UNIVERSAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

These Guidelines help implement the Town of Windsor 2040 General Plan, 2023-2031 Housing Element, Windsor Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan ("Station Area Plan"), and the Town of Windsor Prohousing Designation with the following measures:

1. Establish consistent, practical, and proven building and design standards to make specified dwelling units usable, to the greatest extent possible, for occupancy and visitability by all people without the need for adaptation or specialized design.
2. Enhance the full life cycle use of housing without regard to the physical abilities or disabilities of a home's occupants or guests to accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and functional abilities.
3. Provide housing that meets a diverse range of needs, including those of disabled occupants and visitors.
4. Educate homebuilders about the need to provide housing for all types of people and how that can be done.

APPLICABILITY

These Guidelines define a minimum set of standards for a single-family unit, townhome, condominium, or Accessible Dwelling Unit to be deemed "Universal Design" for compliance with Town policies and/or incentive programs, such as:

- Prohousing Incentive Pilot (PIP) grant program
- Station Area Plan implementation
- Other Town of Windsor projects and policies that reference Universal Design

BACKGROUND

"Universal Design" describes a strategy to design products and environments for all users, to greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. This concept builds on the post-WWII "barrier-free" movement that followed the return home of disabled veterans. Civil Rights era legislation included the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requiring minimum accessibility standards for federally funded buildings and programs. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) codified civil rights protections for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, and transportation. In 1997, the *7 Principles of Universal Design* were established by Robert Mace at North Carolina State University with a working group of architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers. The State of California Department of Housing and Community Development provides a

Universal Design model ordinance, which is based upon the *7 Principles of Universal Design*.

Station Area Plan

The 2012 Windsor Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan ("Station Area Plan") requires that projects within a half mile of the SMART station and with 20 or more dwelling units include at least 10 percent of the units designed to be habitable by people with disabilities. The Station Area Plan describes Universal Design as an endeavor to make day-to-day living and home tasks possible and safer for everyone, allowing a person to remain independent for as long as possible. The Station Area Plan includes footnotes linking to additional resources at the North Carolina State University Center for Universal Design at this website address*:* https://design.ncsu.edu/research/center-for-universal-design/

Station Area Plan Design Guideline DG-20 states: *New transit oriented residential development should accommodate a diverse population. Units, as required by the development standards, should incorporate Universal Design elements to be habitable and visitable by people with disabilities. Such features include:*

- *At least one entrance without steps and a flat or very low threshold. This entrance may be a rear entrance.*
- *Living space on one floor or stair landings big enough to accept lifts.*
- *Wide interior doors (32" clear, typically provided with 36" door), hallways, and alcoves with 60" x 60" turning space at doors, in kitchens, and dead ends.*
- *Clear floor space in kitchens and bathrooms.*

General Plan

In 2018, the Town Council adopted the 2040 General Plan, followed by a General Plan Amendment in 2023 for the required 6th Cycle Housing Element Update. The Housing Element utilizes a multi-pronged strategy to ensure that all residents have access to adequate housing, recognizing that Windsor has a diverse population. The Universal Design Guidelines help to implement the following Housing Element policies:

- *Policy H-1.2 Encourage a Range of Housing Types. The Town shall encourage development of a range of housing types affordable to various income groups, including single-family and multifamily dwellings, "move-up" housing, senior housing, secondary and other smaller units, and special needs housing.*
- *Policy H-5.1 Housing for Special Needs. The Town shall facilitate and encourage the construction of a variety of housing types to provide alternatives to single-family detached housing and to address special housing needs.*
- *Policy H-5.5 Accessible Housing Near SMART Station. The Town shall require projects that contain 20 or more dwelling units and are located within a half mile of the Windsor SMART Station to design and build 10 percent of the units to be habitable by [people] with disabilities.*

- *<u>Program H-14: Prohousing Designation.</u> The Town shall strive to receive and maintain through the sunset date of January 1, 2025, the State's Pro-housing Designation by demonstrating a sufficient number of polices that significantly contribute to accelerating housing production.*

<u>Prohousing Designation</u>
In 2023, the Town of Windsor received the Prohousing Designation from the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). This is a voluntary program to incentive a range of housing initiatives throughout the State. The Town of Windsor Prohousing program includes the future adoption of a Universal Design ordinance, with the intent to enhance the full life cycle use of housing without regard to the abilities of a home's occupants and guests. Community outreach and interviews with local developers were conducted in 2024 to explore a potential Universal Design policy for Windsor.

<u>Enhancements and Next Steps</u>
Design practitioners and others have observed that the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as the 7 Principles of Universal Design, primarily address disabilities that are related to mobility. In fact, many of the basic features outlined in these Guidelines have been recommended for decades, going as far back as the 1950's barrier-free movement. As the wider range of abilities and needs became better understood over time, additional design features have been identified that can enhance functionality and universality, as well as aesthetics. These features include enhancements within the home, such as providing low kitchen drawers instead of cabinets, as well as enhancements to the outside world and public spaces, such as high-contrast signage. These Guidelines are based upon HCD's model Universal Design Ordinance, which is primarily concerned with aspects of design that may be easy to provide with initial home construction, but very difficult and costly to retrofit. Resources to explore further enhancements beyond the scope of these Guidelines are provided in the Appendices, as follows:

- Appendix A: Livable Design
- Appendix B: Inclusive Design

UNIVERSAL DESIGN ELEMENTS

Seven essential elements of Universal Design are defined herein, including:

1. Accessible primary entrance
2. Accessible interior route
3. Accessible common room
4. Accessible primary floor powder room (i.e., half-bathroom) or bathroom
5. Accessible bedroom
6. Accessible kitchen
7. Other

ELEMENT 1. ACCESSIBLE PRIMARY ENTRANCE

1. Provide an exterior accessible route that is either:
    a. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A; or
    b. Not less than forty inches wide and with a slope no greater than one unit vertical in 20 units horizontal.
2. Provide a floor or landing at and on the exterior and interior side of the accessible primary entrance door that is either of the following:
    a. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A; or
    b. Having a level area on the side to which the accessible entrance door swings extending 24” past the strike edge of the door.
3. Provide an exterior accessible entry door that is either:
    a. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A; or
    b. Has a 34” net clear opening.
4. Provide a second exterior door that is accessible as provided in this section with a 32” net clear opening.
5. Where at least one eyehole is provided in the accessible entry door, one shall be at standard height and a second one that is 42” – 44” above finished floor.
6. Doorbell for an accessible entry door shall be 42” – 48” inches above the finished floor.
7. Accessible primary and secondary entrances pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
8. House access from the garage shall have a stepless entry or maximum 7” step up.

ELEMENT 2. ACCESSIBLE INTERIOR ROUTE

1. Provide at least one accessible interior route through the hallways from the accessible primary entrance to a powder room or bathroom, common use room, and kitchen pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
2. Accessible interior routes shall have a minimum width of 42”; except:
    - 39” hallway width is permitted when all doors leading to any bathroom or powder room, if on the primary entry level, have an accessible minimum clear door opening of 34”; and

- 36” hallway width is permitted when all doors leading to any bathroom or powder room on the primary entry level have a minimum clear door opening of 36”

3. No sunken or raised areas are permitted on accessible interior routes between the accessible primary entrance and the bathroom/powder room, the accessible common use room, the accessible bedroom and the accessible kitchen.
4. Provide handrail reinforcement on one or both sides of accessible interior routes.

ELEMENT 3. ACCESSIBLE COMMON ROOM

All accessible common rooms shall be designed as follows:

1. Located on accessible interior routes.
2. No sunken areas.
3. Consistent with standards related to accessible paths to any other common room on the primary entry level.

ELEMENT 4. ACCESSIBLE PRIMARY FLOOR POWDER ROOM OR BATHROOM

An accessible power room or bathroom shall be located on the primary floor as follows:

1. The primary floor has the primary accessible entry pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
2. The accessible powder room or bathroom shall provide clear space that is either:
    a. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A; or
    b. Outside of the swing of the door, provides either a 48” x 60” rectangle or a 60” - diameter circle.
3. Provide a bathtub or shower that meets the requirements of ANSI A117.1.
4. Provide either of the following:
    a. Grab bar reinforcement pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A; or
    b. Grab bars that are installed pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A for the toilet, shower/bath, or lavatory, or any combination thereof.
5. Faucets and handles not requiring tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
6. Lavatory or sink installed pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
7. Toilet installed pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
8. Removable cabinets under the lavatory/sink.
9. Mirrors and towel fixtures pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.

ELEMENT 5. ACCESSIBLE BEDROOM

An accessible bedroom shall be located on an accessible interior route of travel and shall include at least one closet with a minimum 32” net opening and adjustable closet rods and shelving.

ELEMENT 6. ACCESSIBLE KITCHEN

An accessible kitchen shall be located on the primary entry level of a residential dwelling unit.

1. On an accessible interior route to the kitchen, with a pathway through the kitchen to the stove, oven, or combination stove-oven pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
2. A minimum 48” x 60” clear space in front of a stove at the base of a U-shaped kitchen.
3. A minimum 30” x 48” clear space in front of the sink (counting open access underneath)
4. A minimum 18”-wide breadboard and/or minimum 18” of counter space at a 34” height, or any combination thereof.
5. Sink controls pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
6. An adjustable sink and/or removable under-sink cabinets pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
7. Hood fan controls at light switch level or lower.

ELEMENT 7. OTHER FEATURES

1. All receptacle outlets, lighting controls and environmental controls throughout the residential dwelling unit installed pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A or applicable provisions of the California Electrical Code.
2. Rocker light switches and controls installed in rooms must be accessible and on an interior accessible route.
3. On accessible interior routes all adjacent, interior doors or openings for rooms and routes of travel must be accessible pursuant to CBC, Chapter 11A. However, a 34” clear doorway width is permitted provided from a hallway with a 39” width, and a 36” clear doorway width is permitted from a hallway with a 36” width.
4. The width of the level area on the side toward which an accessible door swings must be pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
5. Flooring along accessible interior routes must be installed pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A.
6. If on the primary entry level, miscellaneous areas or facilities (such as a patio or yard, laundry room, or storage area) for the dwelling must have an accessible route to and from the accessible entrance, either through the dwelling unit or around the dwelling unit.
7. An accessible laundry facility shall have an accessible route to and from the accessible entrance, either through the dwelling unit or around the dwelling unit.
8. If the unit has more than one story, provide electrical outlets at stairs for a future chairlift.

ELEMENT 8. EXCEPTIONS

Specific Universal Design features may be waived in writing by the Community Development Director and the Building Official if they deem it necessary to avoid an undue financial hardship caused by site specific conditions.

Approved by motion of the Town Council
June 17, 2026

APPENDIX

A. Livable Design Resources

B. Inclusive Design Resources

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