

Creating Inclusive Environments: Housing Design and Community Visitability

According to the 2000 census, 20% of Americans identify themselves as having a disability. As our population ages, we expect to see these numbers increase dramatically.

Universal design and community *visitability* standards are approaches to housing and neighborhood planning and development which serve the entire population of our communities, regardless of age, size, stature, or physical ability.

Incorporating these design standards into dwelling features and neighborhood amenities is intended to eliminate any stigma or “special” appearance of features that allow access to be fully inclusive for every member of the community and to make every home and neighborhood accessible to anyone who may choose to visit.

Examples of universal design features for housing may include such things as:

- Lever handled door hardware and faucets
- Large, rocker-style light switches
- Extra lighting fixtures
- Hand-held flexible shower fixtures
- Adjustable hanging closet rods and shelving systems
- Wider doorways
- Appliances, fixtures, and cabinetry which allows knee space below the work surface

- Intercom call boxes at entry doors

Visitability communities include features such as:

- Zero-step approaches and entrances to all residences
- Extra wide sidewalks with curb cuts at appropriate intervals and limited slopes
- Easy access to public transportation options
- Accessible doorways
- At least a half-bath in the ground floor of every dwelling

For More Information on Barrier-Free Environments:

www.planning.org/affordablereader/pracplanner/visitabilityvol2no4.htm

www.huduser.org/periodicals/rrr/remodel.html

www.huduser.org/publications/destech/resid.html

www.concretechange.org