



**IndependenceFirst**

*The Resource For People With Disabilities*

**THINK!**  
**Before You Build...**

**Aging In Place**





## Aging In Place:

Designing a residence to allow for the owner to remain in the home throughout all ages. This can be accomplished by simple planned changes at the time of building a home, or in remodeling.

## Universal Design:

Environmental design that makes living easier for everyone who currently or will someday use the home-this includes family, friends, neighbors who might be older adults, people who use wheelchairs and families with small children using strollers.

## Building or Remodeling:

A decision to design or remodel your home using universal design principles makes good financial sense. If you design your home correctly the first time, the costs are minimal if any, to implement these ideas. Most times it amounts to a choice that you must make at the same price: between something that is universally designed and something that isn't. Decisions like these can save you money later, increase your resale value and make your home more attractive to more potential buyers who may wish to purchase it from you in the future.

## Checklist for Universal Design

Take this with you when you talk with your builder or designer!

- ❑ Graded property to allow for sloping of 5% maximum in garden or yard pathways wherever possible
- ❑ Graded property to allow for one entrance that has no steps to enter the residence (*may be back or side door*) or can be easily achieved when desired (*could be 1 step initially*)
- ❑ Doors a minimum of 34–36” wide (*wide enough for strollers, arms full of shopping bags, walkers or wheelchairs*)
- ❑ Open floor plan or minimally, 42” wide hallways
- ❑ If two-level home or more, stacked closet design (at least 60” by 60” suggested) preferably with wall reinforcement to allow for future elevator installation when desired.
- ❑ Bathroom walls around toilets, tubs and showers should be reinforced UNDER drywall to allow for future installation of grab bars when needed (*you won't notice they are reinforced, but it's there when you need it!*)
- ❑ Lever door handles, rather than knobs on all doors (*to allow for arms full operation or operation with an elbow or closed fist*)
- ❑ Sink drains for bathrooms and kitchen should be as close to the wall as possible (*to allow for future roll under capability*)
- ❑ Plan plumbing for bathtub to accommodate potential roll-in shower changeout
- ❑ Sink and shower fixtures/controls with lever design (*to allow for hands full operation or operation with a closed fist*)
- ❑ Finished flooring UNDER sinks, even if not visible (*to allow for future roll under capability*)
- ❑ Cabinets under kitchen or bathroom sink have finished sides (*to allow for future removal of center cabinet door for roll under capability*)
- ❑ Wall mounted light switches with sliding dimmer or rocker styles rather than traditional at 48” high or less (*to allow for arms full operation or operation with an elbow or closed fist*)
- ❑ Electrical Outlets, including telephone, cable and modem jacks at 18” to 24” to minimize bending
- ❑ Use anti-scald temperature controls on water heater or faucet (*to avoid burns for children, older adults and people with sensory impairments*)
- ❑ Pull out shelving in cabinets to allow for easier access and visibility of items
- ❑ For additional considerations, or specific questions please contact IndependenceFirst at 414-291-7520 (V/TTY) or [info@independencefirst.org](mailto:info@independencefirst.org)

This information is provided to you by *IndependenceFirst*, a proud member of the Metropolitan Builders Association as a consultant on new home building, remodeling and commercial buildings. *IndependenceFirst* has worked with MBA members to incorporate Universal Design into homes. *IndependenceFirst* is YOUR nonprofit resource for:

- **Universal Design**
- **Aging In Place.**
- **Assistive Technology**
- **ADA Accessibility**
- **Disability Awareness and ADA Employment**
- **Direct Services for people with disabilities**
- **Information and Referral for access and independent living issues**



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