

For many users, walks and pathways are more than just a means of going from point *A* to point *B*; the walk is also the experience and it is interesting. Surfaces for stage 1 and 2 walkways should be stable and firm with nonslip textures. Grades for these walks would average about 3 percent, but not exceed 5 percent. Depending on the actual grades and lengths of walks, rest areas with places to sit should be provided at regular intervals. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Trail Planning Classification guidelines have been widely distributed and used as a model for designing these elements of walks and pathways.

### Open space for older users

The aging of the population of North America presents particular opportunities for site designers, and many firms have already specialized in the design of places especially for older folks. Accounting for the interests and needs of the older person in a design requires some understanding of the effects of aging on the individual (see Table 4.12).

Beyond the obvious design issues, there are steps that can be taken to help make the walkway and park in general more user friendly. Visually impaired users may require tactile signals to receive information on their surroundings. Texture changes at breaks in grade or intersections may also assist elderly users who may have reduced depth perception capability. Installing a handrail at a sudden change in grade or a stair on an outdoor walk sends a clear signal to the user and provides the information in a subtle fashion. Where possible both stairs and ramps should be provided; for many people, walking down a ramp is more difficult than using stairs.

In the stage 1 integrated walk network, pavement, color, and texture as well as signage can be employed to assist the users with way finding and guidance. Construction of barricades to obstruct vehicles must consider the disabled. A cable or chain strung across a pathway can be a significant obstruction, and a system of removable bollards might be preferable (Fig. 4.32). By developing clear simple signs with thematic use of color, letter style, or texture as a means of communication, significant information can be provided with a minimum of detail. The use of color to identify a particular degree of accessibility or stage of a facility is simple, direct, and without stigma. In addition, lettering styles can be made consistent throughout a facility to convey a maximum amount of information in a simple useful form.

Walkways should be visually interesting, but in general, encroachment by trees and shrubbery are to be avoided. As seen in Fig. 4.33, lower limbs should be removed to a minimum of 8 ft of overhead clearance at the walkway and no closer than 1 ft to the edge of the walkway. If it is necessary to have a grate in a walkway, the maximum opening in the direction of travel is  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Larger openings may catch cane tips or bicycle tires.

The design of open areas should give particular attention to way finding. Large undefined areas may be confusing and underused rather than providing opportunities for viewing activities in open-space areas. In evaluating open space, its