

## The Fair Housing Act and Its Purpose

The Fair Housing Act (the "Act") prohibits any discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, handicap, familial status, or national origin. The Act charges the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with establishing building standards to accommodate individuals with varying disabilities and needs. These guidelines are provided in the Fair Housing Act Design Manual which assists builders and developers in constructing dwellings that comply with the Act.

The information enclosed in this brochure is intended to encourage developers to include visitability and universal design standards into all new construction and to explain how to meet those standards in order to affirmatively further fair housing. Applying these low cost standards to all new housing will benefit the entire community and provide homes that will be usable by everyone regardless of age, ability, or situation. Approximately 20% of the population in Florida are people with a disability, so building homes with these standards in place will greatly increase the marketability of new homes as well.

### What is Visitability?

Housing that is "visitable" enables persons with disabilities to visit friends, relatives, and neighbors in their homes by including specific design standards that provide a living space favorable to the needs of all. A home that is visitable also allows aging residents to remain in their home without having to move to a more accommodating residence. These design concepts not only serve persons with disabilities, but also serve persons without disabilities, such as families with small children.

### How Can Visitability Be Achieved?

Visitability can be achieved for little cost, with the use of a few simple design standards:

- All interior & bathroom doorways should have at least clear opening of 32" and hallways have at least 36" width
- Include at least one zero-step entrance on a firm surface no steeper than 1/2", proceeding from a driveway or public sidewalk
- Provide at least one wheelchair accessible bathroom on the ground floor

## Fair Housing Unit

JACKSONVILLE AREA LEGAL AID

## A Guide Explaining How to Incorporate Visitability and Universal Design Concepts into All New Construction

### What is the Fair Housing Unit (FHU)?

The FHU enforces the fair housing laws throughout Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties. There are no income requirements for FHU clients. FHU is committed to zealously advocate on behalf of victims of discrimination, and has a three-fold approach to accomplish this mission:

**1. EDUCATION:** FHU educates housing consumers to recognize and report housing discrimination. If your group would like to receive a fair housing presentation, please call the hotline.

**2. INVESTIGATION:** FHU often investigates cases of alleged discrimination through testing. Testing has proven to be a highly effective method of identifying unlawful housing discrimination. FHU also conducts ongoing research and monitoring efforts to determine the nature and the extent of housing discrimination being practiced in our community.

**3. ENFORCEMENT:** FHU attorneys may negotiate on behalf of a client, represent a client in state or federal court, or may help a client file a complaint with a government agency, and advocate for him or her throughout the process.

### Call FHU's hotline

- to report housing discrimination
- to request a fair housing presentation

(904) 356-8371

Hotline: 1-866-356-8371



### Fair Housing Unit

126 W. Adams Street  
Jacksonville, FL 32202  
www.jaxlegalaid.org  
(904) 356-8371  
Fax: (904) 356-8780

FLORIDA RELAY (FOR HEARING  
AND SPEECH IMPAIRED)  
1-800-955-8771 (ENGLISH)  
1-800-955-8773 (SPANISH))

## What is Universal Design?

Universal design is an approach to the design of a living environment that makes it usable by all people regardless of age, ability, or situation. Thus, the design standards used are not intended to specifically benefit persons with disabilities, but to benefit all persons so that housing is therefore accessible by everyone.

There are many Universal Design Standards that affirmatively further Fair Housing. Here are a few suggestions:

### Doorways

- Entrance/exit should be at least 36" in width
- Threshold should be ½" or less
- Entry door should have a peephole at standing & sitting levels
- Interior doorways should have a nominal clear opening of 32"
- Use lever-action handles on all interior & exterior doors

### General Interior

- All hallways should have a nominal clear opening of 36"
- Include a minimum of 18" of clear floor space at all doorways to avoid the swing of the door when opening & closing
- All thresholds should be flush
- Slip resistant, trip resistant, and durable flooring
- Install doors that require no more than 8.5 LBF to open (FL Law)

### Bathrooms

- Use lever faucets with an anti-scald feature in the sinks
- Handheld showerhead with adjustable wall mount
- Bathroom walls around toilets, tubs, and showers should be reinforced to allow for future installation of horizontal grab bars
- Include at least one bathroom on the ground level

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## Kitchens

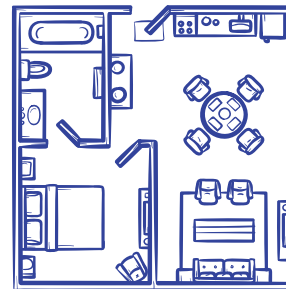
- Use lever faucets with an anti-scald feature in the sinks
- The faucet in the kitchen sink should have a removable spout or a separate sprayer with at least a 9" hose

## Utility Features

- Install midpoint of light & fan switches no more than 48" above the floor
- Use toggle-type or rocker style switches in all rooms
- Install thermostat controls no more than 48" above the floor
- Mid-point on electrical outlets, phone jacks, and data ports should be located no less than 16" above the floor level where appropriate
- Install at least two four-plex electrical outlets in all bedrooms
- Install door bell switches no more than 48" from the floor at the primary entrance so they are accessible to a seated person
- Install sufficient lighting inside & outside the primary entrance

## Common Area and Exterior Features

- Ramp slopes should be between 1:20
- Sidewalks should connect to public streets or sidewalks that lead to public transportation, parking, or loading zones & should be a minimum of 60" in width
- No steps to access common areas



Note: If you have an impairment, disability, language barrier, or otherwise require an alternative means of reading this brochure or accessing information about Fair Housing, please contact us about arranging alternative accommodations.

[jaxlegalaid.org](http://jaxlegalaid.org)