

Visitability in Housing

Visitability is a design approach that integrates some basic accessibility features into all newly-built housing. This approach increases the capacity for those people with disabilities to be able to visit homes of friends and relatives. It is important also for those who may from time to time need to use wheelchairs or other adaptive equipment. Visitability concepts are important also because it adds some accessibility features to single-family detached housing or townhomes where Fair Housing Act requirements do not apply.

Visitability makes houses relatively easy to adapt in the future, allowing current residents to remain in their homes as they age, rather than being forced to move as more features become necessary to maintain independence.

Visitability focuses on the three structural features most essential for a person with mobility impairments to visit or live in a home at least temporarily and possibly even permanently, depending on an individual's needs. These three features are:

1. one zero-step entrance on an accessible path of travel
2. doorways that are 32 inches clear throughout the floor plan
3. basic access to at least a half-bath on the main floor

If included during design and planning, these features are extremely cost-efficient and provide advantages to non-disabled consumers as well.

The IDEA Center (Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access) at the University of Buffalo is a leader in the field of Visitability, Universal Design, and home modification. For more information, you can visit their website at: <https://idea.ap.buffalo.edu/> .