

## Guest Column

### Universal Design in New Homes

By Ronnie Godfrey, CGB, president, R Godfrey Homes

The awareness of the passing of time and its effects on my body has caused me to think about the way we builders design houses. Do we really build for anyone of any age and ability? Universal Design is a concept that has caught my attention.

Following is a definition of Universal Design from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP):

AARP's philosophy of accessible design is "a home that has been designed to accommodate the needs of residents of all ages and physical abilities and can promote independence and the satisfaction of staying in control and in your home as you age. Accessible design or universal design is about creating a home for all, regardless of age or ability. This principle includes design features and products that make a home safer and more comfortable for all residents, no matter their needs and abilities."

These universal design features include:

1. **Easy Access** – A step-free entrance into the central living area of the home from a driveway, sidewalk, or firm route into the main floor.
2. **Easy Passage** – Ample room to pass through doorways on the main floor.
3. **Easy Use** – A bedroom, kitchen, entertainment area, and full bathroom with sufficient maneuvering space for a wheelchair, all located on the main floor accessible via a step-free entrance.

And this from the Center For Universal Design (CUD) at North Carolina State University: "Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

There is a long list of products and methods that can be used in making a home easier for residents. Many don't cost anymore than just applying a

little forethought about how you use existing materials and space. The obvious, like wider doors, has a negligible cost factor but can reap rewards for anyone young or old. Try moving a large piece of furniture through a narrow door and you'll see what I mean. And of course if you use a walker or wheel chair, a wider door is real blessing.

Another comment from CUD: "The intent of universal design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. ***Universal design benefits people of all ages and abilities.***"

I pledge to be more sensitive to these concerns as we build new homes this next year for anyone.

To learn more about Universal Design visit the AARP web site at [www.AARP.org](http://www.AARP.org).

Or visit the Center for Universal Design at [www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/index.htm](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/index.htm)

Proverbs 3:5-8 <sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. <sup>7</sup> Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. <sup>8</sup> This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

For comments about this article contact Ronnie Godfrey at [Ronnie@RGodfreyHomes.com](mailto:Ronnie@RGodfreyHomes.com) or call 817 988 0149.