

Universal Design Policy and Legislation in West Virginia

West Virginia already has a policy that requires homes built with HOME funds to be constructed using UD principles, as well as two significant pieces of legislation that:

- protects groups like Habitat from being sued if they build UD homes
- requires home builders to provide home buyers with a list of UD options for their new home.

A Sample of Universal Design Features

Entrances

- At least one entrance with a threshold at a one-half inch maximum rise
- Lighting along outside walkways and at every entrance for better night vision.
- A 5'X5' clear space outside entry doors to make opening doors easier
- Doors that are 36" wide and have easy to use lever handles

General Bathroom Features

- Reinforced walls around toilet and bathtub/shower
- Knee space under sinks and protection to prevent contact with hot pipes.
- Mirrors placed at various heights
- Toilets with higher seats
- Combination toilet/bidet for hygiene needs
- Roll-in showers with fold down seats

Fixture Controls

- Single-lever, or other easy to use water controls like touch faucets
- Hand-held shower heads, or adjustable height moveable shower heads

Storage

- Adjustable height closet rods and shelves to allow diverse storage options
- Power operated clothing carousel to bring items easily around

Hardware, Switches and Controls

- Lever door handles
- Loop handle pulls on cabinet doors
- Easy touch rocker switches .

Home Automation

- Intercom doorbells
- Flashing fire alarms for people with hearing impairments

Kitchen

- Counters with clear knee space for use in a seated position. .
- Rolling carts for easy maneuvering of items around the kitchen.
- Color contrasting on counter tops to allow for easy recognition of counter edges and to prevent spills.
- Lazy Susan for easy to use storage
- Side-by-side refrigerator for easy and convenient access to refrigerator items
- Front mounted control on range that contrasts with the color of the appliance to facilitate easy reach and use.

Laundry

- Front loading washer and dryer with front mounted controls

For more information, contact:
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What Is Universal Design

The intent of universal design (UD) as it relates to housing is to simplify life for everyone by making the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost.

UD benefits people of all ages, sizes and abilities. Simply put, Universal Design says "welcome" to everyone

"Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

***–Ron Mace
Founder, NC State University
Center for Universal Design***

Misconceptions About Universal Design

Most people think UD is accessible design just for people with disabilities, or that it is expensive to build.

The facts are that a UD home is appropriate for many different people in different circumstances, not just those with disabilities. Also the estimated cost of including UD features in new construction may be as little as \$1,000.

Universal Design means one size really does fit all. We don't need to build ramps because every building has at least one no-step entrance and bathrooms didn't need modified because they're designed to meet a variety of needs. UD helps insure that people can move about freely, indoors and out.

Who Can Use A Universal Design Home

There are many times in life when anyone could benefit from a UD home:

- When you're carrying groceries or other shopping bags into your home
- When you need to help a family member or friend with special needs get in and out of your house
- When you're moving furniture or transporting a baby stroller
- When you or a family member has a temporary disability from a slip on the ice or a sporting accident
- When emergency responders are called

Universal Design does not limit the market of potential buyers – it increases it! A UD home can appeal to newlyweds looking for a home for life, a family with children, or a couple relocating for their retirement years.

Hidden Features of Universal Design

Universal Design does not mean grab bars in every bathroom – it means reinforcing walls so you can put in grab bars if necessary.

UD doesn't mean the home must be a one-floor ranch style – it can easily be two floors if the stairways are wider for the possible future installation of a stair lift or closets are stacked to make it easier to someday add a residential elevator

Whether it is new sale or resale, a Universal Design home can appeal to just about everyone – because the features are hidden.

If you were driving down the street, you could not tell the UD home from

other houses on the street. There is no ramp to point out that someone with a mobility impairment lives here. There's a beautiful sloped walkway that leads to a no-step entrance at the front door, side or back door, or from the garage.

Even on the inside UD features have to be pointed out. The side-by-side refrigerator with the bottom freezer, the counters at different heights so you can sit and peel potatoes or write your grocery list, the raised dishwasher and stove to save your poor, aching back.

The layout of rooms on the entry level is also important - a den that can be converted to a bedroom, a powder room, a family room or living area where everyone can gather, and a kitchen so living on one floor is possible if other areas of the home are not immediately accessible.



We need to build homes to meet our changing needs as the years go by. Designers, builders, developers, and other housing professionals need to work together to insure that we are building houses all West Virginians can call home