

## Hillclimb Assists

By Vince Lyons, City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development

“Hillclimb Assists” is an official Public Amenity as identified in the *Downtown Amenity Features and Standards* document adopted by City Council in 2007 as part of the original Downtown Land Use Code. On page 12 of this document, the Eligibility and Guidelines for this amenity are spelled out. One key eligibility criteria is that the Hillclimb must provide a continuous direct route across the block connecting parallel Avenues. These must incorporate a mechanical assist to convey pedestrians up at least 80% of the vertical distance between the two Avenues. Hillclimb Assists are permitted on 38 blocks with steep slopes as shown on the Public Amenity Map J in the Downtown Land Use Code.

The Hillclimb Assists that I know of that have been officially approved and received extra floor area are:

- **IDX tower** connecting 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, at Marion and Madison
- **Exchange Building / Wells Fargo Center** connection 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. at Marion and Madison. The Exchange Building is not part of the officially approved route, but it is open to the public (and features a beautiful lobby).
- **Washington Mutual Tower #1** – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. at University and Seneca

Not bonused but functioning as Hillclimb Assists or ancillary to other amenities include:

- **Norton Building** connecting 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. at Columbia Street.
- **New Central Library** connecting 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. at Madison.
- **Columbia Center** connecting 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. at Columbia and Cherry with escalators and a tunnel.

There is a great route to the Central Library that starts with the bridge over Alaskan Way and Western with the Marion Street pedestrian Overpass, leads one into the Wells Fargo escalator and through the bank lobby, coming out onto 3<sup>rd</sup> and Marion corner, crossing the street to go up the IDX Hillclimb escalators to the corner of Madison and 4<sup>th</sup>, crossing the street to the Central Library, and then on up through the Library escalators to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Then there is the well known path through the Rainier Tower (“golf tee” building at 1301 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.) through to the concourse of the Skinner Building, which surfaces in the joint lobby between One and Two Union Square projects. A level walkway proceeds all the way to the WA State Convention and Trade Center’s open plaza and into pathway around the east side by Hubbell to 9th and Pine. This latter coupling of pathways was the result of Design Review on Two Union and the CCU permit on the WSCTC.

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