

The Case for Universal Design



According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 87% of Americans who are over the age of 65 want to age in place.

Additionally, in a recent study conducted by EndHomelessness.org, nearly 9 million adults ages 18-64 have a disability but only 1% of housing nationwide, features a no-step entryway.

The inability to safely navigate inside your own home can have an impact on employment, educational opportunities, and access to healthcare.

What is Universal Design (UD)?

UD accommodates people who live with accessibility issues. It also helps people without disabilities welcome aging visitors or take in loved ones with disabilities. It allows people to return home faster when recovering from acute medical conditions. And it makes home life easier for young families. In short, universal design is not just sensitive design, but sensible design... and there needs to be more of it.

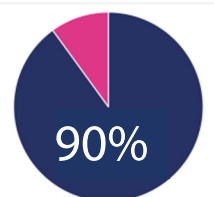
The Background

Aging in place is the phenomenon of older adults remaining in their homes and communities as they age, rather than moving or relocating to nursing homes or an institutional setting. While nursing homes provide a safe community-based environment for seniors, older adults today prefer to age in place.

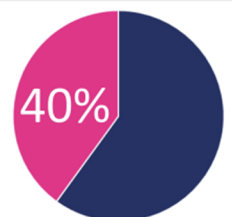
The benefits of the elderly living at home are overwhelming. However, planning and preparation as you age can go a long way towards allowing you to age in place safely and comfortably.

The problem is that we currently don't have adequate accessible housing to make this possible.

How many local homes can you think of that contain a no-step entry, living space all on one floor, switches and outlets at easily reachable heights, wide hallways, doors, lever style door handles, and faucets?



Adults over the age of 50 who want to stay at home and 'age in place'.



People age 65+ who report having some kind of disability.

The Importance of Universal Design



88,544

The number of El Paso County residence who identify as having a disability, according to the U.S Census Bureau.



If you're not part of this demographic today, you very well may be at some point in your life. Americans are living to an average age of 79 and, as we age, chronic health conditions often affect our senses and/or our mobility. Universal Design - also called barrier-free design, inclusive design, or design-for-all, accommodates individuals who live with these issues. However, it also helps people without disabilities who are welcoming aging visitors or taking in loved ones with disabilities

How to advance Universal Design locally

1. Get educated about UD, and share what you learn with friends, family and your elected officials.
2. When building or buying a home, prioritize UD features.
3. When buying an existing home, search for Realtors with an "At Home with Diversity" certification.
4. If you're not looking for a new home, add accessibility features to your existing home.

The late Ron Mace, a polio survivor who used a wheelchair, defined and popularized Universal Design, what he called a "commonsense approach to making everything we design and produce usable by everyone to the greatest extent possible."

Building a world where everyone is
**KNOWN,
VALUED &
INCLUDED.**

THE INDEPENDENCE
CENTER

To read more about Universal Design:

