

ELDER AFFAIRS >



AGING IN PLACE

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The need for affordable housing for low-income or frail elders has reached critical levels.

The affordable housing shortage has created yearlong or more waiting lists for subsidized elder housing, an increasing need for emergency housing, fierce competition for affordable privately owned rental units, and a crucial need for rental assistance for the elderly to defray daily living costs.

Elders who are fortunate enough to live in their own homes often face the need to retrofit their home to make the home conducive to age-related health changes, such as a change in visual acuity or to dexterity and balance: changes that facilitate “aging in place”, commonly defined as the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely and independently. There are a number of tools designed to help elders to age in place, one of those is Universal Design.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN is a seamless part of the layout of your home. The concept of Universal Design was developed by North Carolina State University in 1997. The seven principles of Universal Design include:

- 1) Equitable Use** – The design of each feature of the home is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- 2) Flexibility in Use** – The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- 3) Simple and Intuitive Use** – The feature is easy to understand and use regardless of the experience, knowl-

edge, language skills, or cognitive ability of the user.

4) Perceptible Information – The design conveys necessary information for use regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.

5) Tolerance for Error – The design lowers the hazard threshold and any consequences of unintended use or accidental use.

6) Low Physical Effort – The feature can be used effectively, efficiently, and comfortably without fatigue.

7) Size and Space for Appropriate Use – The design allows for reach, approach, use, and manipulation.

VISITABILITY is another term used when talking about aging in place. Can your neighbor who uses a walker visit your home without worrying about bumping into door frames? Can your grandchildren visit your home without your worrying that they trip and fall? A house is visitable if it has three features – at least one zero-step entrance, doors and hallways with thirty-two inches of clear passage, and one accessible bathroom on the main floor.

The Department of Elder Affairs is pleased to present a workshop on Aging in Place at the Florida Housing Coalition’s statewide annual conference on September 9th. We will address these issues as well as programs offered by the DOEA such as the **SAFE HOMES** that can help you to help others age in place.

