

## Universal Design Makes Everyone Feel at Home.

Promoting independence and dignity for people with disabilities.

*A fall on the stairs, an automobile accident, a stroke . . .  
Overnight any of us could end up with life-changing disabilities.*

*Just ask Ron Mace.*

For most of his life Ron Mace, creator of the term “Universal Design,” used a wheelchair. He understood what it was to try to participate in a world not designed to include him. As an architect, Mace was an advocate for Universal Design, which he defined as “designing all environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible, regardless of ability, age or situation.”

**Every person with a disability is unique.** So is every universally designed home, based on budget constraints and accessibility requirements. Essential Universal Design features include:

- At least one no-step entryway.
- One-floor living (or budget for an elevator or chair lift).
- Wide exterior doorway.
- Hallways that are 36” to 42” wide.
- Doorway thresholds that are flush with the floor.
- Bathroom roll-under sink.
- Walls reinforced for toilet and tub grab bars.
- Roll-in shower stall or transfer tub.
- A five-foot open radius in the center of the bathroom and kitchen.

**Other options that can make a home even more accessible include:**

- Lever-style door handles.
- Single-lever faucet handles.
- Windowsills lower than the norm for a better view from a seated position.
- Kitchen roll-under sink.
- Very short-looped carpet with a dense commercial grade padding. (The wrong choice can make it difficult to impossible for wheelchair and walker users.)

**VHDA is committed to helping people with disabilities find affordable, accessible and sustainable housing.** We underwrite loans for Universal Design projects and programs. We also work with Community Service Boards (CSBs) and a variety of other non-profit organizations helping to improve the quality of housing—and life—for Virginians with disabilities.

By providing housing that accommodates unexpected changes in mobility, and enables residents to age in place, Universal Design plays a vital role in community sustainability. To learn more about Universal Design, please contact:

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