



# Statewide Urban Design and Specifications

## What Is SUDAS?

The Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS) program, a nonprofit corporation, provides uniform design guidelines and construction specifications for Iowa's urban public improvement projects. Iowa is the only state to develop and implement uniform urban design standards and construction specifications that are used statewide.

## A Brief History

In the late 1980s, 16 central Iowa urban jurisdictions, including the City of Des Moines, surrounding cities, and two counties, began developing common standards for urban public improvements. Their efforts came into focus when, in 1995, the governor's office formed a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Transportation to investigate ways to use Iowa's Road Use Tax Fund more efficiently. One of the task force's recommendations was that agencies "adopt common standards for construction specifications." By 1998, the central Iowa group had expanded to 34 jurisdictions, including several communities outside the Des Moines area, and had published manuals detailing their design standards and construction specifications.

In 2004, a nonprofit entity was created to establish a mechanism for statewide ownership of the manuals: the Iowa SUDAS Corporation, more often simply referred to as SUDAS. SUDAS is financed by the Iowa DOT and Iowa's cities and counties through their transportation planning agencies and is governed by a 38-member board of directors. The board of directors consists of engineers from cities, counties, consulting firms, and the Iowa DOT.

Statewide ownership of the manuals makes them truly the statewide standards for urban public improvements.

## Why Uniform Standards?

Iowa's urban communities do not have to adopt the SUDAS manuals. By adopting them, however, local jurisdictions are relieved of having to develop their own. In addition, when designs and specifications are consistent from community to community, more contractors tend to bid on improvement projects because they know what to expect. Construction mistakes are also reduced. These factors are estimated to save millions of dollars statewide each year.





## Promoting uniformity of urban design and construction across Iowa

### How Does It Work?

SUDAS staff meet three times a year with, altogether, about 100 volunteers representing cities, counties, consultants, contractors, and the Iowa DOT. The goal of the meetings is to introduce and reach consensus on revisions and additions to the manuals before presenting the changes to the board of directors for final approval.

### Advantages of Using SUDAS

First of all, citizens simply appreciate uniform public improvements (e.g., similar sidewalk ramps) from town to town. In addition, by using standard designs and specifications, Iowa's cities enjoy the following benefits:

- Uniformity of urban design and specifications across the state
- Reduction of contractor confusion and mistakes due to differing specifications, encouraging more bidders
- A mechanism to be proactive in research and studies for new and improved urban design and specifications
- A method for study and statewide implementation of the latest techniques and material uses
- A forum that allows state and local governments to collaborate with industry
- Reduced costs through uniformity, understanding, and acceptance (conservatively estimated at a savings of \$25M/year statewide)

### For More Information

For more information on the SUDAS program and to view copies of the SUDAS manuals, visit [iowasudas.org](http://iowasudas.org).

**Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specifications**

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