

UNIVERSAL DESIGN Requirements

OHFA values developing housing designed to be used by all. This concept is generally referred to as Universal Design, and is also known as Inclusive Design, Aging-in-Place and Design for All

The definition of Universal Design, developed by the Center for Universal Design*, and adopted by OHFA is,

“The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialization.”

OHFA desires that all units developed with OHFA resources meet the following principles where possible. Applicants submitting proposals must submit designs addressing the following principles and a narrative detailing how the proposal meets these principles. OHFA recognizes that not all Universal Design principles can be incorporated into every proposal. OHFA staff will work with each applicant to help achieve maximum adherence to Universal Design principles. Applicants must receive design approval from OHFA on these principles before receiving OHFA resources on a given proposal.

Principles of Universal Design

1. **Equitable Use:** The design does not disadvantage or stigmatize any group of users.
2. **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple, Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
4. **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
5. **Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.
7. **Size and Space for Approach & Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

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Additionally, all *newly constructed* units developed under OHFA guidelines shall be designed to comply with the Fair Housing Act - even those units not covered by the Act.

Units that are being rehabbed shall be designed to incorporate these features to the extent possible.

Compliance with the Fair Housing Act calls for seven basic *design and construction requirements*. (Even if your development is not covered under Fair Housing, these elements

are required for all new construction):

1. An accessible building entrance on an accessible route.

All units must have *at least* one no step entrance and be on an accessible route.

An accessible route means a continuous, unobstructed path connecting accessible elements and spaces within a building or site that can be negotiated by a person with a disability who uses a wheelchair, and that is also safe for and usable by people with other disabilities.

An accessible entrance is a building entrance connected by an accessible route to public transit stops, accessible parking and passenger loading zones, or public streets and sidewalks.

2. Accessible common and public use areas.

Developments must have accessible and usable public and common-use areas. Public and common-use areas cover all parts of the housing outside individual units. They include -- for example -- building-wide fire alarms, parking lots, storage areas, indoor and outdoor recreational areas, lobbies, mailrooms and mailboxes and laundry areas.

3. Usable doors (usable by a person in a wheelchair).

All doors that allow passage into and within all premises must be wide enough to allow passage by persons using wheelchairs.

4. Accessible route into and through the dwelling unit.

There must be an accessible route into and through each unit. This includes all hallways, stairways and doorways.

5. Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls in accessible locations.

Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls must be in accessible locations.

6. Reinforced walls in bathrooms for later installation of grab bars.

Reinforcements in bathroom walls must be installed, so that grab bars can be added when needed.

7. Usable kitchens and bathrooms.

Kitchens and bathrooms must be usable - that is, designed and constructed so an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver in the space provided.

In a two or more story single family style house or townhome, the design of the floors that are not on an accessible route must also incorporate elements 3-5. and 6-7 (whichever is appropriate) if that floor has a kitchen and/or a bathroom.

Please refer to the following for further information on Fair Housing requirements:

<http://www.fairhousingfirst.org/index.asp>

Applicants must also notify the appropriate statewide accessibility group, which are identified on the OHFA website, at the time of application that accessible housing is being proposed, agree to accept referrals for potential residents, and agree to receive design suggestions for the property. Such notification must take place again when the project is placed into service. Copies of correspondence between the applicant and accessibility group must be submitted to evidence these requirements.