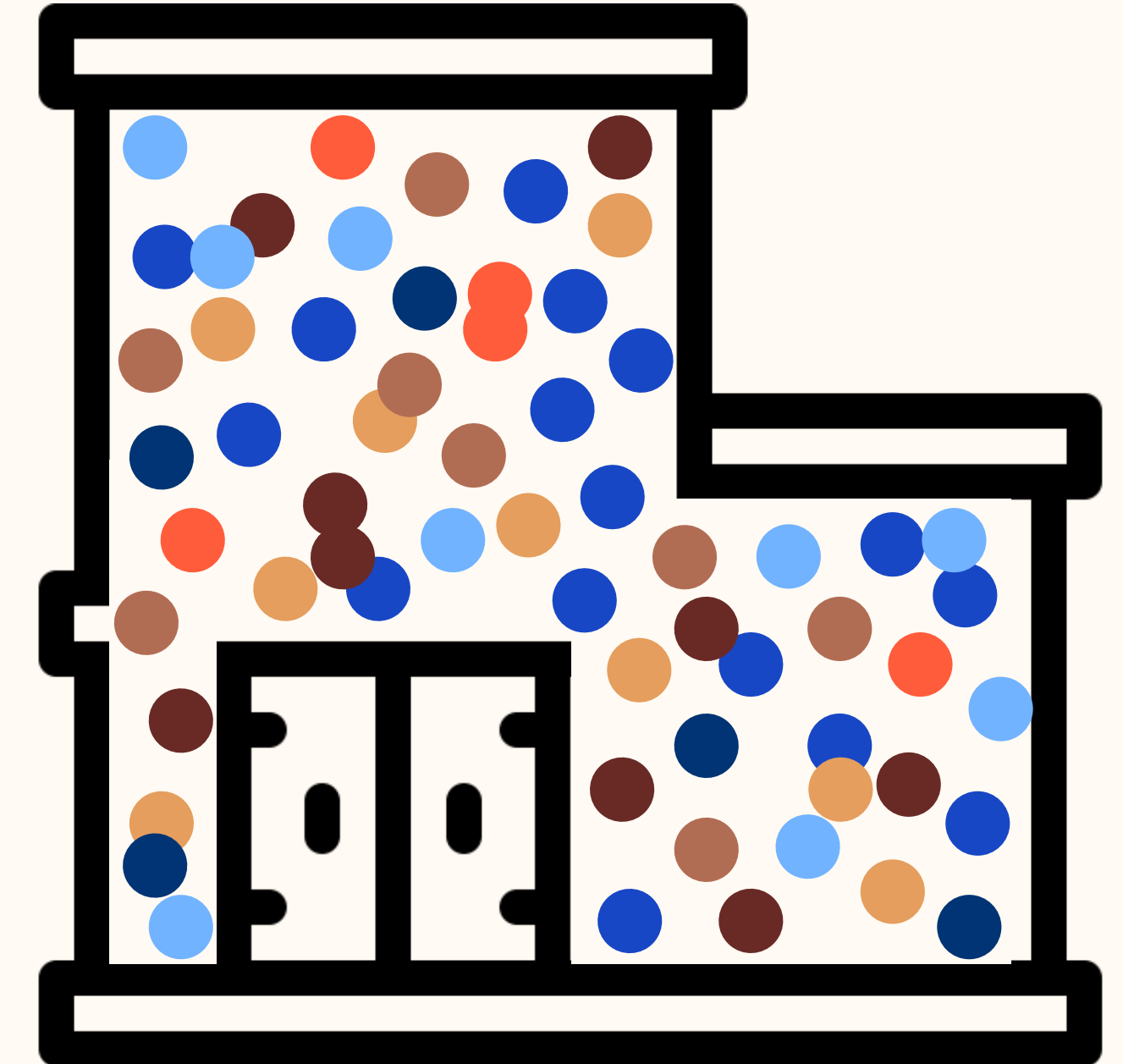
- Hospitals
- Institutions
- Congregate Settings
- Homelessness
- Housing Insecurity

Integrated



People with and without disabilities in the same building physically but with barriers to full access, separate lives and experiences, and no community connections.

Inclusive



People with and without disabilities share community together, diversity is valued, interdependence is supported, and people have access to the same spaces and experiences.

The Solutions

Disability-Forward Housing is:

Affordable

to people of all incomes including those at the lowest incomes (20-30% AMI)

Accessible

cross-disability design to support diverse needs and located with access to services, amenities, and transit

Integrated

does not segregate or isolate but is mixed between disabled and non-disabled

Inclusive

equitable access to all amenities & in/formal supports systems are available, regardless of the level of support needs.



Community

with connections,
recreation,
spirituality, joy,
meaningful work,
and relationships.



Housing

that is accessible,
affordable across a
range of incomes,
and meets personal
preferences



Supports & Services

including medical
services, in home
supports, and
therapies designed
to meet individual
needs.



Role of Local Government

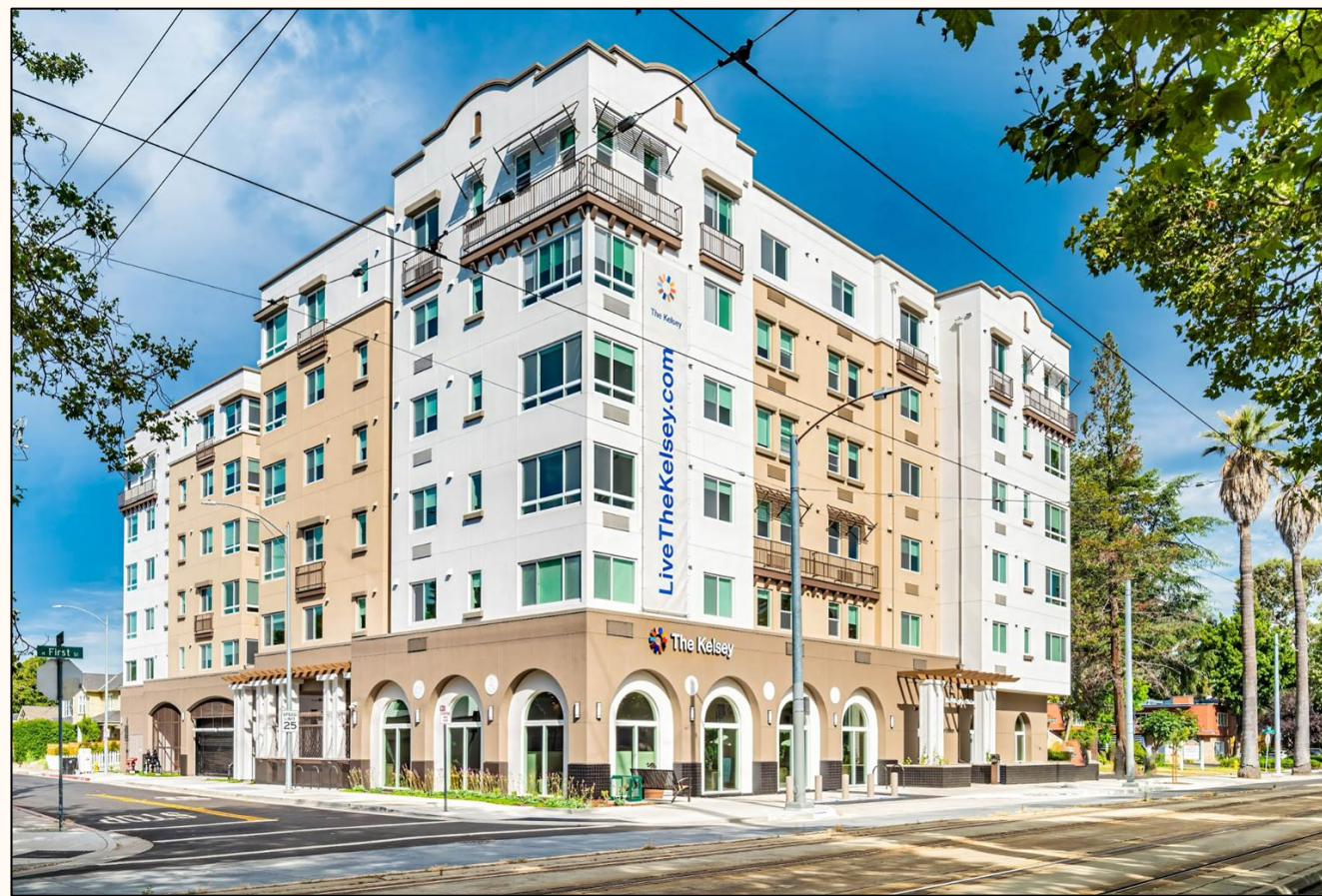
- Fund tenant and project based housing assistance for extremely low-income people with disabilities
- Require and incentivize inclusive design for housing-related programming and funding
- Facilitate administrative coordination and financial investment across housing and services



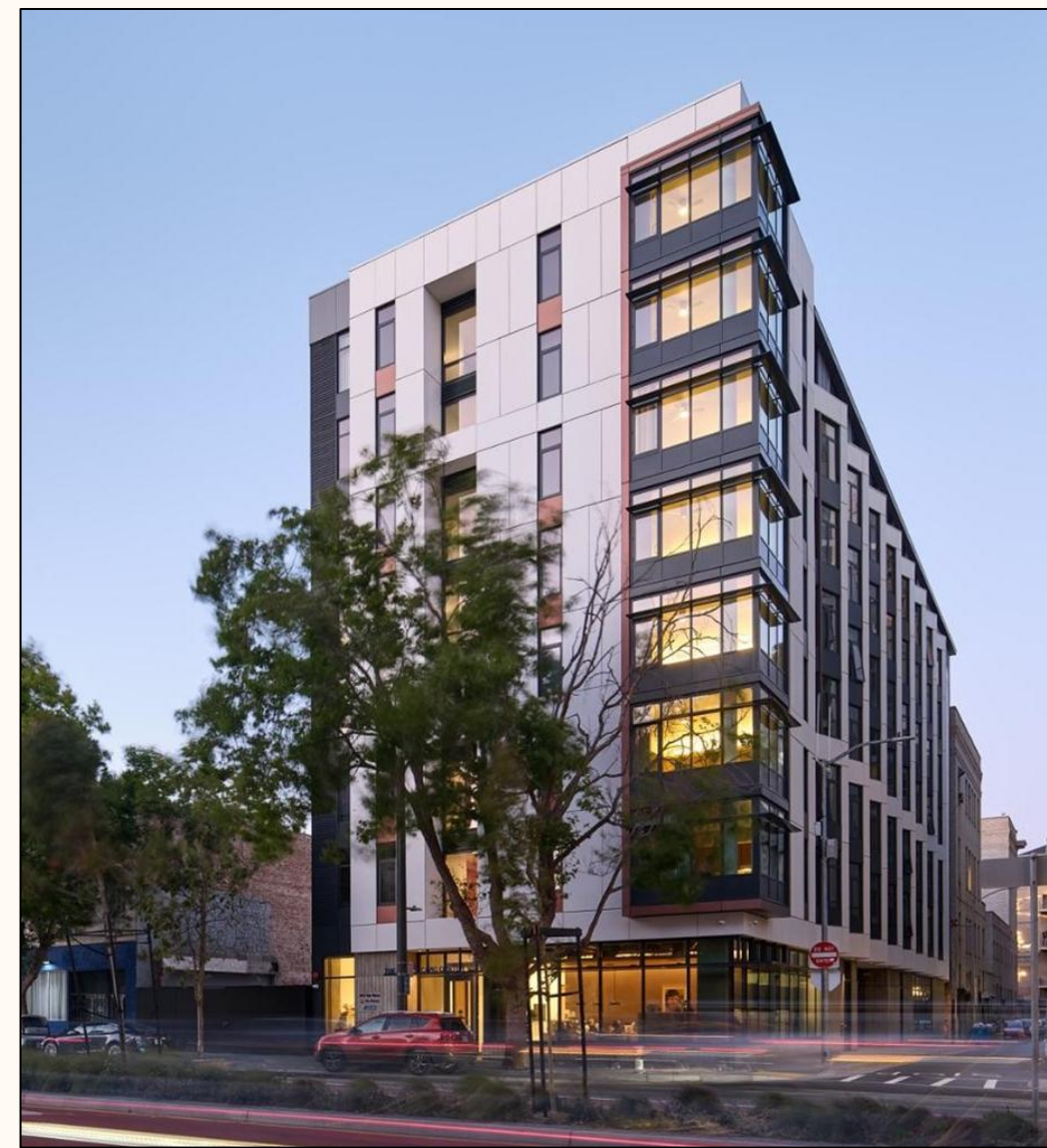
Inclusive Design

(and the Inclusive Design Standards)

The **Inclusive Design Standards** came from project-specific needs for a set of strategies and tools, beyond code, to support cross-disability access and inclusion.



The Kelsey Ayer Station
San Jose



The Kelsey Civic Center
San Francisco



Other Accessible, Inclusive
Housing Communities

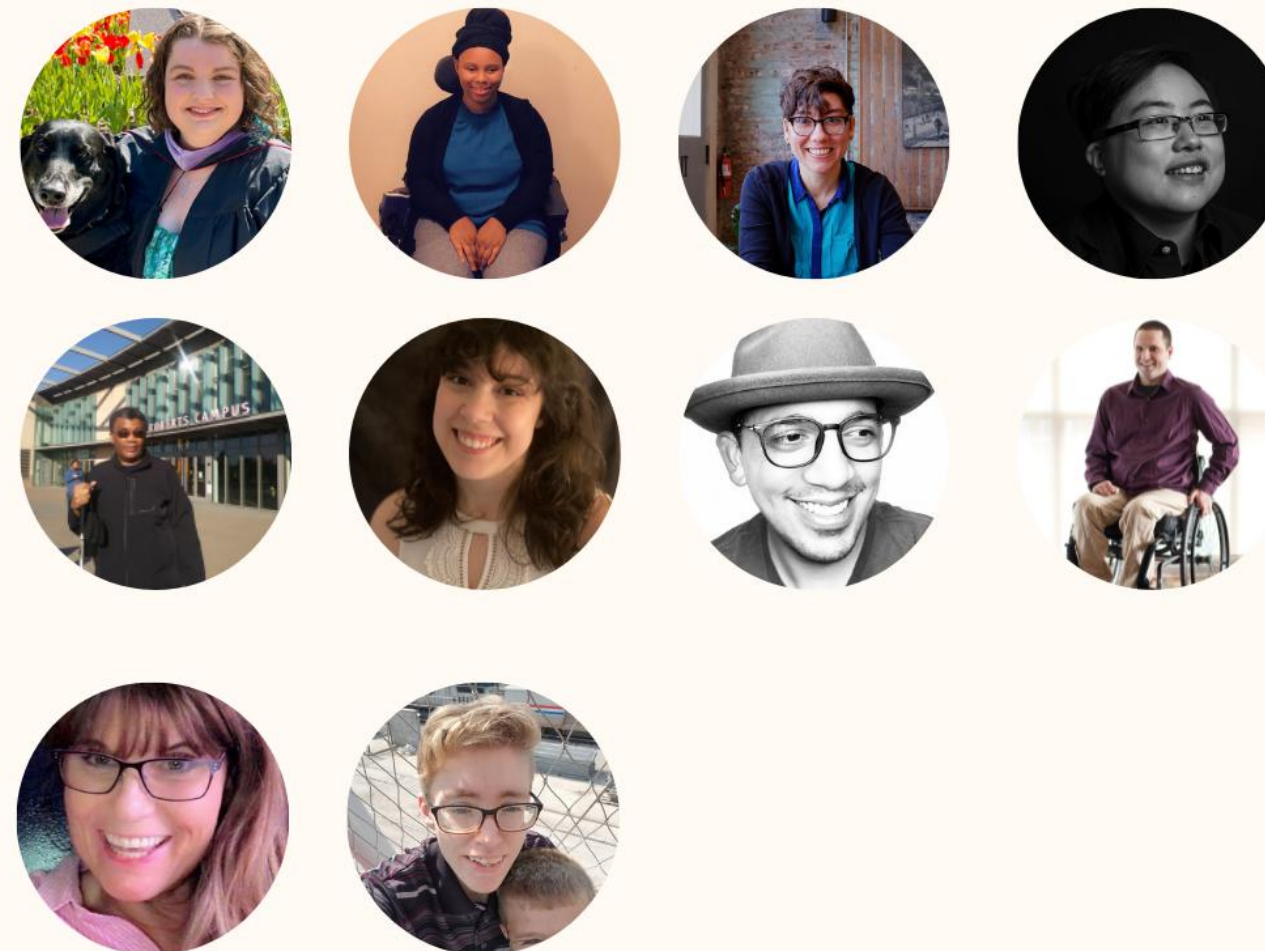
Project Team and Partners

Project Team



Inclusive Design Council

10 paid consultants with disabilities from across the country working at the intersection of design, advocacy, architecture, and planning



Designer Partners

Workshops and 1:1 consultations from architects, contractors, and developers working on multifamily, affordable, and accessible housing



The Inclusive Design Standards include 300+ Elements. Elements reflect design choices, building features, development strategies, or operational policies that support accessibility and inclusion.

Section 4 / Elements / Element Details: Design Process

1.1 People with Disabilities Represented on the Project Team

Team

Impact Areas

- Mobility and Height
- Hearing and Acoustics
- Vision
- Health and Wellness
- Cognitive Access
- Support Needs

Additional Benefits

- Affordability
- Racial Equity
- Environmental Sustainability
- Safety
- Beauty and Better Design

Sources

The Kelsey

1
Point Value

Level 1 - People with disabilities are part of advisory groups and/or focus groups; their input is documented and seriously considered.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT


- Advisory or focus groups are people with lived experience assembled by the project team

2
Point Value

Level 2 - People with disabilities are paid consultants on the project team.

3
Point Value

Level 3 - People with disabilities are full-time members of the project team and/or developer/owner team.



Section 4 / Elements / Element Details: Site

2.3 Building Approach and Entry Arrival Wayfinding

Impact Areas

- Mobility and Height
- Hearing and Acoustics
- Vision
- Health and Wellness
- Cognitive Access
- Support Needs

Additional Benefits

- Affordability
- Racial Equity
- Environmental Sustainability
- Safety
- Beauty and Better Design

Sources

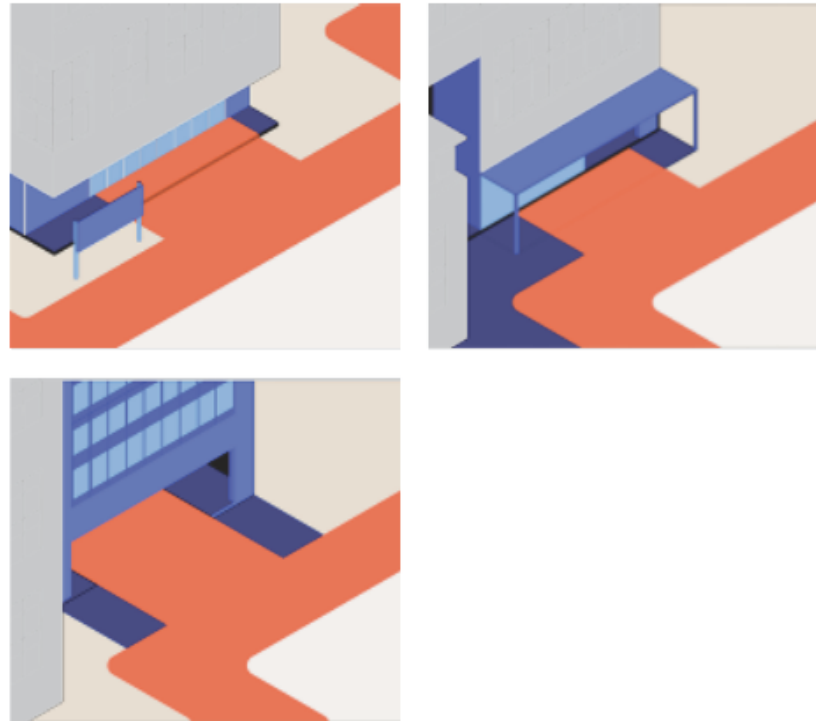
isUD

1
Point Value

Architectural Landmarks.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

- Architectural features distinguish all primary entrances and exits (e.g., prominent signs, graphics, architectural features, landmarks, etc.)
- Landmark elements have unique lighting to assist in locating them
- They are visible along the primary approach route of motor vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists



Graphic by Oorvi Sharma

Section 4 / Elements / Element Details: Interior Spaces

4.2 Vertical Circulation Dual Handrails

Impact Areas

- Mobility and Height
- Hearing and Acoustics
- Vision
- Health and Wellness
- Cognitive Access
- Support Needs

Additional Benefits

- Affordability
- Racial Equity
- Environmental Sustainability
- Safety
- Beauty and Better Design

Sources

Mikiten Architecture

1
Point Value

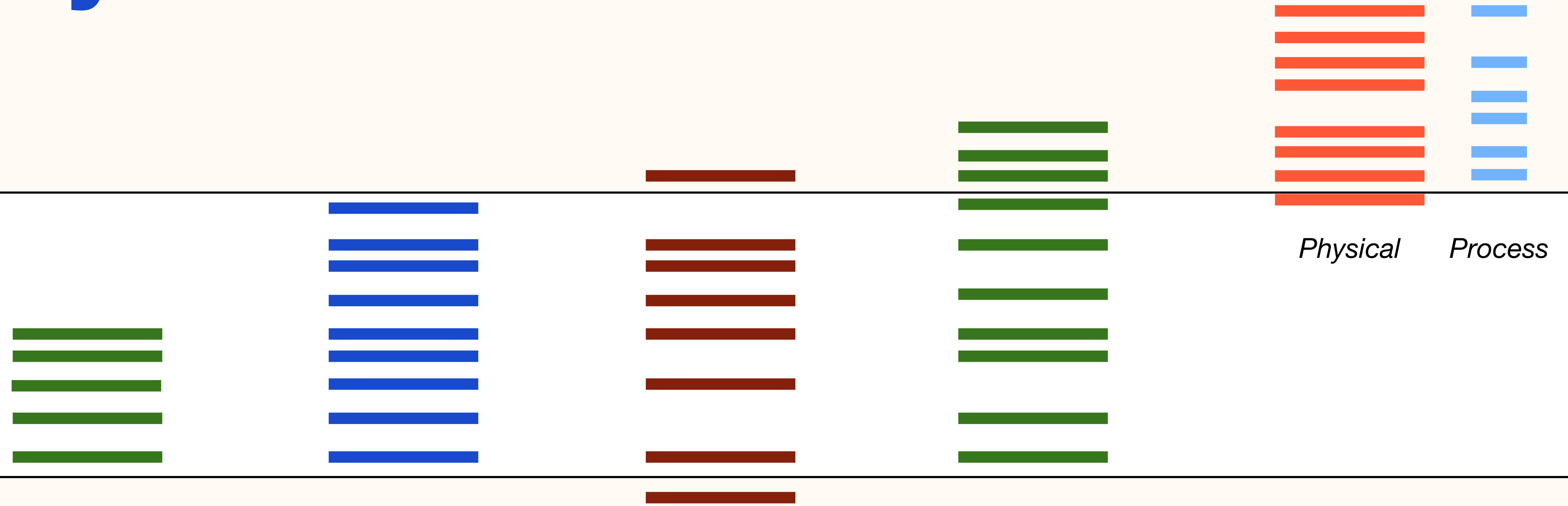
Stairs and ramps have high and low handrails.

- One handrail at 36" and another at 30" above the nosing
- Provides safety for children and shorter adults
- For ramps, someone in a wheelchair can slow their descent or pull themselves up the ramp more easily with better leverage than pushing a wheelchair wheel



Graphic by Oorvi Sharma

Beyond the Codes



Physical *Process*

**ANSI
A117.1
(1961)**

**The
ADA
(1991)**

**State
Codes**

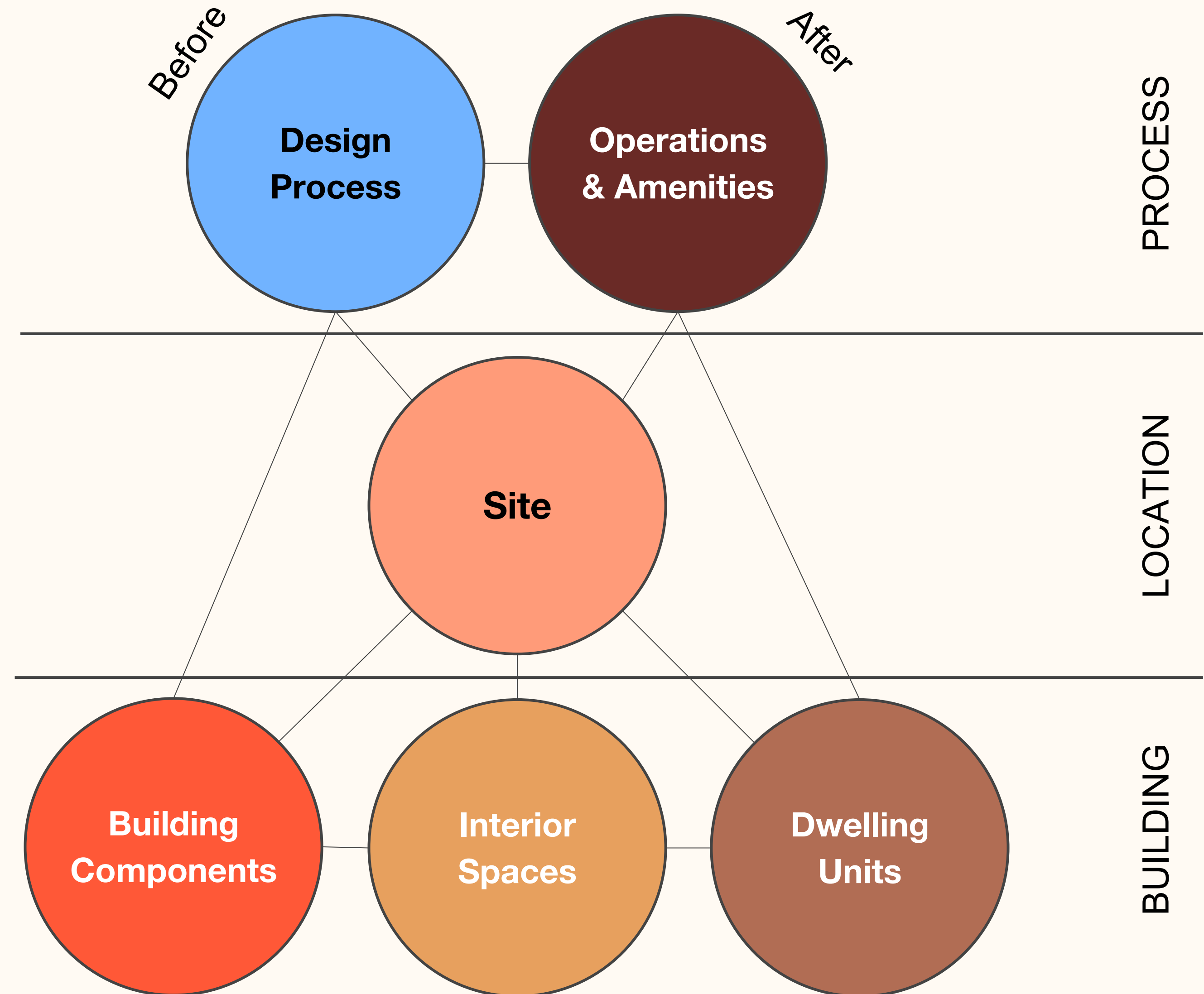
**ICC
A117.1
(2017)**

**Inclusive
Design
Standards**

Design Categories

Choices throughout the development, design, and operations process impact access and inclusion.

Design Categories help outline when in the process an element can be implemented and what member or part of the development or design team should own that element's implementation.



Impact Areas



**Mobility and
Height**



**Hearing and
Acoustics**



Vision



**Health and
Wellness**



**Cognitive
Access**



**Support
Needs**

The Inclusive Design Standards are NOT some things...

- Not Code Requirements - they are designed to work alongside your local and funding-specific design requirements.
- Not A Replacement for Engaging People with lived experiences within your local community. But they do include requirements and strategies for doing so.
- Always Evolving - this is a first version with revisions planned for 2026 as well as new tools to support their use.

Elements In Action

The Kelsey Civic Center



Photo © Bruce Damonte



Photo © Bruce Damonte

Outdoor Spaces



Photo © Bruce Damonte

Touch and Smell

- Paving differentiates spaces
- Aid visual & cane navigation
- Tactile interest for wheeled users
- Vertical rain garden landmark with aromatic vines
- Sensory garden
- Biophilic design



Photo © Bruce Damonte

Dwelling Unit Kitchens

Usable Storage

- Pegboard backsplash
- 50-75% of base cabinets are drawers
- Roll-out base cabinet

Sink Faucet

- Lever handle
- Pull-out sprayer
- Overflow

Refrigerator Location

- Door can swing open 180 degrees

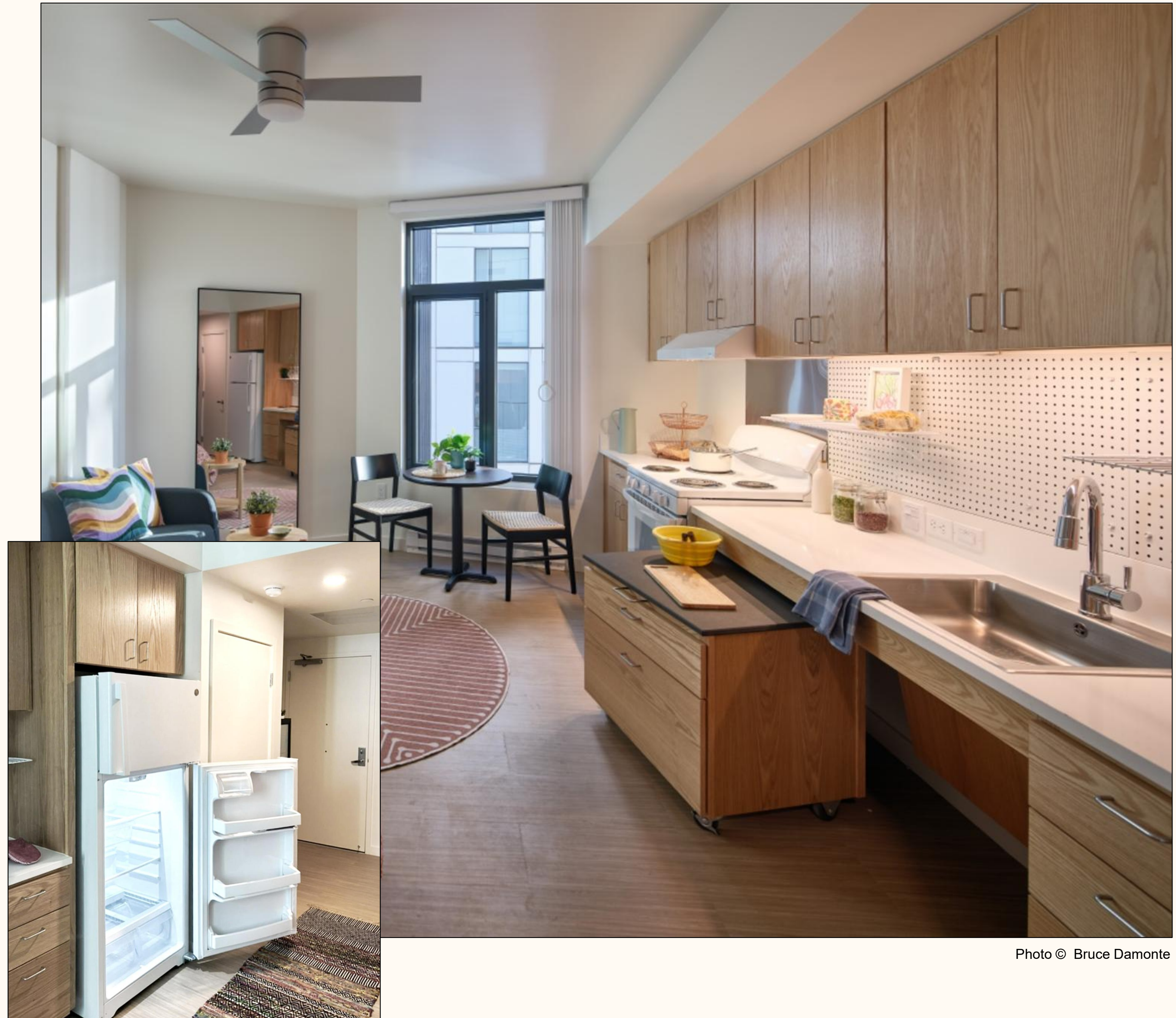


Photo © Bruce Damonte

Details

Elevator Foot Pedals

- Inside and outside elevator



Unit Entry Doors

- Different color on each floor
- Shelf for personalization

High-Contrast Signage

- Multi-usable
- Pictograms, letters, Braille, and descriptions



No-Cost Elements

Differentiation of Spaces

- Use variations in flooring, lighting, color, ceiling height, materials, etc. to differentiate primary areas

Door Visibility

- All doors or door frames visibly contrast with the surrounding walls

Low-Glare Materials

- Use wall and floor surfaces that are low-glare



Photo © Bruce Damonte

Pre-Design and Operations

Focus Groups

- Include people with disabilities for lived experience

Plain Language Leasing Information

- Plain language overview with leasing paperwork

Inclusion Concierge Program

- Dedicated staff trained in inclusion, disability, supports, and services



Opportunities for Local Government

Strategies to Advance Inclusive Design

- Incentivize or require use in funding criteria in NOFAs and RFPs
- Create a set of design or livability standards
- Embed disability-forward solutions into existing design or livability standards
- Increase the required number of units that meet accessible code requirements
- Require or incentivize partnerships with people with disabilities
- Require or incentivize hiring a Universal or Inclusive Design Consultant

Disability-Forward Land use Zoning

Advancing Inclusion

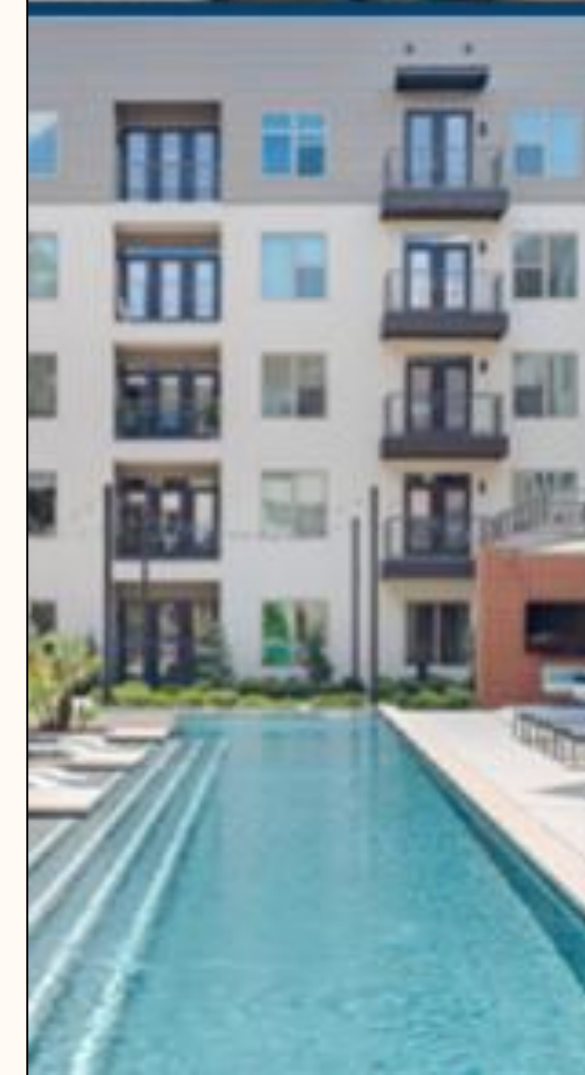
Target units for people with high support needs

Reduce administrative burden and streamline referral and application processes

Increase and enhance funding for supportive services and operating subsidies

City Spotlights

- San Jose, CA
 - Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)
- San Antonio, TX
 - Multi-Family Universal Design Standards
- Teton County and the Town of Jackson, WY
 - Livability Standards
- Seattle Social Housing Developer
 - Request for Qualifications
- City & County of San Francisco
 - DAHLIA: San Francisco Housing Portal



Join Us.

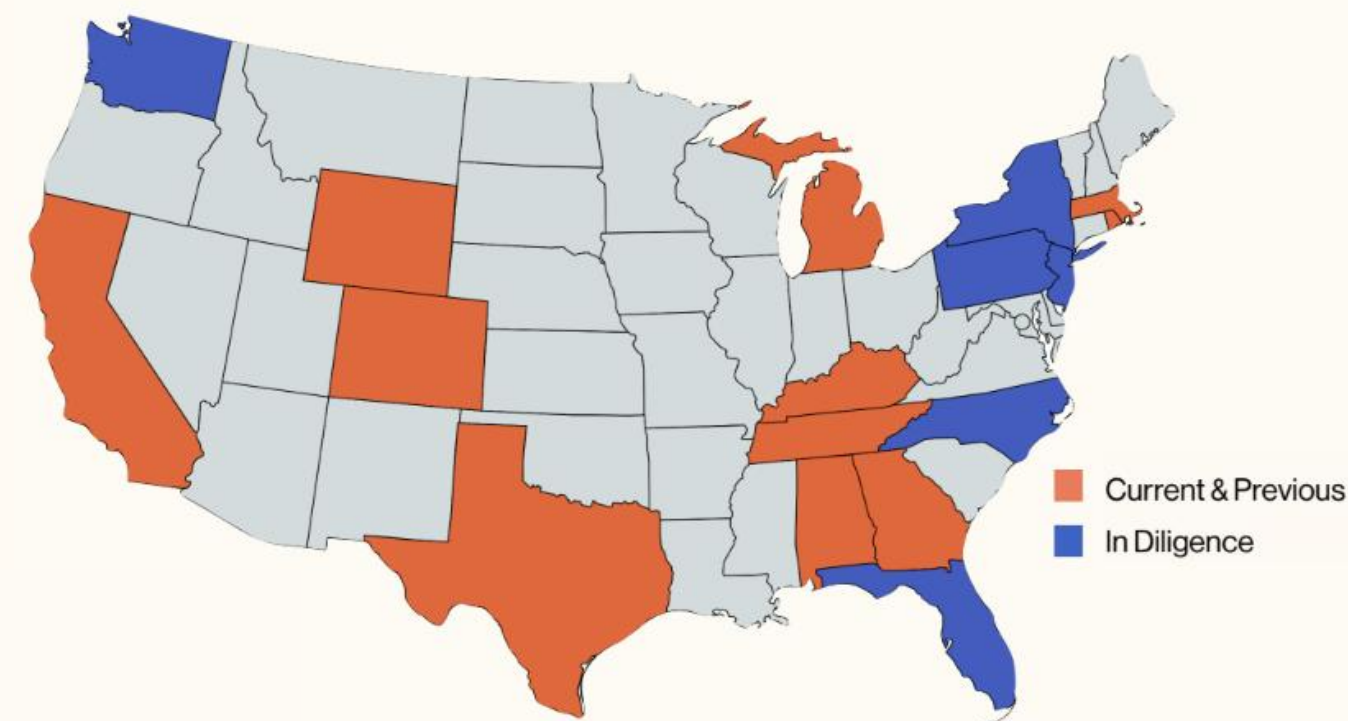
Use the Inclusive Design Standards



thekelsey.org/design

Partner on Local Housing Needs

Collaboration and technical assistance with cities on how to increase disability-forward housing supply.



Stay connected to The Kelsey

Stay informed and take action for a disability-forward housing future.





Questions?

hello@thekelsey.org

design@thekelsey.org

thekelsey.org/design

FOCUS GROUP

Wednesday June 3rd from 12-1pm

Seeking local staff currently working on inclusive or universal design as part of housing program to help inform regional resources to promote inclusive housing being developed as part of RHTA program.

For more info: achan@bayareametro.gov

