

ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT 5

■ PARK PATHS AND RESTING PLACES

Overview

Parks should contain routes of varying lengths for various types of users. Park services and facilities should be easy to identify and accessible to all user groups.

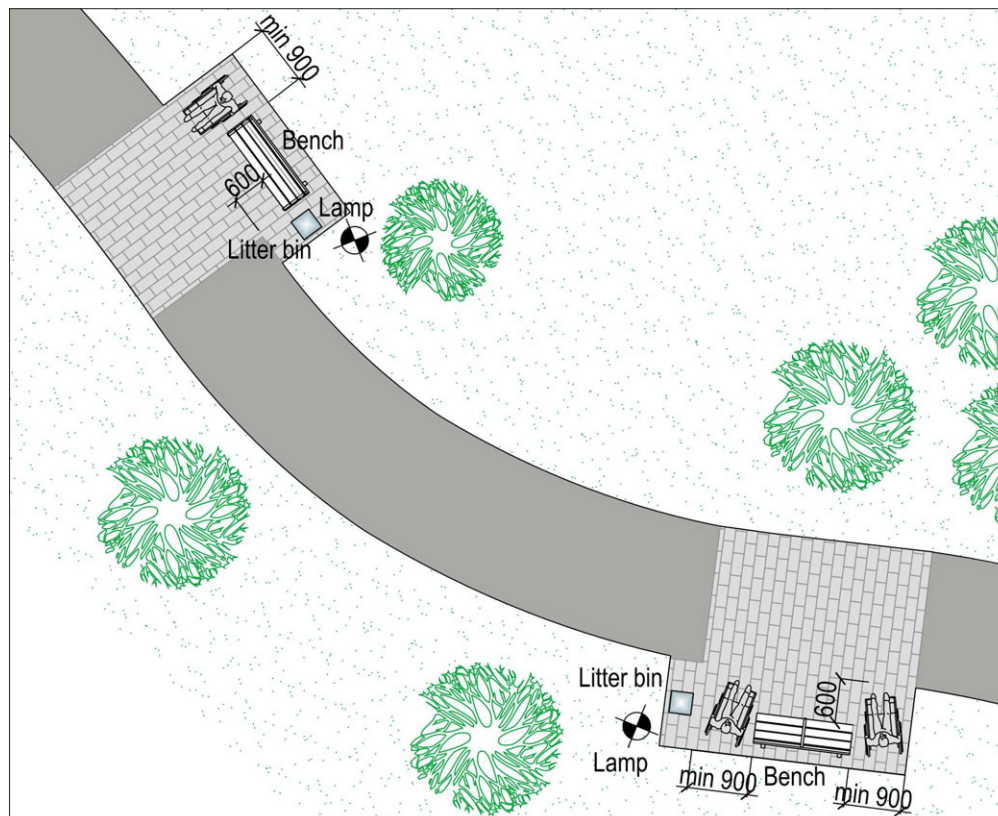
For the special level of accessibility, it is recommended that the distance between resting places is 50 metres. For the basic level of accessibility, a maximum distance of 250 metres is recommended.

Fragrances, sounds and tactile surfaces provide wonderful sensory experiences for all park user groups. Sensory “guides” such as the sound of running water are a special boon to persons who are partially sighted in particular, helping them to orientate themselves in relation to their surroundings. Strong-smelling plants should be placed in a separate section of the park.

The entire route should be lit uniformly, avoiding dark gaps. The lighting fixtures should be placed on one side of the path, avoiding direct glare. The lamp posts should be placed at a distance of 1 m from the edge of the path. For the special level of accessibility the minimum lighting requirement for paths is 10 lux, for path/trail intersections 15 lux, for ramps 30 lux, and for staircases 50 lux.

Paths

Where paths are maintained by machines, the minimum width of the paths should be 2,300 mm. The minimum clear width should be 1,500 mm, which is enough for persons needing an assistant or a guide dog. The minimum clear width for two wheelchairs meeting should be 1,800 mm. The minimum



SuRaKu Cards contain guidelines for planning, construction and maintenance of accessible, public outdoor areas.

The model designs outlined in the cards are examples of designs for an accessible environment. However, further advances in the quality of the environment and accessibility can be achieved by continued product and design development.

The instructions and specifications in the cards are based on the accessibility criteria established for the SuRaKu Project, and on the model designs.

Two levels of accessibility have been defined for the areas in question. The requirements for the basic level of accessibility apply to all areas. More stringent requirements for the special level of accessibility apply to the following areas:

- Pedestrian street milieus
- City centre areas with public facilities and services
- Areas surrounding institutions providing health care and services for the elderly and persons with a disability
- Areas with a lot of housing targeted at the elderly and persons with a disability
- Public transport terminals and areas surrounding public bus stops
- Sports areas and playgrounds catering to all types of users
- Accessible routes in recreational areas, etc.

Vegetation

Planting of vegetation should be designed and the vegetation maintained effectively to rule out the possibility of any inconvenient physical or visual obstructions as well as the risk of causing danger to park users.

Poisonous, allergy-causing and thorny plants should not be used in parks.

For further instructions on the use of vegetation, see Instruction Card 6, "Public Playgrounds".

Applicable rules and regulations

RakMK F1 (Specifications for accessible building construction)

Other instructions

RT Building Information Cards 09-10884, 98-10565

KT-02 (General Working Instructions for Municipal Engineering)

Instructions of the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities:
www.esteeton.fi

SuRaKu Instruction Cards

- 1 Pedestrian crossings and pavements
- 2 Pedestrian street milieus and squares
- 3 Differences in elevation
- 4 Public courtyards
- 5 Park paths and resting places
- 6 Public playgrounds
- 7 Public bus stop areas
- 8 Temporary traffic arrangements

SuRaKu Accessibility Criteria Tables

Kerbstones at pedestrian crossings, Outdoor staircases, Ramps, Guidance paving flags, Demarcation strips, Loading islands, Gutters and gullies, Walking surfaces, Pedestrian crossing markings, Handrails, Railings, Push-button poles, Pedestrian crossing signs, Seating, Bollards, Pedestrian refuge islands, Tactile maps and information signboards, Warning areas.

For SuRaKu Instruction Cards and Accessibility Criteria in PDF format, see www.hel.fi/helsinkikaikille/

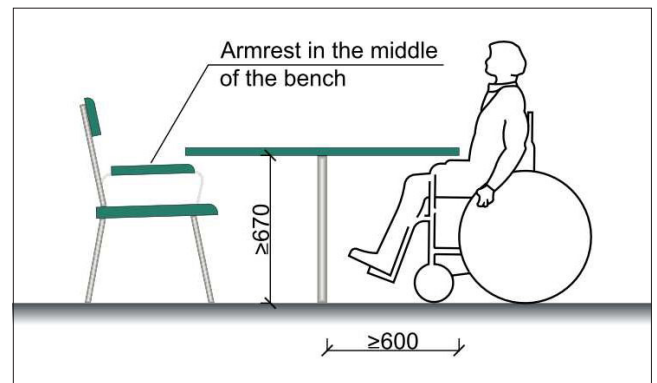
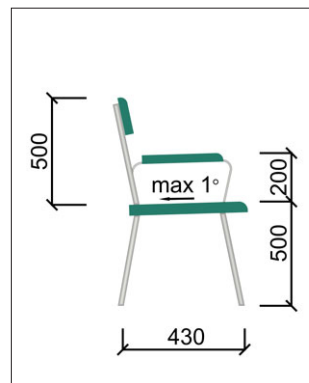
diameter of the turning circle for a manual wheelchair is 1,500 mm; an electric wheelchair needs 2,500 mm. The minimum clear height on the paths should be 2,200 mm.

Walking surfaces

It is recommended that paving materials and colours be varied in areas of differing functional classifications (e.g. trails and paths, and resting places).

For the special level of accessibility, the surface should be hard (granite and concrete paving flags, asphalt); for the basic level of accessibility, hard or medium-hard (e.g. compacted crushed stone fines) and non-slippery. The maximum allowable deviation from level is 5 mm. The maximum allowable joint width is also 5 mm.

For the special level of accessibility, the maximum allowable lateral inclination is 2% (3% for the basic level of accessibility). For the special level of accessibility, the maximum allowable longitudinal inclination is 5% (8% for the basic level of accessibility). The special requirements for ramps can be found on Instruction Card 3, "Differences in Elevation".



Resting places and seating

Resting places should be placed outside paths to allow unobstructed access for all, including wheelchair users. The paving materials in the resting places should differ from those of the paths.

The benches should have a backrest and armrests, and varying seat heights. Ordinarily, 450 mm is a suitable height from the ground, but 500–550 mm is better for persons with stiff knees or hips, and 300 mm is recommended for persons of short stature and children. 500 mm is a good bench seat height for wheelchair users wishing to transfer to the bench.

An adjoining space (min. width 900 mm) should be reserved at one end of the bench. The bench should have a removable armrest in the middle to help wheelchair users get onto and off the bench.

The colours used in the furniture should be in clear contrast to those of the paving material. A wheelchair space (min. width 800 mm) should be reserved at the table. Persons who are partially sighted must be able to distinguish between table and bench, and a contrast-colour edge in the table is one way of helping them in this. No sharp components or components causing collision or other risk are allowed in the furniture.

Signs

Signs should be placed accessibly, with enough standing and wheelchair space in front of the signboards. Tactile signs should be placed at a height of c. 1,100 mm from the ground. The lower part of the signboards should be detectable with a cane. The information boards should be at a height of 1,400–1,600 mm.