# Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

# A History of Accessibility in Seattle

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted on July 26, 1990. Prior to the legislation, there were efforts within Seattle city government to provide barrier-free public access to buildings and services. Some of these efforts corresponded and complied with state and national laws, and others were initiated by City officials and Seattle residents.

## 1890

City utilities were free of charge to disabled adult residents and their families on a case-by-case basis.

Several petitions on file with the City Clerk's Office contain letters from Seattle residents asking for free access to the city's water supply due to disability.

## 1933

Ordinance 63772 required drivers to stop for blind persons who were crossing the street using designated white canes.

The next year, responding to requests from residents, Seattle began allowing blind and disabled passengers to ride for free on the city's streetcar system.

## 1963

The Recreation Advisory Council for the Handicapped (later the Advisory Council for Specialized Programs) was established to advise Parks Department staff on recreational programs for children and adults with disabilities.

## 1973

Section 504 of federal Rehabilitation Act was one of the first federal laws to extend civil rights to people with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination against disabled persons in any program receiving federal assistance.

## 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, broadening the requirements of Section 504 to cover nearly all employers and public facilities, including existing buildings.

www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/historic-preservation/special-projects/disability-history