

What is universal design?

Universal design is the art of creating environments that are attractive and user friendly for people of all ages and abilities. It is the only design concept that consciously designs to accommodate peoples' differences—not their similarities.

A universal home is not noticeably different from a typical home, on the inside or outside.

An access door in the side of a bathtub would be an example of an accessible design element that would not be a universal design element. Most people would not see the door as extending the tub's usefulness; it would only be a benefit to a person with special needs. On the other hand, a no-step entrance to the home would benefit everyone regardless of ability and would therefore be considered a universal design feature.

The aesthetics of universal design

Universal design not only adds functionality to a home, it can also make it a more pleasant place to live. A good universal design plan should be so attractive that you don't even realize it is a universal design home—it's simply a home that everyone would want.

The bottom line: What will universal design cost me?

Here's the good news; a home with universal design features adds about \$1,000 to the cost of a standard home of the same size. Working with your builder, ask about universal design features and spend time today thinking about the features that are right for you now and in the future.

Why universal design?

There are three primary reasons to consider universal design.

- 1 General ease of use.** Moving furniture, bringing in the groceries or preparing a meal becomes easier in a home with universal design features.
- 2 Visit-ability.** Nearly every one of us knows an elderly or physically challenged person who has difficulty getting around. By incorporating universal design features into your new home, you are able to share your new home with the people who are important to you.
- 3 The third reason is that we're all getting older every day!** There may come a time in life when a walker or wheelchair is necessary. A home that follows the precepts of universal design may allow you to live at home longer and with more independence.

Often confused with accessible design, universal refers to homes designed to be accessible and useable by everyone regardless of ability. The temptation is to equate universal design with wheelchair ramps, but that is accessible design—not universal design. As the name implies, universal design elements should have universal appeal and application.

Welcome to a new era in housing design
The Universal Design Home,
a residence created to be usable by all family members, whether young or old.



Easy universal design building changes

No-step entry

In most new construction projects, creating a no-step entry is simply a matter of planning. Work with your landscape architect to eliminate the need for exterior steps to create an entrance that will allow you to move large objects in and out of your new home easily. You will appreciate it the day you move in.

Outlet height

Standard outlet height is 12 inches above the floor line. Raising them to 18 inches off the floor makes them easier to find and use.

Light switches

Lowering light switches to (#) inches makes them easier to use by everyone, including children.

Door width

Standard door widths of 28 to 32 inches are too narrow to accommodate a walker or a wheelchair. In most new homes your builder can expand doorways to between 32 and 36 inches wide which will make your home feel more spacious.

Kitchens and bathrooms

Incorporating wider floor areas into kitchens and bathrooms, with at least a 60" turning radius, makes for more comfortable surroundings and creates a feeling of spaciousness in these often-used areas.

Sill height

Sills on exterior doors are an unnecessary barrier to entry, as well as a tripping hazard. By eliminating raised sills on exterior doors you will create a smoother transition into your new living space, while making it more accessible.

When you include universal design features for your new home, you make it more user-friendly for you, your family and your future.

Learn more.

To learn more about the ZeroStep program that explains the full range of benefits available with Universal Design please call:

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