VISITABILITY
CREATING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

There are 418,000 people with disabilities living in Connecticut, more than 76,000 in Hartford alone. Visitability is concerned with creating housing that will accommodate everyone, no matter what age or ability, in the aspect of community life. Visitability does not want to be associated with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) practices by rather be an affordable, sustainable, and inclusive design approach for integrating basic accessibility features into all newly built homes and housing complexes. Homes built with everyone in mind are more in demand and bring a higher return on investment. An increasing design trend is that homebuyers are looking for ease of access features like open floor plans and single level living so they can stay active and stay in their home while aging-in-place. Visitable homes achieve this design trend because as homebuyers age they won't need to make minimum accessibility changes. (A project of Independence unlimited,Inc, 2017)

CRITERIA

- One no-step entrance
- Wider doors and hallways
- An accessible bath on the main floor

VISITABILITY DEFINITION

Visitability is a movement to change home construction practices so that virtually all new homes — not merely those custom-built for occupants who currently have disabilities — offer a few specific features making the home easier for mobility-impaired people to live in and visit. Several people have asked for a more detailed definition, noting that the list of required features has not been identical in all Visitability-type legislation, handouts and other materials. (visitability, 2012)

VISUAL EXAMPLE

VISITABILITY FLOOR PLAN LAYOUT

Step-less Entrance · Bathroom access · Accessible circulation
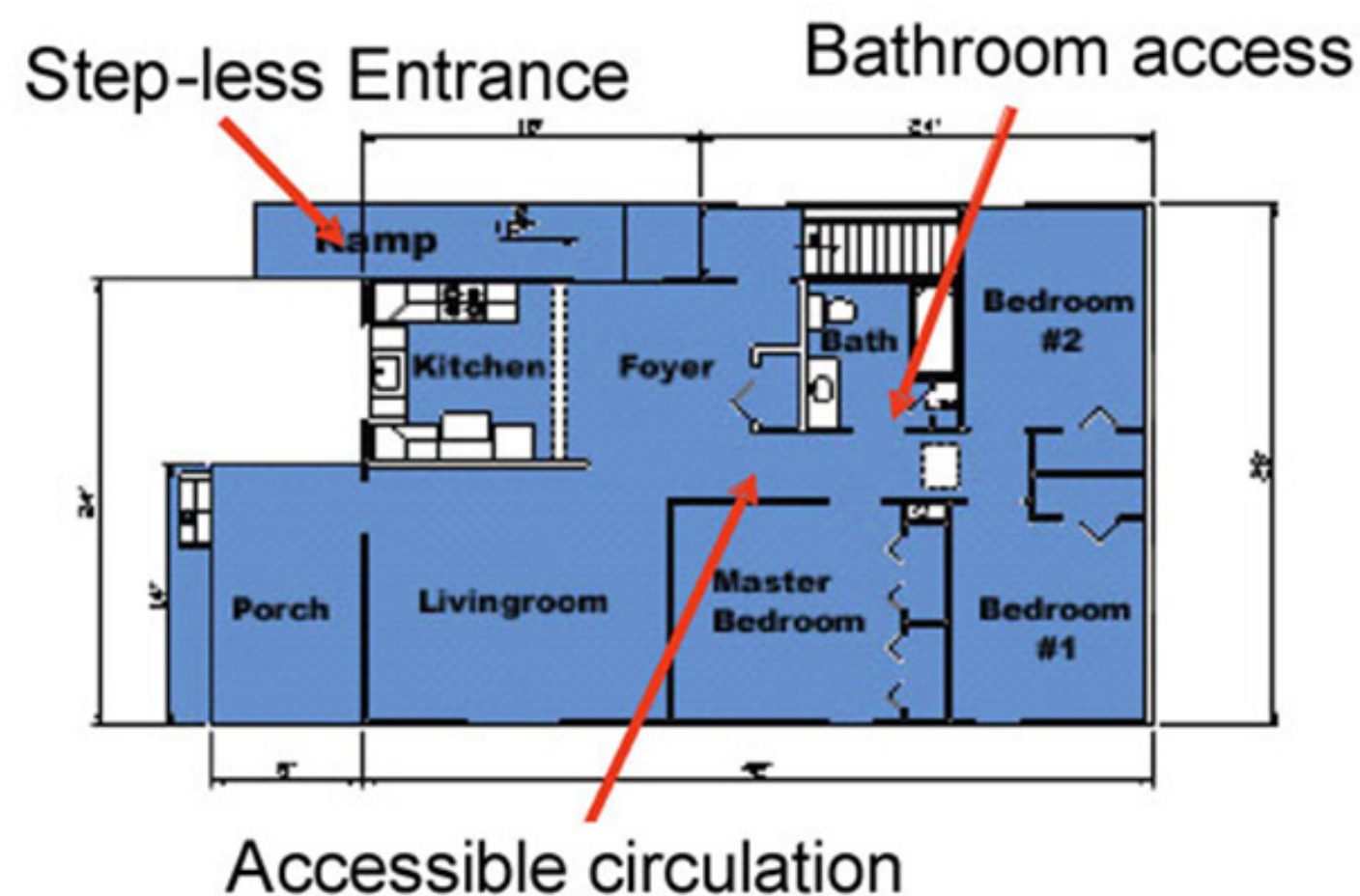
RESEARCH

That spirit of Visitability says it's not just unwise, but unacceptable that new homes continue to be built with gross barriers — given the how easy it is to build basic access in the great majority of new homes, and given the harsh effects major barriers have on so many people's lives. These easily-avoided barriers cause daily drudgery; unsafe living conditions; social isolation; and forced institutionalization. Second, the features list must be partly rigid and partly flexible. The inflexible features are: At least one zero-step entrance approached by an accessible route on a firm surface no steeper than 1:12, proceeding from a driveway or public sidewalk, Wide passage doors, At least a half bath/powder room on the main floor. No arguments are accepted that "We'll build the house so a ramp could be added later." At least a half bath on the main floor now belongs as a non-negotiable feature, but it did not when the first Visitability legislation was passed in Atlanta in 1992. At that early time in the movement's history, and in the absence of precedents, passing a bill with a zero-step entrance and door width requirements in private, single-family houses was just barely possible even without the bathroom requirement. Advocates balanced the obvious need for a main floor bathroom with the law of averages that nearly all new dwellings already include that feature. If people add to their personal definition of Visitability advanced features such as a five-foot turning diameter in bathrooms, parking space requirements, a roll-in shower and so on, they are going beyond the scope of what is currently possible for rapid, broad application of Visitability, and we discourage use of the term Visitability for their initiatives.(visitability, 2012)

HISTORY

The International Code Council (ICC) was established in 1994 as a non-profit organization dedicated to developing a single set of comprehensive and coordinated national model construction codes. The founders of the ICC are Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), and Southern Building Code Congress International, Inc. (SBCCI). Since the early part of the last century, these non-profit organizations developed three separate sets of model codes used throughout the United States. Although regional code development has been effective and responsive to our country's needs, the time came for a single set of codes. The nation's three model code groups responded by creating the International Code Council and by developing codes without regional limitations; the International Codes.

REFERENCES

Visitability (2012). *Basic Access in Every Home,* Retrieved from Visitability: www.concretechange.org

A Project of Independence Unlimited, Inc. (2017) *Visitability.* Retrieved from Visitability Creating Inclusive Communities

DESIGN PROCESS

1 FOCUS · 2 EXPLORE · 3 SELECT · 4 DESIGN · 5 ACTION · 6 ASSESS · 7 CREATE · 8 RE-FOCUS
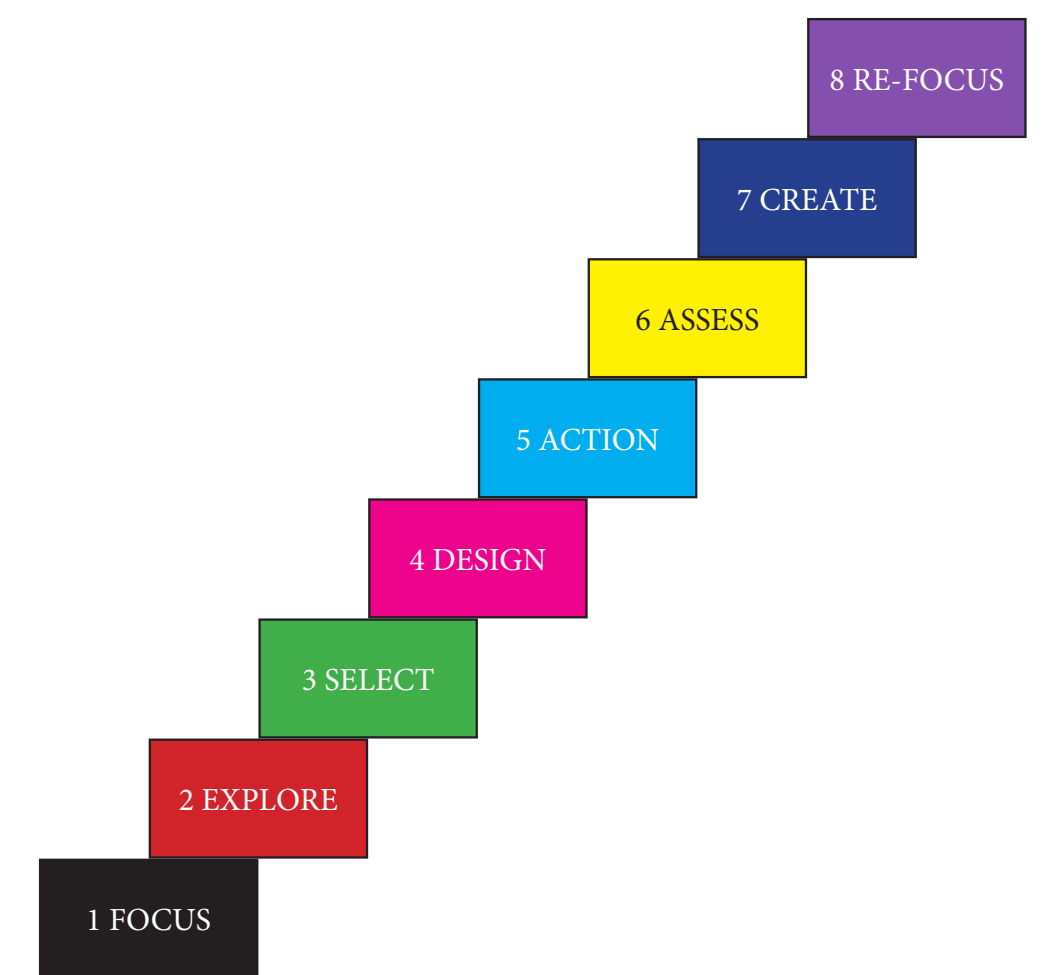
STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

80% of Americans over age 50 want to remain in their current homes
95% of Americans over age 75 want to remain in their current homes
— AARP
In 2013, nearly 13 percent of the U.S. population was over age 60 (that's more than 100 million Americans)
In 2010, more than 3.7 million baby boomers turned 60
— U.S. Census information
At least 21% of US households have at least one person with a physical limitation
60% probability that a newly built single family home will house at least one disabled person during the next 50 years
— Journal of the American Planning Association
11.5 million Americans have physical disabilities that make going outside the home difficult or practically impossible
— U.S. Census information
More than 90% of the existing housing stock is not accessible
— Journal of the American Planning Association (A project of Independence unlimited,Inc, 2017)

SOLUTION

To accommodate Visitability's criteria I chose to create a one floor ranch style home. Both the front and back entry ways are ground level with the house to accommodate those who are disabled, and have mobility problems. Each doorway was widened to 36", as well as each hallway was widened to 48". To accommodate Visitability's last request I created a powder room right off the foyer that is 8' by 7'3" to be accessible by someone in a wheelchair or walker.