

Universal Design



Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago

Association of Children's Museums

InterActivity Conference

April 24-27, 2008

Universal Design

With the ACM/VSA arts
*Universal Design for
Learning Award*
comes responsibility:
accessibility for all



A Key Element

- From day one, principles embedded into design guidelines for architects and fabricators
- Incorporated Universal Design as key element of the Museum building and exhibit planning



What We Considered

- Equitable use
- Flexibility
- Ease of use
- Physical effort
- Lay out
- Lighting
- Sound
- Colors
- Flooring
- Variety



Flow: Circulation and Sight Lines

- Ensure space is easy to navigate
- Adults can always see their children
- Avoid large, cavernous spaces
- Avoid ceilings out of a child's range of vision



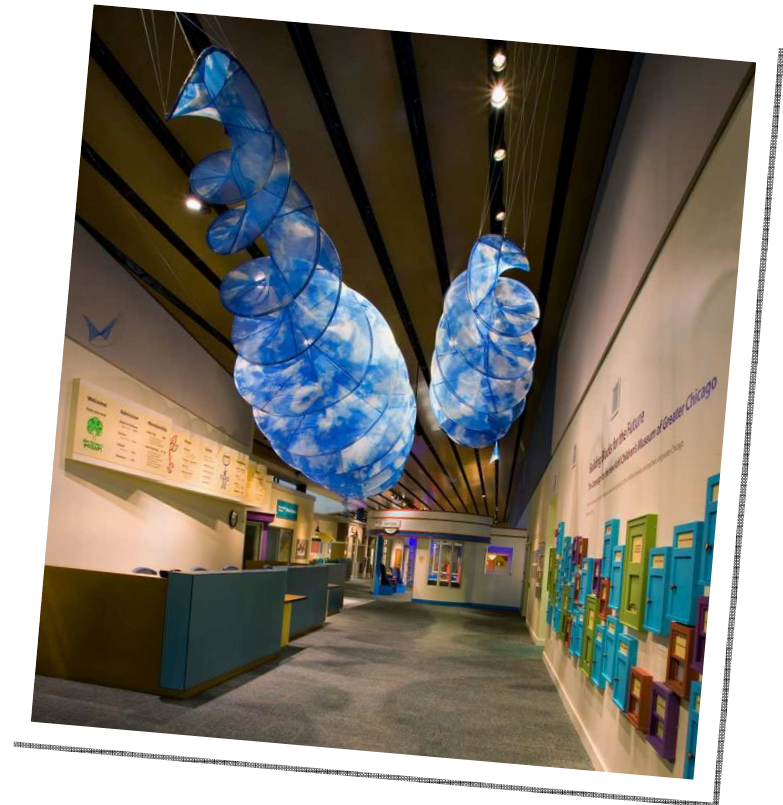
Access

- Disabled parking
- Outdoor walkways with ADA ramps
- Gradual, slightly ramped entrance way leading into Museum used by all Museum visitors
- Automatic front doors; weight, width, ease of regular door use
- Washrooms – family room + bench to facilitate changing older children with special needs
- No steps (except those leading to admin offices on upper level)
- Elevator to upper level



Entry

- Low and high counters designed into overall structure (not a one level counter)
- Space in entry way allows for strollers, wheelchairs, walkers or other mobility aids



Way-finding

- Map on floor uses pictures, icons
 - Helps non-readers and non-English speakers
- Every exhibit design includes infant areas, multiple points of entry
- Colors: general, whimsical, bright
 - Signage (font, size, effective contrast)
 - Braille



Way-finding *(continued)*

- Sounds: tests conducted in old Museum to determine noise level, calculate ratio of sound-absorbing panels
- Sound paneling exceeds requirements
- Floor, ceiling, lighting – LEED and Universal Design incorporated
- “Edu-Cubes” – flexible seating, easy to accommodate young children to senior citizens by turning cubes



Staff Training

- Sensory needs and play things
- First, no judgments; be sensitive to needs and be helpful
- Knowledge of why exhibits are designed the way they are
- Use variety of tools, playthings, materials assists children without fine motor skills to play, too (ex: adaptable brushes)
- Adjustable table heights as needed
- Non-breakable items, multitude of textures, smells, colors



Habitat Park

- Outdoor exhibition area with accessible paths/walkways
- Accessible tunnels
- Sensory sculpture and plants to touch, climb in or on
- Phase II is underway



The Story of Tyler

Tyler is a 7-year old child with autism who had never found a public place where he could relax and enjoy being with his family. For the first time, ever, Tyler and his family found the comfort to play and be together as a family at Kohl Children's Museum.

