



Residential Building Accessibility in the RDBN

It is important to be reminded that the presence and participation of persons with disabilities in our communities is significant. The percentage of persons with disabilities of all ages will increase, especially over the next few decades. This growth will include persons with all types of disabilities, each type having their own specific design needs.

The roles of persons with disabilities in society are ever expanding and need to be recognized. The incorporation of accessible design into all buildings, beyond what is required by the Building Code, is an important consideration.

The vast majority of people want to remain in their communities as they age. Appropriate housing options can be a barrier to those that desire to age in place. Often home and building design is tailored to a narrow range of physical abilities.

Most homes have been designed for a particular group of individuals - adults raising families - and these home designs pose challenges for older adults and people with disabilities. Even for parents, steps to the home can be difficult to

navigate when pushing a stroller.

The design of homes for a relatively narrow range of abilities poses inconveniences for some. For older adults and people with disabilities, the design can make the difference between aging in place and having to move to another setting.



Small modifications, such as grab bars and improved lighting, can make a big difference for many people. More fundamentally, getting home design right the first time, through features such as main-floor bathrooms and wider doorways, can greatly extend adults' ability to enjoy their homes for a lifetime.

Universal design is a term that describes those features that enable people of all ages and abilities to enjoy a product. For

housing, universal design features typically include elements such as lever faucets and door handles, roll-under sinks in kitchens and bathrooms, and wider doorways.

A home designed with *visitability* offers a more modest set of features for the main level of a detached home. These include at least one zero-step entrance and a bathroom and bedroom on the main level.

These features are not difficult to build into new homes, and homes built with universal design features look much like other homes. Many residents (and their friends and family) do not recognize the importance of such features until they find themselves physically impaired in some way.

Homebuilders respond to market demands and design according to building codes. Currently, demands and codes do not provide a strong incentive to include universal design features, despite the fact that they are much needed by residents of all ages and particularly by older residents, who are more likely to have a physical disability.



Making Residential Buildings More Accessible

There are a number of benefits to incorporating universal features into your home. Many features such as grab bars can be easily retrofitted, however some features such as wider hallways must be completed during construction. Universal design features make a home more useable for everyone and can add value to your home. It also makes your home more visitable and may allow you to age in place.

Area	Guideline
Entrance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One entrance without steps and a flat threshold or a with ramp with minimal slope 2. Minimum 60" by 60" level maneuvering space at stepless entrance 3. Outdoor walks with a firm and even surface and a continuous path of travel 4. 36" minimum exterior door with lever hardware
Bathrooms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least one three-piece bathroom on the main level that is accessible 2. Clear floor space in room with 60" diameter turning circle 3. Adaptable cabinets with under sink kneespace 4. Broadly applied blocking (reinforcement) inside walls around toilets and bathing fixtures for future installation of grab bars 5. Offset controls in tub or shower to minimize stooping, bending and reaching 6. Lever-type sink faucets 7. Toilet in a 48" by 56" space with centerline of toilet 18" from wall 8. Curbless showers, if installed, at least 36" by 60", plus a standard tub 9. 32" min lavatory counter height with lever faucet control 10. Adaptable cabinets to reveal kneespace under lavatory - exposed piping in kneespace should be padded or concealed 11. When tub or shower are installed, select models designed to accept a portable bench or bathing seat 12. Adjustable height hand-held shower head in addition to standard fixed shower head 13. Anti-scald devices on all plumbing fixtures 14. Mirror positioned to backsplash
Bedrooms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A room that can be used as a master bedroom on the main level 2. Height adjustable closet shelves and clothes rod 3. Maneuvering room between bed and closet 4. 60" turning radius in bedroom

Area	Guideline
General Interior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hall widths of 42" (where possible) 2. 36" minimum interior doors with lever hardware 3. Maneuvering space at doors (60" by 60") 4. Increased number of electrical outlets (18" min height) for additional lighting and alarm indicators, especially in bedrooms 5. Flashing and audible fire/smoke detectors 6. Rocker or paddle-type light switches 44" max above floor 7. Low pile carpet or smooth anti-slip flooring 8. View windows at 36" max height 9. Front-mounted controls on washer and dryer 10. Stairs with a closed riser 11. Stairs with handrails on both sides and handrail extensions
Kitchens	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear floor space with a 60" min turning circle 2. Adaptable cabinets to reveal kneespace at sink and under work surface near cooking appliance. 3. Cooktop or range with front or side-mounted controls and staggered burners to eliminate dangerous reaching 4. Exposed piping and any sharp or hot elements in any kneespace should be insulated or concealed 5. Single-lever faucet controls 6. Adjustable height shelves in wall cabinets 7. Refrigerator/freezer with freezer in the bottom or side-by-side refrigerator/freezer 8. Variable height counter surfaces 9. Continuous counter between stove and sink 10. Loop or other easy-to-use handles on drawers and cabinets 11. Task lighting

