

“Livable for a Lifetime”

Applying Universal Design in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District

Community Involvement Work Group

Introduction

Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people regardless of their ability or age, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The Livable for a Lifetime initiative grew from the “2020 Community Plan on Aging.” Its purpose is to promote change in the practice, policy, design, and construction of homes and communities, as well as the community involvement necessary to fulfill this initiative.

Purpose

The Community Involvement Work Group will promote a greater awareness of the need for universal design practices among community members. A greater awareness and education is the first step; the next step is making universal design a regular practice throughout the community to enable individuals of all ages to plan their housing, transportation and community needs with an understanding of accessibility and visitability, attending to both interior and exterior design concepts.

Goal

To achieve an increased awareness and active involvement by community members in promoting universal design concepts.

Suggested Activities

- Identify existing opportunities for education of community members through regularly scheduled activities such as Senior Marketplace, Aging 101 Forums, Homebuilders Association events, CAAR events, Chamber Aging in Place Roundtable, etc.
- Identify organizations and businesses that could be involved in developing a public relations and education campaign and ongoing initiative.
- Conduct an annual housing needs assessment to insure that new developments include the appropriate mix and number of universal design elder housing units. Provide data to housing programs, developers, local governments, and others concerned with planning housing construction.

- Present regularly scheduled public/developer education programs and offer incentives to promote universal design in new homes.
- Investigate and publicize options for shared living to support seniors unable or preferring to live alone.
- Develop materials and outreach programs to encourage caregiver-friendly employment policies and practices by local businesses.

* Universal Design is used to describe full universal design and visitability - a standard that includes a no step entrance, adequate doorways (a minimum of 32 inches of clear passage space), a usable bathroom on the first floor, and sufficient interior space. This initiative – based on 2020 Community Plan on Aging recommendations – is also applying universal design to neighborhoods, public areas, community facilities, and transit.