

What Is Universal Design?

Universal design (UD) is a design form that strives to create products and environments that can be used by all people, regardless of race, age, sex, culture, gender, weight, and ability.

Its goal is to create a safer, more comfortable and user-friendly place to live. It incorporates accessible and barrier-free design into homes, creating housing that is marketable to everyone. Universal design avoids using special assistive technology, and instead employs design features and consumer products that are easy to use and widely available.

Seven Principles of Universal Design

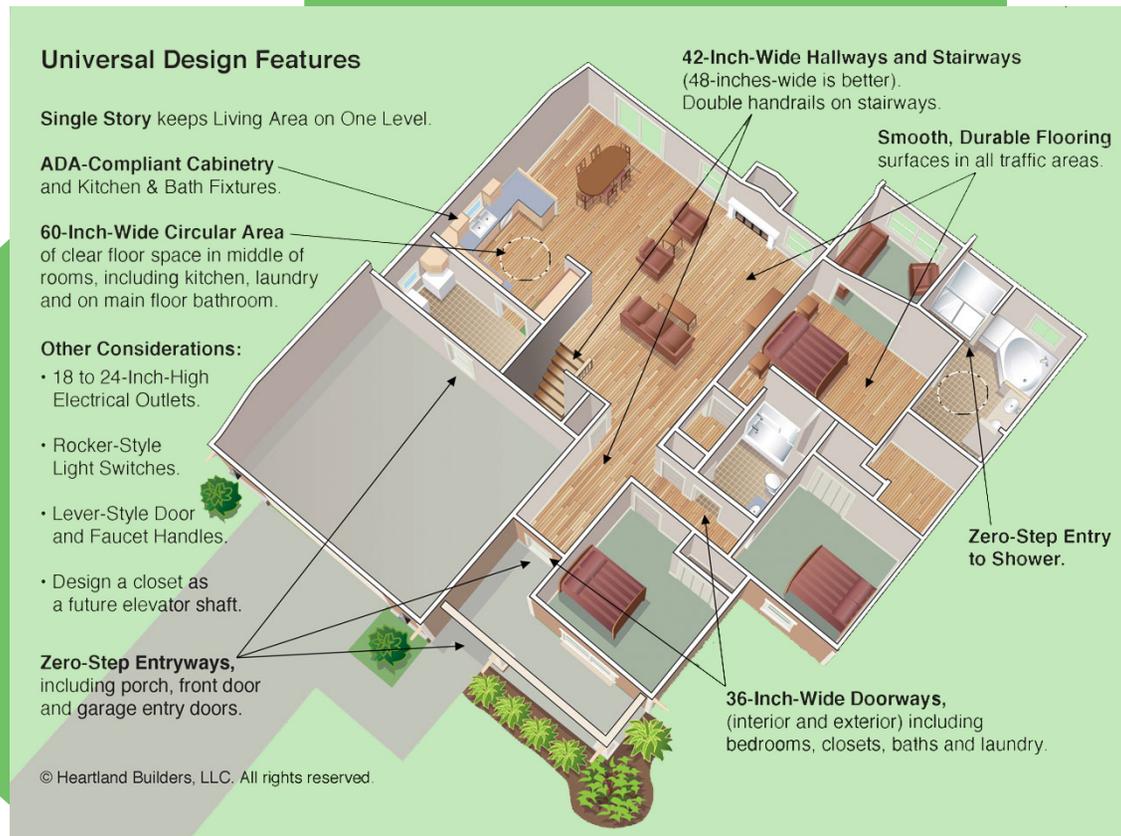
1. Equitable Use
2. Flexibility in Use
3. Simple and Intuitive
4. Perceptible Information
5. Tolerance for Error
6. Low Physical Effort
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

Why incorporate Universal Design into homes?

With the number of individuals over 50 growing 2% each year, demand for barrier-free homes has increased accordingly. Home designs today often present challenges for this aging population. Implementing UD features can create environments where people can remain in their homes as they age.

15.7% of Sacramento County's population is disabled*, which provides even more demand for Universal Design features. UD provides a safer environment for disabled and elderly people, promoting an independent, "aging-in-place" lifestyle. Because Universal Design features are meant to be used by all ages and abilities, these homes anticipate the future needs of individuals and are still useful at their current age.

*American Community Survey 2007



As of July 2004, builders of for-sale and rental homes are required to offer to install accessible housing design features, but only at the purchaser's cost. This applies to all single family, duplex, triplex, condominium, and town homes.

Additional Resources:

Center for Universal Design:
<http://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud>

UniversalDesign.org:
<http://www.universaldesign.org>

Sacramento County Department of Planning & Community Development:
<http://www.planning.saccounty.net>

Department of Housing & Community Development:
<http://www.hcd.ca.gov>

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How will Universal Design benefit the developer?

- There are many incentives for developers to incorporate UD into their own housing projects:
- Universal design homes are marketable to the entire public because they are designed with all abilities in mind.
- Developers can receive density bonuses for implementing UD features.
- There is a growing demand for UD home features, especially from the aging baby boomer generation. The number of individuals over 55 is expected to reach 85 million by 2014.*
- UD installation practices are easily integrated into home building businesses.

*American Community Survey 2007