



## Inclusive Housing Design

Visitability  
Universal Design  
Accessible Housing for All

[www.montanahomechoice.org](http://www.montanahomechoice.org)

(406) 449-3120 ext. 11

### What is Visitability?

Visitability is a goal in design to remove the common minimal barriers that prevent people from visiting the homes of their friends, neighbors, and family in all housing. A visitable home is designed in a way that anyone is able to come for a visit, regardless of age or physical ability.

Making a home visitable is simple and costs little or nothing, what it really calls for is a change of mindset to think of the whole population when designing a home. The minimum requirements for a home to qualify as visitable are:

1. There is at least one no-step entrance;
2. There is an accessible bathroom on the ground floor; and
3. Each doorway on the main floor has a minimum of 32-inches of clear space. (36 inch doorway)

However, those are just the minimum standards to visitability. To make a home even more visitor friendly homes should have a bedroom on the ground floor, and outlets and switches at a reachable height, all common areas should be accessible and useable by all. All or most of ground level floor should be accessible.

**For more on visitability see:** Visitability:UM Rural Institute Montana Disability and Health Program, Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities

<http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Publications/Visitability.htm>

[Visit-Ability: Powerpoint](#) Presentations Presented on February 19 and 20, 2008, in Missoula, and Helena, Montana by Eleanor Smith, Founder of Concrete Change and the Visitability movement

<http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Publications/IntroVisitability.pdf>

<http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Publications/Visitability.pdf>

HUD Visitability Guide -Strategies for Providing Accessibility and Visit-ability for HOPE VI and Mixed Finance Homeownership: <http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/strategies.pdf>

“Accessibility and Visitability Features in Single-family Homes: A Review of State and Local Activity” Report [http://research.aarp.org/il/2002\\_03\\_homes.html](http://research.aarp.org/il/2002_03_homes.html)

Concrete Change is an international advocacy effort to make all homes visitable. Includes useful powerpoint presentation on zero-step entry ways. <http://www.concretechange.org/>

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Research Center on Universal Design site:  
<http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/visitability/>

## What is Universal Design?

***“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 of the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University***

Universal Design in housing is more than visitability; it is adaptability and usability. Instead of thinking of the whole population as visitors, it calls for housing designers to think of the whole population as occupants. A universally designed house is visitable as well as adaptable to anyone who may live in the home. Common features of a universally designed house are:

1. At least one stepless entrance
2. An open plan design (minimizes hallways and doorways and maximizes sight lines).
3. At least one bedroom and accessible bathroom on the ground floor.
4. Each door has a minimum of 32-inches of clear space. (36 inch door)
5. Five feet diameter turning space in all rooms (including bathroom).
6. Hallways and archways at least 42 inches wide.
7. All stairs should be adaptable to a lift if necessary, and have handrails that extend beyond the top and bottom risers.
8. At least one bathroom with accessible bathing features such as a curbless shower, or transfer tub, and all bathrooms with reinforcements built in for grab bars if they need to be installed later.

### **Links for more information on Universal Design**

[http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/pubs\\_p/docs/PublicationsList.pdf](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/pubs_p/docs/PublicationsList.pdf)

The Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University is the leading organization on Universal Design. The site is a comprehensive resource on Universal Design offering research, information, technical assistance, design ideas, links to additional resources, and more.

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

Universal Design Alliance website resource website.

<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/PDF/remodel.pdf> - “Residential Remodeling and Universal Design: Making Homes More Comfortable and Accessible” an article available from HUD (large file) with pictures and instructions showing how to make a home Universally Designed. It gives examples of features of Universal Design for the whole home, ranging from the most basic to the most extensive.

<http://www.aarp.org/life/homedesign/> - This is the Universal Design main page for the AARP website with links to information about Universal Design and ideas, tips and checklists to make your home’s design safe and barrier free.

<http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/ercud/indexwelcome.htm> - Rehabilitation Engineering and Research Center on Universal Design (RERC UD) at Buffalo has news and information on its research towards the advancement of Universal Design.

## How to Build Accessible Housing

Below are links to different resources on accessible design and construction

### Accessible Building Products

<http://www.toolbase.org/ToolbaseResources/level3.aspx?BucketID=2&CategoryID=22>

Building industry technical assistance website on Universal Design.

<http://www.toolbase.org/Home-Building-Topics/Universal-Design/dabp> – ToolBase Services keeps an updated list of accessible products for home construction searchable by room and product type.

### Resources for Building Housing that Meets Accessibility Legal Requirements

<http://www.fairhousingfirst.org/index.asp> - Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST (Fair Housing Instruction, Resources, Support, Technical Guidance) website offers training, education, and legal materials on ADA and Fair Housing Act compliance. The organization also conducts site trainings on compliance with the Fair Housing Act and Disability Rights Laws.

<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/PDF/FAIRHOUSING/fairfull.pdf> - HUD's guide to building housing that meets Fair Housing Act standards.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/disabilities/accessibilityR.cfm> - This HUD website provides information on the housing accessibility requirements for both private and federally assisted housing.

### Ramps

<http://www.wheelchairramp.org/> - This site offers a comprehensive manual on designing and constructing modular ramps for your home.

For technical assistance regarding developing housing that is accessible, usable, and marketable to the maximum extent possible across the age and ability spectrum, please contact Michael M. O'Neil, State Director, Montana Home Choice Coalition, AWARE Inc. at (406) 449-3120 ext. 11

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