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What is Universal Design?

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.

Universal design is related to aging-in-place remodeling and a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) can help you remodel your home using universal design concepts. The NAHB Remodelers in collaboration with Home Innovation Research Labs, NAHB 50+ Housing Council and AARP developed the CAPS program to address the growing number of consumers that will soon require these modifications. While most CAPS professionals are remodelers, an increasing number are general contractors, designers, architects, and health care consultants.

Everyone can use universal design! It doesn't matter if you are young or old. You could be short or tall, healthy or ill. You might have a disability. Or you may be a prize-winning athlete. Because of universal design, people who are very different can all enjoy the same home. And that home will be there for all its inhabitants even when their needs change.

Here are some of the more common universal design features that are also incorporated into aging-in-place remodels:

- No-step entry. No one needs to use stairs to get into a

universal home or into the home's main rooms.

- One-story living. Places to eat, use the bathroom and sleep are all located on one level, which is barrier-free.
- Wide doorways. Doorways that are 32-36 inches wide let wheelchairs pass through. They also make it easy to move big things in and out of the house.
- Wide hallways. Hallways should be 36-42 inches wide. That way, everyone and everything moves more easily from room to room.
- Extra floor space. Everyone feels less cramped. And

people in wheelchairs have more space to turn.

Some universal design features just make good sense. Once you bring them into your home, you'll wonder how you ever lived without them. For example:

- Floors and bathtubs with non-slip surfaces help everyone stay on their feet. They're not just for people who are frail. The same goes for handrails on steps and grab bars in bathrooms.
- Thresholds that are flush with the floor make it easy for a wheelchair to get

through a doorway. They also keep others from tripping.

- Good lighting helps people with poor vision. And it helps everyone else see better, too.
- Lever door handles and rocker light switches are great for people with poor hand strength. But others like them too. Try using these devices when your arms are full of packages. You'll never go back to knobs or standard switches.

Lewis County Government Affairs Updated

Lewis County's Community Development department is working on a new proposal that could increase housing options in the rural parts of the community. The plan, known as the Rural Housing Alternative, is to "encourage development of housing types that are typically more affordable than single family residential, while fitting into the rural character of Lewis County." Information provided by the county, and the building industry, suggests that single family housing is the most

expensive type of housing to build. It also takes up the most space and can limit the ability to diversify housing options. The new allowable options will provide for this diversity (Think duplexes, triplexes, etc.). Allowing such diversity in housing options spreads the cost burden among a greater number of residents, while also increasing the housing supply within the community. The Lewis County plan allows for this expansion, while also preserving rural lands. Amid this state's affordable housing

crisis, the "Rural Housing Alternative" is one idea that deserves consideration.

You can read more about the proposal on the Lewis County website at: <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/re-zones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/rural-housing-update/>

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