

Today's Bathroom Meets the Needs of all Ages

By Penny K. Bartlow, ASID, CID

Over the years, bathrooms have evolved from small utilitarian spaces to lavish spa-like retreats. They are becoming one of the best designed rooms in the house. Today's interior designers are taking bath design a step further by creating beautiful retreats that have the added benefit of being functional for all ages and abilities.

The concept of universal design has been around for many years. The intent is to create a design that is usable by as many people as possible. Clear floor space, curbless shower, clear knee space below the sink, grab bars, and lever faucet controls are a few features that make a bathroom accessible without sacrificing aesthetics.

One of the advantages of incorporating universal design principles in bathroom design is that it allows an individual to stay in their home as they age, or suffer an injury. There have been many instances, for example, when a person breaks both legs skiing and has to move out of their home because their wheelchair doesn't fit through the bathroom door. A simple design specification of a 36" door rather than a 32" door may have allowed this person to recuperate comfortably in their own home.

A universal bath is more spacious and comfortable for everyone regardless of age or ability. It just makes sense to utilize universal design principles when building or remodeling a bathroom. Planning for a simple retrofit is also a smart approach. For example, if walls are reinforced during construction, grab bars can easily be added later. When designing your bathroom, work with a qualified interior designer who can lead you through the steps of creating an accessible space. They will be able to create a beautiful environment that you will enjoy at any stage of your life. ❖



Above, left: Lever faucet controls allow effortless operation, while clear space below the sink and low mirror installation provide accessibility. Interior Design by Powell & Bonnell. Photography by Ted Yarwood. Right: Open shower provides barrier-free access. All accessories are within seated reach. Contrasting slip resistant floor tiles separate the level floor and shower floor that gently slopes toward drain. Interior design by SpaceShaping, Karla B. Johnson, Allied Member ASID, AKBD, CAPS.

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