



All people have varying abilities. Throughout our lives, many of us may encounter temporary or permanent changes in our ability to conduct the tasks necessary for daily living. Therefore daily tasks become limited by barriers.

**Universal Design features can:**

- **increase accessibility**, or the ability to access regular activities in your home;
- **enhance visitability**, or the ability for friends to visit your home;
- **promote more independent lifestyles**, for yourself, family and guests;
- **‘universally’ support** people’s diverse needs and abilities;
- **provide greater safety** in your home; and
- **encourage “Aging in Place.”**

**Additional Resources:**

AARP.org  
[http://www.aarp.org/families/home\\_design/](http://www.aarp.org/families/home_design/)

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

Universal Design Alliance:  
<http://www.universaldesign.org>

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

HCD Checklist available:  
<http://www.hcd.ca.gov/codes/shl/ModelChecklistFinal1-10-07Version.pdf>

**County of San Diego**



**Home Modifications through Universal Design:  
 A Resource Guide**

**Planning and Development Services**

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“Adding universal design features as part of the initial home construction is significantly less expensive than a later attempt to retrofit a home”

-U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)



Universal Design: The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation or specialized design.

## Universal Design Principles



Universal Design is for everyone.

### Universal Design:

The intent of the universal concept is to simplify life for everyone by making more housing usable by more people. Universal design is an approach to design that incorporates products as well as building features and elements which, to the greatest extent possible, can be used by everyone. While accessible or adaptable design requirements are specified by codes or standards for only some buildings and are aimed at benefiting only some people (those with mobility limitations), the universal design concept targets all people of all ages, sizes, and abilities and is applied to all buildings.

### Benefits of Universal Design

Designing homes which simplify life for everyone by making the house usable by more people at little or no extra cost provides many benefits for everyone. Some of these benefits include:

- **Increased safety:** Having features such as no-step walkways, entries and showers, adding grab bars and slip resistant floors can prevent falls.

- **Provides ergonomic design:**

Having an environment that accommodates commonly used wheeled devices such as luggage, baby strollers, walkers and wheelchairs reduces the stress on one's body. Lever handles on faucets and doors not only make it easier to turn handles when carrying items, it reduces stress to hands and wrists.

- **Provides a more work efficient design:**

Universal design uses efficient products and work environments to reduce the time and personal energy required to perform daily tasks.

- **Provides a more inclusive design:**

Having a home that incorporates universal design means that people of all ages and abilities are able to use the home. The design accommodates people who are tall, small or use a wheelchair.

- **Allows for individuals to grow old in their homes:**

Universal design accommodates changes over the lifetime of the individual who lives in the home due to aging, injuries, heart conditions and arthritis.

### Some common universal design features:

- Step-less entrances - no steps needed to get into the home.
- Single story - living room, kitchen, bathrooms, and bedrooms are all located on one level.
- Wide doorways and hallways – to allow movement throughout the house doorways are at least 32 – 36 inches; hallways are between 36 – 42 inches.

- Accessible bathroom – bathrooms with adequate maneuvering space, 60 inch diameter turning space in room.
- Kitchens-feature accessible countertops, cabinets, sink and appliances.

### How will Universal Design benefit the developer?

- Universal design homes are marketable to the entire public because they are designed with all abilities in mind.
- 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.

### Why Universal Design?

Universal Design is about barrier-free living. You can limit the impact of barriers by implementing the features of Universal Design. The benefits of home modifications can serve immediate and future needs. Universal design increases accessibility for persons with physical limitations and provides flexibility necessary to add features such as lifts, ramps, and handrails if desired at a later date. This flexibility can increase a home's marketability, particularly to elderly persons and those with physical limitations. This means that your home can be more responsive to the reality of varying abilities inherent to life.