

UNIVERSAL DESIGN TAX INCENTIVE ACT

Introduced by Congressman Joe Neguse (D-CO) and Congressman Marc Molinaro (R-NY)

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act defined a goal of “equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency” for individuals with disabilities.

Aging in place is the phenomenon of older adults remaining in their homes and communities as they age, rather than moving or relocating to nursing homes or an institutional setting. While long-term care provides a safe community-based environment for older people. The vast majority of older adults prefer to age in place and live independently.

The United States cannot accommodate our citizens' needs, as only 5% of housing across the country is equipped with features that make them accessible.

The Universal Design Tax Incentive Act (H.R. 8547) establishes a tax credit for certain costs during the construction or renovation of residential and commercial buildings that are certified by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as satisfying Universal Design Standards

- The bill requires the HUD to create a Working Group made up of staff from Federal agencies, academic interests, industry partners, and community stakeholders to establish Universal Design Standards. Please note that the bill language gives the Secretary the power to add members from any community partners, including those listed. It is not restricted to only those listed.
- To verify Universal Design Standards, HUD would require all properties to be third-party verified to ensure consumer confidence in the Universal Design Standards. All properties would be verified by a recognized authority at the cost of the owner of the dwelling unit or commercial unit unless such an inspector agrees to provide such inspection on a cost-free basis.
- Homeowners or developers would be eligible for a 20% tax credit for Universal Design expenses that are attributed to design or construction of new buildings, plus a 50% tax credit for Universal Design expenses that are attributed to renovation of an existing building.
- Once established, the tax credit will be retroactive for six years for buildings renovated before 2024, and annual limitations on deductions may be set by the IRS based on construction costs.

By offering a significant incentive to developers and homeowners, the bill aims to help consumers, businesses, and industry save money while increasing the nation’s supply of accessible housing and buildings. Universal Design is for everyone, including people with disabilities and our aging population.

To cosponsor, please contact Ryan.Shuman2@mail.house.gov in Rep. Neguse’s office.

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The United States is home to a growing aging demographic and a large population of people living with one or multiple disabilities. However, only 5% of housing across the country includes features that are accessible to such individuals.

According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 90% of Americans over 65 want to age in place. In a recent study conducted by EndHomelessness.org, nearly 9 million adults ages 18-64 have a disability, but only 1% of housing nationwide features a no-step entryway.

What is Universal Design?

The original [Principles of Universal Design](#) were developed by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University under Ron Mace's leadership. Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation or specialized design.

The articulation of these guidelines sparked an international movement that includes a diverse body of scholarship, policy, law, and international agreements aimed to integrate people with functional limitations into the global social fabric. The inability to safely navigate inside your own home or workplace can impact employment, educational opportunities, and access to healthcare.

The availability of accessible housing is critical to enable persons with disabilities to live independent lives with minimal support. It is also essential to enable persons with disabilities to equally participate in society to enjoy the freedom of living independently, and also being able to visit the homes of friends and family.

Why do we need Universal Design?

Typically, people think "accessible" means "ADA compliant," which implies that something is disability-specific. The ADA primarily applies to public accommodations and does not account for most housing and certain commercial buildings. (see. [Universal Design Project](#)). Currently, there are no HUD standards that recognize a design for these structures that's usable by all people.

The Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard has identified that only 1.0% percent of the national housing stock offers basic universal design features.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that 27% of adults in the USA have some type of disability. This includes mobility, cognition, independent living, hearing, vision, and/or self-care impairments. If you are not part of this demographic today, it's possible that you may be at some point in your life.

Cost Savings

The national median monthly cost of assisted living care is estimated at \$4,000 per month, and depending on location and care needs, it can reach upwards of \$10,000 per month. This price is much higher for nursing home care. The average cost for basic design and structural modifications needed to live in place is a one-time renovation cost between \$12,000 and \$16,000 per one-story residence.