

Universal Design – a concept for everyone.



The intention of universal design is structures that are barrier free and open to people of all ages and sizes and abilities.

If you are building or remodeling your home, here are some ideas to make it easier to live in - now and as you grow old:

Floors should be stable, firm and slip resistant. Heavily padded carpet can be more difficult to walk on for people with balance problems.

Use 36 inch wide doors and have a clear entry/exit space in every

room with a five foot diameter for wheel chair maneuverability.



Lever handles for opening doors are easier to operate than grip and twist knobs.

Light switches with large flat panels are easier to use than small toggle switches.

A barrier free shower could include a roll-in floor, a seat, water controls that are easy to reach (not too high or too low) and a shower head with adjustable heights. Lever type water controls are easier to use. Install backer boards in walls so grab bars can be added as needed.

Install smoke detectors that flash a warning light as well as emit noise.

Leave knee space under counters/sinks so sitting is an option.

Use front end controls on cooktops to avoid reaching over burners.

Note: there are controls which are made to prevent children using them.

**Community Planning and Economic Development –
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Equitable use

Is this design useable for people with different abilities?

Example – ramps instead of stairs.

Flexibility in use

Do things have a wide range of function for people with different needs?

Example – adjustable seating.

Simple and Intuitive use

Can users – different ages, languages-understand what to do?

Example – Use meaningful icons.



Perceptible Information

Can people with different abilities receive needed information?

Example – smoke/carbon monoxide alarms with flashing lights as well as sirens.

Tolerance for Error

Does the design protect people from hazards?

Example – high contrast colors used for signs, stair edges and counter edges.

Low Physical Effort

Can the design be used comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue?

Example – lever handles on doors.

Size and Space for Approach and Use

Does the design allow people of all sizes and abilities access?

Example – wide doors.

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