Presenter Info

Amber O’Haver, Housing Coordinator
accessABILITY, Center for Independent Living
5302 E Washington St
Indianapolis, IN 46219
Phone: 317-926-1660
Email: aohaver@abilityindiana.org
Web: www.abilityindiana.org

Like us on Facebook!
accessABILITY – Our Mission

Building Advocates and Inclusive Communities
accessABILITY – Our Vision

At accessABILITY, we believe that ALL people with disabilities are valued individuals of our community with rights and responsibilities. This value is reflected in the following ways by accessABILITY:

- Is a consumer-controlled organization. No less than 51% of our staff and governing board are persons with a disability to ensure that the will and needs of people with disabilities are reflected in all we do.
- Supports and advocates for a community that is accessible for all.
- Believes disability is a natural part of life.
- Was established to assist people with disabilities in developing the supports they need to assure full inclusion in community life.
The Problem

• Builders of single family houses continue to construct barriers that exclude people with mobility impairments, both as residents and visitors, thereby segregating those with disabilities from this housing.

• Currently, only 5% of new single-family homes and townhouses financially assisted by the U.S. federal government provide any access features that permit people with mobility impairments to visit or reside in the homes.

• The remaining 95% are constructed with public money and create new, unnecessary architectural barriers.
Visitability

- A concept in home design, called Visitability, can provide basic access for all to new homes.
- Visitable homes are built for residents with and without disabilities.
- Visitable homes enable owners to invite friends, neighbors and relatives with disabilities or who may be aging to enjoy life’s activities in the home.
- accessABILITY defines visitability as at least:
  - Providing at least one zero-step entrance (does not have to be front entrance)
  - All main floor interior doors--including bathrooms--with 32 inches of clear passage space and hallways no less than 36 inches in width
  - Providing one accessible bathroom on the ground floor (preferably a full bathroom)
According to the report *Shut Out, Priced Out and Segregated*, 25 to 60 percent of all houses built in 2000 will have at least one resident with a severe, long-term mobility impairment at some point during the years the house serves as a residence; however, it is not possible to predict in which of these houses disability will occur.

Physical barriers like steps, narrow doors and lack of a bathroom which can be used by a wheelchair user result in those with disabilities being segregated and locked away from a healthy living environment.

Does not allow those with disabilities to be independent:
- A child using a wheelchair can’t go to a friend’s birthday party
- An elderly parent cannot visit a son’s house without assistance
- Not able to close a bathroom door or use a bathroom at all when visiting if able to get through the door
Photos courtesy of Google photo stock
Visitability – Saves Money

- Allows people to age in place in the housing of their choice – stabilizes neighborhoods
- Decreases risk of needing to go to an institution setting or nursing home just to be mobile
- Tax dollars would not have to be used to modify the home later – build it that way from the beginning
- Protects the housing occupants - should they gain or develop disabilities later - to not have costly home modifications in a critical time of need
Visitability Features Can Be Both Inclusive and Visually Appealing!
The zero step entrance could be a side entrance.
The zero step entrance could be through a garage.

The zero step entrance could be sloped to not have a step at a front or back door.
Attractive homes still incorporating traditional front porches in design
Zero step entrance could be at a back entrance or with homes with basements. This may especially be of interest in older urban communities who want to have a certain street look or curb appeal to the housing that is consistent with the older look of the already in place house. Yet, the new construction has the needed features.
Minimal Cost

- Studies indicate that incorporating basic visitable features into new construction adds little additional cost and does not significantly change the design.
- When planned-in-advance, basic access typically costs from $100 for new homes on a concrete slab to $500 for homes with basements.
- Retrofitting an existing house is usually expensive, may be hard to coordinate during a health crisis or emergent need, and often is awkward looking.
Marketability

- The total number of people with disabilities, the majority of whom want to live in their own home in the community, would seem to present a sizable market for housing.
- Many with disabilities have the funds and the desire to purchase or rent a home, though they are often prevented from doing so by the lack of accessible housing stock.
- People are living longer, with and without disabilities, and the market demand is for the housing to age with them.
- Remember – visitability is also about having the features so those with mobility impairments can visit you. Features can also be used by those without disabilities:
  - Zero step entrance by a parent with a stroller
  - Zero step entrance for moving companies or deliveries
  - Zero step entrance for small children
  - Zero step entrance for individuals with recent knee/hip replacements
Visitability - It Works!

• According to American Planning Association, basic access has been demonstrated to be practical in more than 95% of situations.

• Builders can obtain an exemption from the no-step requirement where the site makes it impractical in areas with mandatory requirements.
In practice, most sites are not steep. Thus, basic access requirements applied to individual houses also result in accessible paths between houses, creating visitable neighborhoods.
Example of townhouses with significant main floor square footage with basic access.
Additional Features

- In addition to the essential zero-step entrance and 32-inch door clearance, some basic access policies also include:
  - designated placement of electrical controls at reachable levels;
  - blocking in bathroom walls at designated locations to facilitate the future placement of grab bars (if and when desired by a resident); and
  - rectangles of unimpeded usable space in bathrooms and kitchens.
State/Local Laws

- Although there's no legal requirement currently at the federal level, the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development "encourages" visitable features in single-family housing built with federal dollars.
- Currently, 8 states have legislation mandating basic visitable features for specific types of housing built using certain state funds: Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas.
- Georgia mandated a zero step entrance on all new construction beginning in 1992. Other states have mandated portions of the 3 requirements.
Many localities also have ordinances with some localities taking it even further and requiring of all newly constructed housing, regardless of financing source.

- In February 2002, Pima County, Arizona enacted the first mandatory visitability ordinance for all publicly- and privately-funded homes.
- In addition, three Illinois towns (Bolingbrook, Naperville, and Chicago) have passed legislation mirroring the Pima County ordinance.
- Many other localities as well.
One of many manufactured houses offering landscape ramps and wide doorways in Las Palmas Mesa, an Arizona active adult community.
Habitat for Humanity

- In 1989, an Atlanta affiliate of Habitat for Humanity began making every one of its new homes visitable. More than 800 visitable Atlanta Habitat houses have been built.

- In 1992, the Atlanta ordinance was passed. It was the first in the world to mandate a zero step entrance on certain private, single-family homes.
Retrofitting Later is Expensive and Can Be Awkward Looking
Not originally visitable on left vs. visitable from beginning on the right
Not originally visitable on left vs. visitable from beginning on the right
Fixing later not ideal
Interior Mods Later = EXPENSIVE

- Widening doorways and adding in accessible bathroom features later can be incredibly costly.
- The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana’s current home mod program has found, with discounted contractor labor, bathrooms modifications still average around $10,000.
- Ramps can average $500-2,500, with discounted labor.
Legal Challenges

- Only legal challenge of a visitability law to date - the Pima County ordinance was challenged by the Arizona Home Builders Association. However, the Arizona Court of Appeals found the ordinance lawful noting:

  - "the uncontested evidence established that approximately one percent of the population is confined [sic] to wheelchairs, but the county points out that a much larger percentage will suffer [sic] a disability at some point in their lives. Although all age groups are affected by disability, the county introduced evidence that approximately forty-one percent of people over the age of sixty-five have some form of disability. Disability is a growing problem both nationally and locally, and the county also introduced evidence that Arizona's population of people over the age of sixty is expected to triple by 2025. Although many of these disabled people will not be confined [sic] to wheelchairs, the county concluded from these figures that the number of people confined [sic] to wheelchairs is rising. For these reasons, the county addressed a legitimate governmental interest when it adopted a building code designed to increase the number of homes accessible to those in wheelchairs."
Moisture Protection

- Moisture protection for zero-step entrances in homes can be accomplished by applying normal waterproofing procedures.
- Just as for commercial buildings, the combination of a good-quality door seal, a sloping porch floor and an overhang above the door has proven to provide long-term, reliable moisture protection at residential zero-step entrances.
- Thousands of visitable homes throughout all climates have confirmed this in practice.
Illinois reimburses builders up to $5,000 if they construct at least 10% of houses in a development with four visitability features, such as one zero-step entry 36 inches wide, 32-inch interior doors, reinforced bathroom walls, and accessible environmental controls.

Georgia's mandatory visitability requirements for new, publicly-funded homes, the state also offers a $500 tax credit to encourage voluntary visitability compliance in new, privately-funded homes.

Virginia and Pennsylvania offer similar tax credits.
Latest & Greatest

- Dayton, Ohio Board of Realtors – Leading the Way
- Collaborated with their local independent living center for development of an accessibility features form
- Dayton Board of Realtors adopted this accessibility features form (completed by the seller) to a home’s MLS, thereby making it a searchable feature and part of any disclosures for persons interested in finding homes with the accessible features.
- Tap into an underserved market
- Great marketing/selling tool
Resources

- Concrete Change: http://concretechange.org/
- SUNY Buffalo Visitability Project:
  http://www.udeworld.com/visitability.html
- Shut Out, Priced Out and Segregated: The Need for Fair Housing for People with Disabilities.
  http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/2008_14_access.pdf
How You Can Help Advocate For Inclusive Communities!

- Contact us with questions or for volunteer opportunities!
- Visit our website for more information – www.abilityindiana.org
- Sign up for our e-newsletter
- Thank you for participating!