

Accessible Houses

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Important Documents

- [Fairfax 50+ Community Action Plan](#)
- [Regional Fair Housing Plan](#)
- [Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Housing Assessment & Strategy Report](#)
- [Design for Life](#)

Related Committees

- Building for All Committee
- Coordinating Council for the Aging and Adults with Disabilities
- Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Observations

What do we already know?

Incorporating Universal Design (UD) into newly constructed single-family homes is a way to ensure the strength and vitality of our community. UD features, such as zero-step entries, wider doors and hallways, and first-floor master suites, create a living environment that is free of barriers and enables everyone to flourish.

Fairfax 50+ Community Action Plan

In addition, price-appropriate housing must be made available to county residents who have a disability. Individuals with disabilities are more likely to have extremely low-incomes and often face a compounded problem - finding housing that is both affordable and that has the accessibility features needed to live comfortably in the home. Similarly, many seniors on fixed incomes, of whom many worked in Fairfax County throughout their careers and contributed to their communities and the local economy, have difficulty affording homes with necessary accessibility features.

Comprehensive Plan

Improving accessible housing goes hand in hand with increasing access to accessory dwelling units and downsizing options goes a step further in its attention to the specific needs of those with disabilities. Because of the wide range of disabilities individuals face, accessible housing can involve a variety of options. The most common, however, focus on those with mobility impairments. Single-level living and the inclusion of universal design features in housing developments both provide options that meet the needs of a wide range of disabled residents, both current and future.

Housing Assessment & Strategy Report

Many of our region's residents need accessible housing.

2.5 to 6.1% have ambulatory disabilities that make it hard to walk or climb stairs 2 to 4% have vision disabilities 2 to 3% have hearing disabilities ...

Based on these numbers, we need between 100,000 and 300,000 accessible housing units. Many of them must also be affordable because people with disabilities may also have low incomes. Overall, the region is far from meeting these needs – this is especially true in outer suburban communities like Loudoun and Prince William counties which has very little or no multifamily or public housing.

Regional Fair Housing Plan

Barriers to homeownership

People with disabilities face at least two main barriers:

1) They tend to have **lower incomes** than those without disabilities. This limits which homes they can buy, especially given the high local prices.

2) Buyers most often choose **single-family homes**. But they **aren't covered by the Fair Housing Act's design and construction standards**. This makes them less likely to be accessible to those with mobility disabilities

Regional Fair Housing Plan

Opportunities

How can DSB effect change in this area?

Educate

In conjunction with BFAC and FATE, Fairfax County Public School students have now designed and constructed 9 single-family homes with UD features that enhance the functionality of a living space in an aesthetically pleasing way without significant additional expense.

Fairfax 50+ Community Action Plan

In May 2012, BFAC established a partnership with the Foundation for Applied Technical Education (FATE), a community-based organization. FATE sponsors instructional programs that give high school students in Career and Technical Education the opportunity to participate in work-based learning by constructing Universally Designed homes in Springfield, Virginia.

Fairfax 50+ Community Action Plan

Advocate

In response to the demand for more Universally Designed housing opportunities throughout Northern Virginia, Fairfax County Government established the Building For All Committee (BFAC) as a public-private partnership. The mission of BFAC is to advocate for all homes in the county (renovations, as well as new construction,) to be comfortable, safe, and convenient so as to enhance the independence of residents of all ages, sizes and abilities.

Fairfax 50+ Community Action Plan

Innovate

The Design for Life (DFL) Tax Incentive Program provides homeowners tax incentives and DFL Program Certification for builders who construct homes that meet Level I (VISITable) and Level II (LIVEable) standards for people with accessibility needs.

Design for Life

In 2015, Decatur, GA revised its zoning codes to reduce the minimum square footage for a home and make it easier to build accessory dwellings in single-family residential districts, provided lot size and setback requirements are met.

Housing Assessment & Strategy Report

The City of Fairfax has taken significant steps toward the development of diverse housing in the City. However, encouraging a greater variety of market-rate housing is likely to require some additional incentives and/or zoning adjustments. These incentives can encourage developers to provide different types of development than those which would otherwise be the most profitable.

Housing Assessment & Strategy Report

Requirements for percentages of new developments to include some single-level living options could improve the housing mix and options for seniors to remain in the city once their existing housing becomes difficult to manage due to health or mobility concerns.

Housing Assessment & Strategy Report

Outcomes

How can DSB measure its success in this endeavor?

Permits

By tracking permit requests the county can assess whether the incentives are working to generate the kind of results intended.

Partnerships

Work in collaboration with other committees to implement and review initiatives.

Projects

When certifications are awarded two projects that meet criteria, these can be opportunity to track progress.

