



Livable for a Lifetime

*Applying Universal Design
in homes & communities*

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOME SWEET TAX-CREDIT HOME

Charlottesville, VA (June 8, 2011) --- An amended Virginia law could change the way homeowners and builders alike look at their homes. House Bill No. 1950 (<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?111+ful+HB1950>), adopted by the General Assembly during the 2011 session, increased the maximum Livable Home Tax Credit (LHTC) from \$2,000 to \$5,000 and extended eligibility to builders of new accessible homes, effective with the 2011 tax year.

Easier Living for Everyone

The Virginia Livable Home Tax Credit (LHTC) program is designed to improve accessibility and universal design in Virginia's residential units by providing state tax credits for the purchase of new units or the retrofitting of existing housing units. To qualify for the tax credit, a new home must include at least three universal design features, and a retrofitted existing home must include at least one universal design feature:

- Accessible route to a zero-step entrance into the residence
- Zero-step entrance into the residence
- Doors with at least 32 inches of clear width
- Hallways and passages with at least 36 inches of clear width
- Accessible light switches, electrical outlets and environmental controls
- Accessible bathroom
- Accessible and useable kitchen facilities

In addition to making a home usable by people of any ability, these modifications can make any home more convenient for moving furniture, maneuvering a stroller, or entering the house juggling bags of groceries. According to members of the Livable for a Lifetime (L4L) initiative, the new bill could mean significant advantages for the local economy, as well as those living in these homes. "This could add needed incentives for builders," says Jim Herndon, accessibility coordinator for the City of Charlottesville, "and also increase the percent of housing stock that has some degree of visitability."

(more)

Todd Hawkins, co-owner of BuilderFish and a member of the L4L Steering Committee, notes that “Localities and the state can encourage homeowners and builders to improve accessibility to ward off forced moves, shut-ins and the additional strain that would fall to social services. Like energy improvement credits, this incentive may encourage owners and developers/builders to research and consider design improvements. This, in turn, can help sow the seeds for long-term market demand as consumer awareness builds.”

Applications for the Livable Home Tax Credit must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) by February 28 of the year after the tax year in which the purchase, retrofit, or building was completed. For new construction, the application must include a copy of the executed sales contract. For existing homes, documentation must include copies of the work specifications and proof of payment. For full instructions and the application form, visit DHCD’s web site at http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/housingpreservationrehabilitation/Tax_credit_program.htm.

About Livable for a Lifetime

The purpose of Livable for a Lifetime (L4L) is to promote change in the practice, policy, design, and construction of homes and communities, as well as the community involvement necessary to achieve this change. L4L promotes the application of Universal Design in homes and communities. 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. L4L’s work is guided by a Steering Committee, which meets on a monthly basis, rotating meeting locations and facilitators between the Piedmont Housing Alliance, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) and JABA. L4L’s web site has a section on home modification at <http://www.livableforalifetime.org/homemod.htm>.

Current L4L Steering Committee members are: Karen Reifenberger, Mark Watson (Piedmont Housing Alliance); Chris Murray, Julie Ulrich, Gordon Walker (Jefferson Area Board for Aging); Billie Campbell (Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission); Bob West; Wally McKeel (JABA Board, Virginia Transportation Research Council, retired); George Shadman (Albemarle County Department of General Services and ADA Compliance); Jim Herndon (City of Charlottesville); Elizabeth Swider (Aging in Place Business Roundtable/Care is There); and Todd Hawkins (BuilderFish).

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