

Visitable Homes, Visitable Communities



Visitable homes are deliberately designed with basic access by residents who do NOT have disabilities.

Visitability is a campaign for these features to become standard in virtually all new homes.

Most homes have steps at every entrance, and have bathroom doors that are narrower than other interior passage doors. Visitable homes have:

- One entrance with zero steps
- 32 inches clear passage through all interior doors, including bathrooms
- At least a half bath on the main floor

What Are The Benefits?

- Residents in the community can welcome guests who use wheelchairs or walkers, or have some other mobility impairment such as stiffness, weakness or poor balance. When Visitability is in place, **mobility-limited people are not isolated by architecture.**
- If a family member develops a disability through illness, accident or aging, the person and their family are more likely to be **able to remain in their existing home**, rather than having to do major, expensive renovation—or move to another house, or a nursing home.
- **All residents find it easier** to bring in baby strollers, grocery carts, heavy furniture, etc.
- **Visitable homes enhance sale and resale** in an era where the senior demographic is growing rapidly. **Buyers are attracted to homes that welcome their aging parents** and provide easy-use convenience for themselves.
- **Visitability features cost little up front** — unlike the much higher after-the-fact cost of retrofitting features.

Zero-step entrances on new homes are nearly always **easy to construct**, on flat or hilly terrain. The entrance can be at the front, side or back, wherever is most feasible for the topography. A zero-step entrance can usually be incorporated without a “ramp” by grading so that the sidewalk meets a porch. For homes built on a concrete slab, the zero-step entrance is typically extremely easy. For homes with basements or crawl spaces, solutions such as sitting the home properly on the lot, using a porch as a bridge to the sidewalk, lowering the first-floor rim-joint, creative use of small retaining walls, constructing the zero-step entrance from the garage and other methods provide low-cost zero-step entries.



More on Doors

All interior passage doors need to be a minimum of 2'10", which leaves 32" clear space when the door is open at 90 degrees. Pocket (sliding) doors are one way to obtain 32 inches of clear passage space.

Special attention needs to be paid to the bathroom door because it is typically smaller than other doors on house plans. The bathroom door can be hinged to swing out rather than in to give a person using a wheelchair enough room to shut the door when inside the room. In a small bathroom, the wheelchair user can roll in forward and roll out backward, but it is essential to have at least a 32" clear path to the commode.

Usually a builder need not employ an architect to modify an existing house plan to accept wider doors; usually the existing plan already offers enough wall space for wider doors and the wider doors can be indicated by simply marking the plan.

For more information, visit the Concrete Change website at www.concretechange.org.

This message is provided by the Andover Commission on Disability with permission of Eleanor Smith of Concrete Change. PHONE: (978) 623-8335 TDD: (978) 623-8333 FAX: (978) 623-8518

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