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Universal Design Comes Home

Counties Tackle Housing Deficiencies Head On

Saavy local leaders already know what the latest research has confirmed — an overwhelming majority of people want to “age in place.”

Localities are seeing first hand the impact that aging baby boomers are having on the housing market. There are now 77 million boomers in the United States and they own nearly half of all the homes. The AARP study titled *Beyond 50.05*, which was released this past summer, found that 84 percent of AARP members surveyed said they want to remain in their own homes, but 87 percent said they thought that their homes would not meet their needs.

Leaders in many cities and counties across the country are taking a proactive approach to ensure that a portion of their current and future housing inventories

can accommodate the needs of their aging populations. Universal design is being incorporated into the variety of approaches that these communities are pursuing.

Prince William County, VA

Prince William County, the third fastest growing region in the *See Home, page 8*

California Targets Housing Issues

Legislature Seeks to Improve Livability of Housing

by John Paul Scott, AIA

California is in the process of taking several steps to improve the livability of its future housing stock through mandatory and voluntary regulations. The first step is a visitability requirement for a certain portion of housing units in projects that would otherwise be exempt from adaptability or accessibility. The second is the development of a model Universal Design Ordinance and its associated checklist of available accessible features that could be added to the unit.

For more than two decades, the California Building Code (CBC) has included accessibility requirements that reflect the Fair Housing Act. Both the CBC and the Fair Housing Act exempted single family homes, apartments under three units, condominium projects under four units and carriage units (i.e., a dwelling unit above its personal parking garage). In addition, the CBC and the Fair Housing Act exempted multi-story units, such as townhouses, when they occurred in buildings or facilities with-

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Osolinski Architects/Cooper Residence

This universally designed house features a zero-step entrance.



Regulation Is Not the Answer

Even before the invasion of Iraq, there were signs posted on the lawns of many of my neighbors in Takoma Park, MD (admittedly a liberal-minded community) proclaiming: "War is Not the Answer". I think there is a parallel in the effort to create universally designed environments -- "Regulation is Not the Answer".

There seems to be a mentality inside and outside the Washington, DC Beltway that if there is a problem, making a rule will fix it. My experience in developing, interpreting and applying accessibility regulations on a daily basis, has brought me to the conclusion that regulations result in minimal and grudging compliance, but rarely in good design. In fact, the Title III ADA regulations, due to their vague language (that has the power of law), have resulted in creating a war zone between owners and plaintiff attorneys and often result in poor and uninspired designs.

I don't believe it is possible through the use of regulations to motivate designers, developers and building owners to take the pro-active positions and adopt the long range thinking necessary to create universal designs. While regulation may be needed to obtain the minimum criteria necessary for basic accessibility, attempts to regulate open

ended ideas like universal design, only stifle creativity and stymie efforts to continuously improve designs that are needed to fit the needs and desires of a rapidly aging and evolving society.

I believe that education is the best method to stimulate the evolution of universal design. If you show a creative person a good example, they will often try to develop something even better. If you explain how many people will benefit from a good design, solutions will evolve that appeal to that market.

The New York City Mayor's Committee on the Handicapped recently issued a request for

proposals to develop standards for universal design -- regulations that would require a minimum level of universal design in the construction of buildings in New York City. I fear that this will be perceived as one more nuisance regulation to be dealt with in the most cost effective way possible -- in other words meet the letter of the law but no more. It is not likely to motivate designers and building owners to find innovative ways to better suit the needs of the population as it ages and as needs change. Regulations cause designers to become conservative and to make statements such as: "I've met the requirements, and doing anything further might put me at risk."

Universal design is currently exciting designers, consumers and product manufacturers throughout the world. They are realizing that universal designing gives us products, environments and systems that are more useful and attractive to larger audiences. With educators latching onto universal design teaching methods, wireless communications companies advertising universal design features of their phones, Target Stores promoting "Design for All" to market their products, homebuyers demanding (and savvy developers offering) universal design features in new houses, it is myopic of regulatory agencies to think they can improve or further stimulate the current situation with regulations.

If governments want to do something useful, they should follow the suggestions of the panels of universal design experts convened by the National Endowment for the Arts over the last 10 years. Those panels have consistently called for education and public awareness as the way to further universal design, and have consciously not recommended regulations. When people are shown good examples, they want them. That is the preferred way to motivate universal design. Education not regulation.

jsalmen@UniversalDesign.com

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Accessibility Surfaces in White House Conference on Aging Resolutions

Three universal design related resolutions were among the 50 resolutions approved at the White House Conference on Aging in December. The resolutions will be used to shape future US government policies. Past conferences have resulted in major social change, including the creation of Medicare and Meals on Wheels.

The resolutions approved include:

- Expand Opportunities for Developing Innovative Housing Designs for Seniors' Needs
- Encourage Community Designs to Promote Livable Communities that Enable Aging in Place
- Enhance the Availability of Housing for Older Americans

President Bush chose not to attend the conference, making him the first president ever to skip the event in its 50-year history.

GSA Adopts New Accessibility Standards

The General Services Administration (GSA) has adopted new accessibility standards for federally funded facilities with the new Americans with Disabilities Act and Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADA/ABA-AG) issued in 2004 by the US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board). The adopted standards will apply to a wide range of new or altered buildings under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), which ensures access to facilities designed, built, altered or leased with federal money.

The new standards replace the existing standards, known as the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) and will apply to construction and alterations that commence after May 8, 2006, and to leases entered into after this date. Compliance with the UFAS standard will be permitted for construction and alterations that begin before this date and for projects whose design is substantially complete by this date. For more information, visit: www.access-board.gov.

NEA Universal Design Grant Awarded

Ohio State University has been awarded a \$50,000 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant to increase the nation's understanding of universal design. The goal of the Universal Design Leadership Project is to create greater

public awareness of and demand for universally designed environments by educating designers, consumers, educators, developers, city planners, and others on the social impact and principles of universal design.

The project plans include a conference on visitability and universal design, an on-line course, an E-book, research on best practices in planning and zoning for universal design and a survey of users occupying urban projects with significant universal design elements. For more information, visit <http://ada.osu.edu>.

Accessible Rights-of-Way Draft Guidelines Released

Draft guidelines that cover pedestrian access to sidewalks and streets, including crosswalks, curb ramps, street furnishings, pedestrian signals, parking, and other components of public rights-of-way have been released by the US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board). For more information, visit www.access-board.gov.

GSA Building Standards to Improve Access at Entrances

The latest edition of the Government Services Agency (GSA) Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service (March 2005) contains a new requirement for all public entrances to have at least one automated door (or two where there is an entry vestibule) which is in compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) standards, which address fully automated, low-powered, and power-assisted types of doors.

The GSA standard exceeds existing requirements which, like the US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board's guidelines, address technical criteria for automated doors but which do not mandate automated doors. Automating exterior doors is beneficial for access since the exterior opening force can be significant due to a variety of factors, including door weight, wind loading, gasketing, air pressure, and HVAC systems.

The standards are available on the GSA website at www.gsa.gov/P100. The new provision is in Chapter 3 Architecture and Interior Design, section 3.5, page 85. 

The new standards replace the existing standards, known as the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) and will apply to construction and alterations that commence after May 8, 2006, and to leases entered into after this date.

Accessible Housing – Moving Toward a New Paradigm

Guest Commentary by Edward Steinfeld, Professor of Architecture and Director, Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDEA Center), University at Buffalo, State University of New York

There are many new developments occurring in the field of accessible housing. These include initiatives by government agencies to adopt higher levels of accessibility than current codes require, the emergence of commitment labeling programs and efforts to improve consensus standards.

In the Spring of 2004, the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (the IDEA Center) completed a survey of state and local visitability and universal design initiatives. It found that 27 localities and 13 states have adopted either mandatory or voluntary visitability ordinances. Another 16 local communities and 11 states have proposals underway. Thus, there were at least 67 initiatives nationwide and probably more by now.

The state of Arkansas is sponsoring an effort headed by Korydon Smith, an architect and faculty member of the University of Arkansas, to develop guidelines for use by the state housing finance agency in building accessible housing. Professor Smith has assembled a group of experts, this author included, to help develop concepts that could provide a means to encourage adoption of universal design principles in affordable housing statewide. The idea is to create several levels of universal design. One level might be required, while incentives could be used to encourage adoption of higher levels.

In the United Kingdom (UK), the Rowntree Foundation has promoted the idea of Lifetime Homes. The Foundation publishes the Lifetime Home Standards and has developed a labeling program with developers. In addition, it is working with community agencies to adopt the standards voluntarily to go beyond the mandated UK requirements for accessible housing.

Concrete Change, a disability and housing advocacy group in Atlanta, GA, has developed a similar program called Better Living Homes, which incorporate universal design features beyond the basics of visitability. The home builders' association in Georgia has adopted this

program and another state is expected to adopt it shortly.

ICC/ANSI

As a prelude to the next cycle of revisions to ICC/ANSI A117.1, Standard on Accessible and Useable Buildings and Facilities, a task group on housing was established this fall. Its charge is to rethink the existing requirements of the A117.1 standard with a view toward incorporating criteria for visitable and aging-in-place housing. The task group has only just begun its work but there has been considerable discussion among members about the direction it will take.

The New Paradigm

What does all this mean? It means that a new paradigm for accessible housing is rapidly emerging -- one that is based on universal design concepts rather than accessibility. It demonstrates a realization that not everyone needs, wants or can afford the same accessibility features in their homes. It reflects the realization among many activists and professionals that current laws and regulations will not provide a sufficient supply of accessible housing as the boomer generation reaches maturity and that the established set of accessible features incorporated in standards like ICC/ANSI A117.1 may no longer be appropriate for older people.

Today we need a flexible response to the need for accessible housing. It has to incorporate many levels of access that produce a ladder, which begins at basic access like visitability and moves to full blown universal design in high end homes. It has to address perception and cognition as well as mobility issues.

But, there is not, as yet, a national consensus on how to implement the ladder concept. This presents an agenda for the ICC/ANSI A117 Committee. Its efforts could help to clarify the rungs on the ladder. The challenge is how this can be done without codifying universal design in an overly rigid way, stifling innovation and by incorporating the richness of the emerging initiatives.



Dr. Edward Steinfeld

The challenge is how this can be done without codifying universal design in an overly rigid way, stifling innovation and incorporating the richness of the emerging initiatives.



Making it Easy with World Usability Day

On Nov. 3, people in more than 80 locations, and 35 countries around the world celebrated World Usability Day and its theme, “Making It Easy!”

“Every citizen and customer has a right to expect products and services that are easy to use. World Usability Day events highlight how this can be achieved,” according to event organizers. “From cell phones, to call centers, to customer service websites and more, there are countless opportunities to ‘Make It Easier to Use.’”

An initiative of the Usability Professionals’ Association, World Usability Day was developed to promote awareness of the benefits of usability engineering and user-centered design. The event included a variety of gatherings, lectures, exhibits, competitions, demonstrations and open houses.

Brazil

In Curitiba, Brazil managers and directors of local companies attended a lunchtime lecture by Dr. Larry Constantine about usability and its importance to business. In the evening he spoke to university students and professors on designing products for use. There was a poster display showing industrial design students’ usability evaluations of 10 different everyday products, such as microwaves, remote controls, ATMs, and mobile phones. The displays described the difficulties and possible design solutions for each product.

Singapore

The Usability Day: Redesigning Singapore event featured before and after examples of the usability of commercial solutions and government e-services. Participants went on a Usability Lab Tour and were given the opportunity to take a usability test. According to Tahira Amir

Sultan, “Some [participants] felt for the first time they had a real feel of how a usability test is conducted. In the past, they had attended various seminars on “How to Conduct a Usability Test,” but none of these seminars were able to give them the insight obtained when experiencing a test first hand.

Germany

The Berlin Open Usability Information Day included lectures, live demonstrations of usability methods and discussion groups about standards in interface design. The idea of Open Usability is an effort to make usability more transparent by communicating the procedures, methods and results of usability work.

Denmark

At the IT University of Copenhagen, researchers and practitioners held discussions about international usability from a Danish perspective. One discussion concerned research of usability testing across different cultures – with the participant and the evaluator being from different countries and cultures. According to Jakob Bruhns, the initial results of the research indicate more errors were found when the test participant and evaluator were culturally close to each other.

United States

A day-long event at the Museum of Science in Boston, MA focused on the importance of usability in everyday life. More than 1,000 people came through the exhibit. The event included a Bad Sign exhibit where children were asked to try to figure out what was wrong with particular signs. Groups embarked on signage/wayfinding field studies.

For more information on World Usability Day, visit www.worldusabilityday.org. 

“From cell phones, to call centers, to customer service websites and more, there are countless opportunities to Make It Easier to Use.”



Attendees consider every day items at the Usability Museum in Philadelphia, PA.

“World Update” is compiled by Elaine Ostroff, founding director of the Adaptive Environments Center, and Denise Hofstedt. If you have information about international universal design efforts that you would like to have published in Universal Design Newsletter, write to us at: 6 Grant Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912; or contact publisher@universaldesign.com.

Dreaming Big with Universal Design

Architect John Paul Scott Searches for a Higher Purpose

Architect and universal design advocate John Paul Scott isn't stifled by the way things are, but is inspired by the way things ought to be. He is a design professional whose positive spirit keeps him dreaming and his "access for all" passion keeps him motivated.

A native of Detroit, MI, Scott moved to California 30 years ago after earning a Bachelor of Science degree in architecture from Lawrence University in Southfield, MI. He then obtained a Masters degree in Environmental Design from University of California-Berkley.

His interest in universal design was sparked while working at Walt Disney Imagineering in the 1990s. "The Walt Disney Company figured out early on that design for accessibility was a good business practice, especially since people with disabilities and their families and friends have billions of discretionary income dollars to spend on entertainment and recreation," says Scott. "Theme parks are a natural environment for the application of universal design." In many ways, Walt Disney theme park designers, known as "imagineers" were designing attractions since 1952 with their own home-grown version of universal design.

At Disney he learned how every environment tells a story and that when designing, you should always have a "big idea."

"Theme park attractions are designed so that people read them with multiple senses. Whether young or old, native or foreign, guests can intuitively read and enjoy the attractions on many different levels," says Scott. "One could pick apart a well designed theme park to identify the elements that create universal design — but it is the whole system that actually achieves the goal. It is experience-making before it is place-making. It is a philosophy, and not a practice. It is about 'use' - and not about the 'object.'"

When at Disney, Scott was involved with the company's efforts to prepare for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. He began to notice the larger benefits of universal design, including:

- Physical safety is one of the greatest cross benefits of thematic — universal design. Designing a highly accessible environment creates a safe environment for all users.

- Safety instructions and wayfinding is told to guests in many different formats and at different times. Easily readable signage with pictograms serve people with different reading and comprehension abilities. It serves guests who do not use English as a primary language. It effectively conveys safety information for the broadest spectrum of guests.

- An environment without steps serves as a safe environment.

It serves young families with strollers, people with temporary mobility injury, and groups of people animatedly conversing. The primary beneficiaries of step-

less environments are people who simply are not watching the ground when passing through these visually stimulating places.

- Family/unisex toilet rooms are an asset in a theme park. They provide an individual with privacy to perform personal hygiene activities that cannot be conducted comfortably in a multi-user toilet room. Additionally they serve a family member who may require opposite-sex, companion assistance, or a father and daughter, or a mother and son user.

Another Chapter

When the travel industry hit the skids after 9/11, Scott left Disney to open his own consulting business and eventually began working for the Port Authority of San Francisco. It was in these settings that he began to make believers out of the uninterested.

Bonnie Milstein, lawyer and civil rights consultant, first met Scott on a Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) project. The job was to train more than 800 HACLA employees on the Fair Housing Act and disabilities rights laws, including the ADA Accessibility Guidelines.



John Paul Scott

"One could pick apart a well designed theme park to identify the elements that create universal design — but it is the whole system that actually achieves the goal."

John Paul Scott, AIA

Scott, from page 6

“Before designing his portion of the training, John met with the housing authority’s chief architect and engineering staff to understand their understanding of the ADA, their resources, and their constraints,” says Milstein. “He then designed the training to meet the specific training and work needs of the managers as well as those who had daily contact with the tenants, like the gardeners, locksmiths, and plumbers. The chief architect was so appreciative and impressed by John’s understanding of the ADA and his ability to translate his knowledge to HACLA staff that he tried to hire him.”

She also saw him in action later when they worked together on the Port Authority of San Francisco’s ADA Transition Plan. She says that Scott had to convince the Port’s engineers, staff and commercial tenants of the importance and the need to bring the Port’s properties and policies into line with California and federal laws. He also had to explain technical matters to public members of the Port’s Transition Plan Committee.

“John personally surveyed the length of the Port’s property, explained his often creative plans using maps and other graphic materials, and remained open throughout the process to contrasting points of view with persistent good humor,” says Milstein. “The transition plan received unanimous support and was adopted by the Port Commissioners at its first reading.”

He was hired away from the Port to work in the San Francisco Mayor’s Office on Disability as the Deputy Director of Physical Access. Among his duties is management of the city’s ADA transition plan. As with any city, there is never enough money to do work that needs to get done.

Whatever projects come through his office, Scott looks for the opportunity to promote accessibility and regularly encourages access beyond the code. When federal money became available to renovate recreation facilities so that they could be used as disaster preparedness centers, Scott saw it as a chance to include unisex/family shower restrooms.

Although he has been around for a while, Scott has a new age approach to his work. He

applauds the ADA specialists who came before him and claims today’s specialists have it much easier. “The first generation of ADA specialists had to fight their way to the surface,” he says. “They had to battle their way into a project. Now people understand [accessibility] is necessary and required.”

In working with other city agencies, he embraces his role as an educator. “We want to inspire the people we work with to look at universal design as a benefit to citizens and tourists. Rather than hold accessibility tight to the vest... we push the information to them in packages that are palatable. We empower people by explaining it more. We show them how to piece together a project that meets its objectives.”

Jul Parson, who has worked with Scott in San Francisco, says his expertise and enthusiasm are infectious, and his manner is always respectful and cheerful. “John doesn’t want to just share his vision — he wants to take you there with him. I think he realizes that full access is all inclusive and means being accessible oneself. It’s not easy to find that type of attention to detail and ability to communicate so diversely in one person.”

As an ADA expert on city projects, Scott has been working to get involved in projects in the earliest stages. He and his colleagues try to meet with project officials early in the process and draft a memorandum of understanding with regard to accessibility. No more Monday morning quarterbacking. “We won’t change the rules in mid stride,” says Scott. “We will give the information they need. We document what we’ve agreed to and we follow up with quality assurance.”

Incorporating accessibility into a project during the planning stages costs almost nothing — removing a barrier can be expensive, says Scott.

Not Just the Code

“For John, making the accessibility laws and regulations work is much more than a work assignment; it is a passion,” says Milstein.

Scott has found a higher purpose in his work. Starting with an inorganic, technical collection of requirements, he can get people to change how they think about accessibility and make them see that a law is not enough. 

“John doesn’t want to just share his vision — he wants to take you there with him.”

Jul Parson,
Colleague

Home, *from page 1*

State of Virginia, is in the center of growth and development in the Washington, DC region says Julian Bermudez, Director of Housing & Community Development for the county. By 2000, housing units in the county had increased 31 percent over the previous decade with the addition of 23,000 units. Since 2000, 25,000 more units have been built and the population has swelled by 73,570.

“Prince William County is in an excellent position to make a tremendous impact on housing before the county builds out. We need to work quickly to ensure that families can benefit from universal design in homes for years to come.”

Toni Clemons-Porter
Long Term Care
Administrator

“We have experienced two decades of unprecedented growth,” says Bermudez. With more space to grow, the county’s building boom is expected to continue. Despite all the new construction, the current housing stock is not able to meet the needs of growing families. “Families struggle to accommodate houses for aging parents/people,” says Toni Clemons-Porter, Long Term Care Administrator, Prince William Area Agency on Aging. “Prince William County is in an excellent position to make a tremendous impact on housing before the county builds out. We need to work quickly to ensure that families can benefit from universal design in homes for years to come.”

With no time to waste, county leaders

formed an aging committee to develop a plan to make their community more liveable. They have produced a publication, “Easy Living with Universal Design” to show residents simple ways to add universal design features to existing homes and promote universal design features in new homes. The publication has been widely distributed and is available on the county government’s website, www.pwcgov.org.

Officials have also teamed up with designers and a local builder to construct a demonstration home, expected to open to the public in Spring 2006, that showcases universal design features.

In addition, county officials, led by Clemons-Porter, organized a one-day symposium for design professionals, developers, builders, planning and zoning officials, bankers and homeowners on universal design in housing. The keynote speaker was Richard Duncan, Director of Training at the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. Speakers discussed how universal design prolongs independent living, what universal design features to ask for and how to market a property that includes universal design elements.

Montgomery County’s Design for Life

Across the Potomac River in Montgomery County, MD where there is very little developable land left, county officials are concentrating on ways to make existing housing better able to meet the needs of aging residents.

Realtor Jackie Simon and Department of Health and Human Services Program Manager Betsy Lueking have spearheaded the Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services effort to ensure the county’s housing stock continues to meet the needs of its occupants and to change the county’s zoning language to make it easier for homeowners to add accessibility features in new and existing homes.

“Design for Life certification will help assure that a home certified by the program will continue to meet the needs of the occupants and be welcoming to their guests for many years,” according to the county’s Commission on People with Disabilities Annual Report.

The Design for Life certification offers two levels of accessibility:

Design for Life Benefits

The Montgomery County Design for Life Program spells out the benefits to buyers, builders and communities:

Homeowner/Homebuyer Benefits

- Welcome all visitors
- Easier to live in
- More comfort for elders and people with mobility needs
- Reduces the risk of falling
- Enhances everyday style
- Home for life

Builders Benefits

- Targets new emerging market
- Offers cutting edge features
- Recognition of superior product
- Recognition of attention to buyer needs
- Offers branding opportunities

Community Benefits

- Promotes inclusion of all population segments

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What They Want

The Impact of Consumer Demand on Housing Features

Consumers are aware of universal design features in housing, but are not interested in them until there becomes a need, according to universal design consultant Charlotte Wade, MS, CAPS. In a presentation this fall at a universal design in housing conference in Woodbridge, Va., Wade cited a variety of studies conducted over the past three years that indicate interest in accessibility features is on the rise with aging home buyers and that builders are beginning to respond to those desires.

Aging Consumers

A recent AARP study found that 79 percent of respondents thought accessibility features were important. A 2005 study of baby boomers by the home builder Pulte, reported that one quarter of respondents, age 41 and older, said that universal/wheelchair design was important in housing. The percentage increased with older respondents. In the 2002 National Older Adults Housing Survey, respondents in age-restricted communities were more likely to be attracted by or add accessibility features to their home plans.

A 2003 National Association of Home Builders survey found that builders reported that only 7 percent of buyers did not want accessible design features in their home.

Builder Response

In a 2003 survey of home builders of age re-

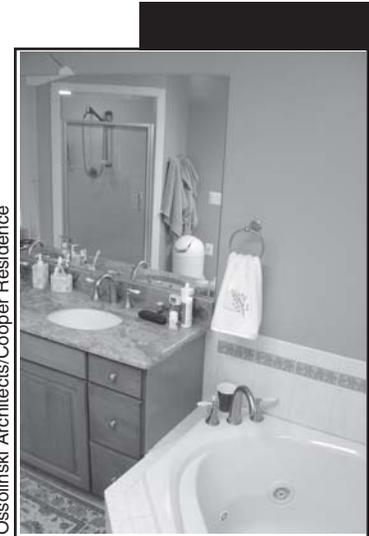
stricted, age targeted and independent living communities showed that builders have responded, to a degree, to consumer demand. For example, 83 percent of the builders surveyed said that they are providing a bathroom on the entry level. Seventy-five percent said they are providing wider doorways and hallways. Among the other features that the builders report providing are:

- Showers separate from tubs – 65%
- Low step or no step entries – 60%
- Grab bars in bathrooms – 59%
- Improved lighting – 44%
- Non-slip flooring – 30%
- Elevators – 24%

The Market

Since all buyers are not demanding the features that they will someday need to remain in their homes, Wade has several suggestions to make sure the housing inventory will meet the needs of the aging population.

She notes that the stigma from accessible features in housing needs to be removed and that consumers and builders need to be further educated about the benefits of universal design. She encourages the development of demonstration houses in communities as part of an educational effort. “Education is the key to acceptance,” said Wade. 



Ossolinski Architects/Cooper Residence

This bathroom features a shower separate from the tub.

Home, from page 8

• **Level I – Visit-Ability** meaning that the home has at least one no-step entrance, 36-inch wide front door and hallways, a useable bathroom with a 32-inch wide door, and a place to visit on that level.

• **Level II – Live-Ability** includes all items in Level I, but also requires an accessible bedroom and kitchen.

“This voluntary program is being developed with participation by the building community, organizations representing the aging and disabled, county government, as well as private and public organizations whose goal is to increase the number of houses available in the county that include features important to our growing and diverse community,” says the report.

The mission of the group “is to make more

housing opportunities available while increasing style and design without adding substantial construction costs.” The group is also working on zoning text that would make accessibility features in new construction and renovation possible without a special exception as is now required.

That Ship Hasn’t Sailed

The Brookings Institute recently reported that by 2030 almost 60 million more housing units will be needed to support the growing population and to replace housing that has become obsolete. If the grassroots universal design efforts continue to spread, Peter Pan-type homes – meaning homes built as if their occupants would never grow old – will be as rare as fairy dust. 

California Housing, *from page 1*

out an elevator.

For California this means a huge number of non-accessible and non-adaptable dwelling units are added to the housing market each year.

Visitable Dwelling Units

The visitability regulation requires that a project provide a minimum of 10 percent visitable units in projects that have multi-story units in a building without an elevator. Prior to this code change, which took effect in July 2005, entire residential projects could be constructed with no potential for wheelchair access through the front door of any unit, if they were: multi-story units or situated above a common podium base like a parking garage or retail establishment without an elevator.

These non-adaptable and non-accessible housing projects are common especially in publicly funded projects and higher density developments. The visibility ordinance requires that in new construction of permissibly non-adaptable and not accessible multi-family projects, a minimum of 10 percent of the units have a wheelchair accessible entrance, an accessible route through the interior and doors of the ground floor of the unit and a "usable" powder room or bathroom on that accessible level. Within these units, a person who uses a wheelchair could visit the occupant, but the unit is not necessarily adaptable if the resident seeks to age in place or sell the unit to someone who uses a wheelchair.

Universal Design Model Ordinance & Checklist

As required by California Assembly Bill 1400, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has drafted a model universal design ordinance. Included is a requirement that builders constructing for-sale dwelling units are to provide a "checklist" of accessibility features and their costs that are available to potential homebuyers. The ordinance seeks to deliver Fair Housing Act "adaptable" dwelling units in single or multiple dwelling unit projects that would otherwise be neither adaptable nor accessible.

In enacting this ordinance a local city or county can make the ordinance mandatory or voluntary. To promote its use, the voluntary version of the ordinance could be paired with tax or development incentives so that the developers take it upon themselves to provide adaptable units.

The checklist includes features which could be added to the unit to make the dwelling uniquely adapted to the potential buyer's current or future needs. The list contains more than 100 specific features that must be disclosed to potential buyers "which can make a home safer and easier to use for individuals who are aging or frail, or who have certain temporary or permanent activity limitations or disabilities."

Not every feature on the list must be available or offered by the builder. A builder is not required to provide and install the feature unless the homebuyer requests it before the specific "timing" restriction and agrees to pay for it, if the feature is not included in the original design. If the homebuyer selects a feature, then the specific feature must be installed per the CBC chapter 11A accessibility requirements or the differences in installation must be clearly disclosed to the buyer.

Market Demand and Faith

The Universal Design Model Ordinance does not specifically deliver accessible adaptable or universally designed housing units. However it does provide for a common process and expectations. The delivery of an adaptable, accessible or universally designed dwelling unit will depend on market demand.

The added cost to provide a single family universally designed or age-in-place home is relatively inexpensive at the outset of a project. The challenge is applying the ordinance to communities that develop in dense urban areas with constrained sites -- where homes are built up and not out. The key to success of the Universal Design Model Ordinance in more urbanized areas is for the adoption agency to tighten the threshold where an elevator is required, or create incentives for one to be provided. These incentives could include the use of limited use limited access elevators, residential elevators that serve several units, tax incentives or density development bonuses. For more information, visit: www.hcd.ca.gov/codes/ 

Prior to this code change, which took effect in July 2005, entire residential projects could be constructed with no potential for wheelchair access through the front door of any unit....

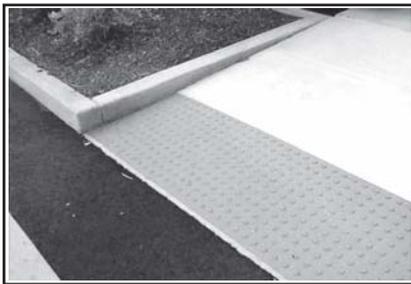
John Paul Scott, AIA is Deputy Director, Physical Access for the Mayor's Office on Disability, City and County of San Francisco, CA

Recessed Automated Towel Dispenser

The new enMotion® Recessed Automated Touchless Towel Dispenser, from Georgia-Pacific, features a stainless steel finish, a recessed cabinet design, and automatic touchless dispensing in one system. Its easy affordable retrofit installation offers a cost-efficient accessibility solution. The unit can help improve hygiene, increase operational efficiency and help support the EPA's guidelines to reduce waste.

Truncated Dome Design

Stampcrete International has a new design for its truncated dome stamping tool. The new pattern, which has been developed to satisfy all Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, includes domes that are lined up in rows in place of the original staggered design.



Truncated dome

Portable Wheelchair Lift

The Ascension VIRTUOSO 4860P portable wheelchair lift provides access to stages, platforms and risers for individuals with disabilities.

The lift is a completely self-contained compact unit, requiring no additional components. The portability feature makes it possible for public facilities to save on the cost of installing multiple fixed lifts or ramps since one VIRTUOSO lift can serve multiple locations.



Portable Lift

The lift can be operated independently by individuals with disabilities, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and meets all applicable ADA requirements, according to the manufacturer.

The lift plugs into a standard 120-volt wall outlet and is ready for use and only needs 5' of clearance in front of a stage.

enMotion Recessed Automated Towel Dispenser
Georgia Pacific Commercial
877.377.2737
www.gp-enmotion.com

Truncated Dome Design
Stampcrete International, Ltd.
800.233.3298
www.stampcrete.com

Portable Wheelchair Lift
Ascension, A Division of AGM
3526 East Fort Lowell Road
Tucson, AZ 85716
Phone: 800.459.0400
Phone: 520.881.3993
sales@wheelchairlift.com
www.wheelchairlift.com

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Please send me information about other publications and services available.

Feb. 1-5, 2006: *International Conference on Aging, Disability and Independence, St. Petersburg, FL.* This conference will include presentations on assistive devices; housing and home modification and universal design; smart homes; telehealth; transportation. Contact: www.icadi.phhp.ufl.edu

Feb. 9-11, 2006: *People in Place in People, 1st International Symposium on Environment, Behaviour & Society, Sydney, Australia.* This is an opportunity for intensive dialogue on issues of environment, behavior and society with implications for policy, planning and design. Contact: www.arch.usyd.edu.au/web/research/ebs/ebssymposium.html

March 16-19, 2006: *2006 Joint Conference of the National Council on the Aging and the American Society on Aging, Anaheim, CA.* This conference will bring together more than 4,000 professionals to discuss the physical, emotional social, economic and spiritual aspects of aging. Contact: www.agingconference.org

March 25-26, 2006: *21st Annual International Conference on Technology & Persons with Disabilities, Los Angeles, CA.* This international conference focuses on technologies across all ages, disabilities, levels of education, training, employment, and independent living. Contact: www.csun.edu/cod/conf/

April 4-6, 2006: *Ergonomics Society Annual Conference 2006, UK.* This conference includes a symposium on "Inclusive Homes, Inclusive Living" including users' aspirations and barriers in neighbourhood, home, mainstream utilities, support services. Contact: www.ergonomics.org.uk/events/AC2006call.htm

April 24-26, 2006: *Building for Boomers & Beyond: 50+ Housing Symposium, Phoenix, AZ.* Sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders. Contact: www.nahb.org/meeting_details.aspx?meetingID=1501

May 30-June 3, 2006: *IFA 8th Global Conference on Aging, Copenhagen, Denmark.* This conference will highlight cross-cultural cooperation to meet the challenges of global aging and address important region-specific issues of aging. The conference will be built around the following themes: the economics of aging, the challenges of aging, active aging, empowerment. Contact: www.global-ageing.dk

June 18-21: *Transend 2007, 11th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons, Montreal, Canada.* Deadline for abstracts and posters is February 15, 2006. Contact: www.tc.gc.ca/transend2007

Events to be placed in the UDN Calendar must be submitted to the editor two months before the publication date.

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