

The Universal Accessibility Point in LEED-ND

Why and How

**Concrete Change 2007
www.concretechange.org**

LEED-ND Document:

“Intent: Enable the widest spectrum of people, regardless of age or disability, to more easily participate in their community life by increasing the proportion of areas that are usable by people of diverse abilities.”

A change in house design is underway, in the USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Scandinavia:

To make a few essential access features the norm in new house construction.

...not merely in custom houses designed for people who currently have a disability (as currently practiced) but in virtually all houses built for the open market.

In the USA, this innovation is in its infancy.

Why universal basic access? Why not just increase the percentage of homes with basic access? Or include access if the projected first occupant currently has a disability?

Because it is not possible to predict in which home a resident will develop a disability.

Because a typical home over its lifetime will house nine or more different families.

Because basic access at the time of construction costs little, while removing barriers is often very expensive.

Because home barriers force people into institutions who could otherwise live at home.

Because visiting friends and extended family is vital to social and mental health for people who develop disabilities, and their families, just as it is for non-disabled people.

The current norm for new, detached single-family houses, or attached single-family row houses:



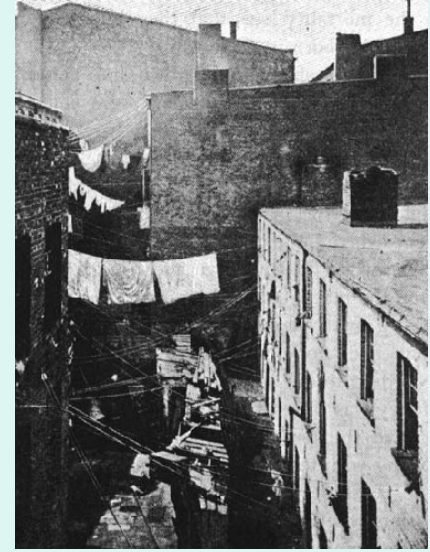
Steps at all entrances



Narrow bathroom doors

Estimate: At least 98% of new houses are built with these two major barriers.

Unfortunate results of the no-access status quo:



Britain!







To receive the LEED-ND “Universal Accessibility” point, the designer and builder extend the access features the FHAA already requires for new multi-family houses to at least 20% (and not less than one) of the single-family detached houses, duplexes, triplexes, or row house units in the project.



(No LEED point. New multi-family
Already covered by FHAA)



Torti Gallus

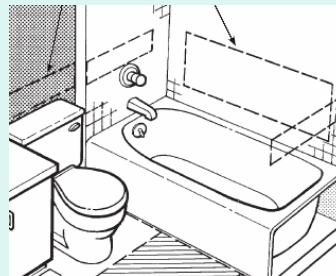
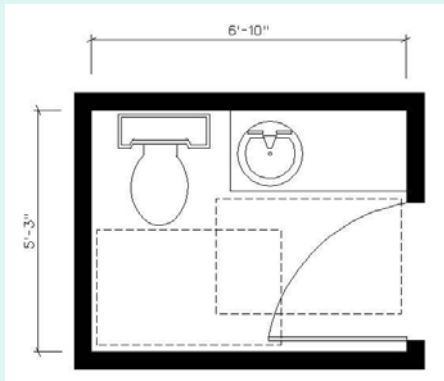
Single family detached: Yes
Note: 2-story homes OK.



Caleb Racicot

Row houses: Yes

What features? Six of the seven features which have been required by federal law since 1991 in all new multifamily buildings apartment building, public or private, rental or condo.



**(The requirement for “Accessible common and public use areas”
Is less relevant.)**

Sources of Technical Help

- **Fair Housing Act Design Manual**

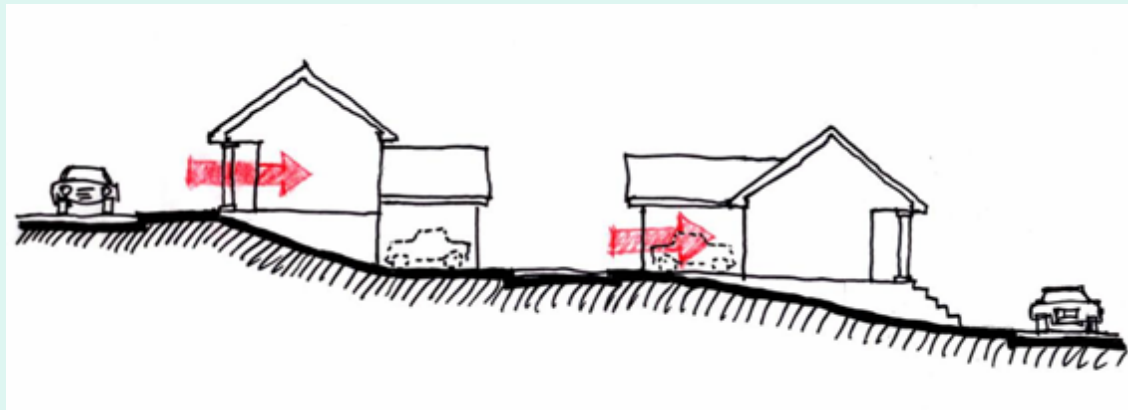
Free pdf at www.huduser.org
(hard copy for \$5.00)

- **Fair Housing First website**

Estimate: At least 90% of NU dwellings are not built on tiny infill lots in the inner part of cities, but rather on large tracts of land feasible for zero-step entrances.



From LEED-ND document: “Regarding residential accessibility design provisions, an accessible entrance can be located at the front, side or back of the residential unit, which may sometimes be determined by the topography of the site.”



Great opportunity.