

Chapter 15.154

UNIVERSAL DESIGN (ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS) FOR RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS

Sections:

- 15.154.010 Purpose and intent.
- 15.154.020 Findings.
- 15.154.030 Definitions.
- 15.154.040 Scope and application.
- 15.154.050 Obligation to offer and install universal design features.
- 15.154.060 Exemptions.
- 15.154.070 Universal design features-Standards-Primary entry.
- 15.154.080 Universal design features-Standards-Interior routes.
- 15.154.090 Universal design features— Standards—Primary floor powder room or bathroom entry and facilities.
- 15.154.100 Universal design features-Standards-Kitchen and facilities.
- 15.154.110 Universal design features-Standards-Common use room.
- 15.154.120 Universal design features-Standards-Bedroom.
- 15.154.130 Universal design features-Standards-Miscellaneous areas.
- 15.154.140 Universal design features-Standards-General components.

15.154.010 Purpose and intent.

The purposes of this chapter are:

- A. To facilitate the development of dwelling units that are visitable, usable, and safe for occupancy by persons with disabilities;
- B. To allow new homebuyers the option of incorporating universal design principles into their future homes that would enhance their ability to remain in their homes during periods of temporary, developing, or permanent disabilities or frailties; and
- C. To accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and functional abilities while not significantly impacting housing costs and affordability. (Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.020 Findings.

Pursuant to California [Health and Safety Code](#) section 17959, the city council finds that:

- A. As many as 12.6% of city residents have one or more disabilities and 14.4% of city residents are age 65 or older. Individuals with mobility difficulties may require special accommodations to their

homes to allow for continued independent living. This chapter is reasonably necessary to serve this population as well as those anticipating a disability by enhancing opportunities for the full life cycle use of housing without regard to the physical abilities or disabilities of a home's occupants or guests. This is done in order to accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and functional abilities.

B. The provisions of this chapter are substantially the same as the model universal design ordinance adopted by the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development and are not less restrictive than the requirements of the California Building Standards Code as adopted by this title. (Ord. 2025-0020 § 1; Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.030 Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

"Accessible" means consistent with or as defined by the California Building Code, Chapter 11A.

"ANSI A117.1" means the most current version of the "Standard on Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities," commonly known as "ICC/ANSI A117.1," published by the International Code Council and American National Standards Institute, Inc.

"Bathroom" means a room containing a toilet (water closet), lavatory (sink), and either a shower, bathtub, combination bathtub/shower, or both a shower and bathtub. It includes a compartmented bathroom in which the fixtures are distributed among interconnected rooms.

"CBC Chapter 11A" means Chapter 11A of the California Building Code (located in Part 2, Title 24, [California Code of Regulations](#)), or its successor provisions.

"CBC Chapter 11B" means Chapter 11B of the California Building Code (located in Part 2, Title 24, [California Code of Regulations](#)), or its successor provisions.

"Common use room" means a room commonly used by residents or guests to congregate.

"Development phase" means a distinct and separately marketed group of dwelling units in a residential development project such as a phase, series, village, or section.

"Dwelling unit" means a single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.

"New construction" means the construction of a new building. New construction does not include additions, alterations, or remodels to existing buildings.

"Powder room" means a room containing a toilet (water closet) and lavatory (sink), but no bathtub or shower. It includes a compartmented powder room in which the fixtures are distributed among interconnected rooms.

"Primary entry" means the principal entrance through which most people enter a building or residential unit, as designated by the building official.

"Residential development project" means a development project that contains one or more residential dwellings.

"Residential dwelling" means a detached building that contains one or two dwelling units and that is used, rented, leased, let, or hired out to be occupied exclusively for living purposes.

"Seller" means a person who, either directly or through an agent, sells or offers to sell a dwelling unit that is subject to this chapter. A seller may be the residential development project developer, builder, or owner. (Ord. 2025-0020 § 2; Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.040 Scope and application.

A. This chapter applies to the new construction of residential dwellings in a residential development project totaling 15 or more dwelling units.

B. If the residential development project includes more than one model or type of residential dwelling unit, then only one of the models or dwelling unit types is subject to the requirements of this chapter.

C. If the residential development project includes multiple development phases, at least one model meeting the requirements of this chapter shall be offered for each development phase. (Ord. 2025-0020 § 3; Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.050 Obligation to offer and install universal design features.

A. The seller of residential dwellings that are subject to this chapter shall prepare and provide to all prospective purchasers a brochure that identifies and describes the universal design features to be made available under this chapter and the dwelling units within the residential development project that are subject to the requirements of this chapter. Additionally, the seller shall provide to prospective purchasers a postage-paid, pre-addressed comment card that prospective purchasers may use to evaluate the effectiveness of this chapter and their experience with the seller. The comment cards shall be available in each brochure, at the model homes offering the universal design features, and at all sales offices associated with the development. The comment cards shall substantially comply with the city's form comment card as set forth on the city's website.

B. If model homes are available to be viewed in person by the public and are used in the marketing of residential dwellings that are subject to this chapter, at least one of the model homes shall be constructed to accommodate the universal design features identified in this chapter or shall include placards on the walls illustrating the features listed in this chapter. If model homes are not available to be viewed in person by the public, the universal design features identified in this chapter must be prominently displayed in sales offices and marketing materials.

C. The seller of a dwelling unit that is subject to this chapter shall offer an opportunity to select any of the universal design features listed in this chapter to a purchaser or prospective purchaser of the dwelling unit at the earliest feasible time after the purchaser or prospective purchaser is identified.

D. If requested by a purchaser, the seller of a dwelling unit that is subject to this chapter shall construct or install any universal design feature identified in this chapter, at the purchaser's cost, unless an exemption is granted for that universal design feature under Section 15.154.060.

E. In lieu of the standards established in this chapter, or when CBC Chapter 11A does not contain specific standards, the seller of a dwelling unit subject to this chapter, at his or her option, may offer or utilize standards for universal structural or design features, components, or appliances and facilities, including but not limited to ANSI A117.1 Standards, that meet or exceed CBC Chapter 11A and that offer greater availability, access or usability.

F. The building standards contained in CBC Chapter 11A shall not apply to the universal design features under this chapter except where, and to the extent, stated in this chapter. (Ord. 2025-0020 § 4; Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.060 Exemptions.

A. A seller may apply to the building official for an exemption from one or more of the universal design features required to be offered under this chapter. Requests for exemptions must be in writing and must be submitted with the building permit application as part of the building permit application process.

B. The building official shall approve a request for an exemption of a universal design feature required by this chapter if the building official finds either one or both of the following:

1. That the seller has demonstrated that compliance with the requirement to offer and install a universal design feature under this chapter would create an undue hardship due to topographical conditions of the site, lot size, or other site constraints, and equivalent facilitation is not available; or

2. That the seller has demonstrated that compliance with a request to install universal design features under this chapter would result in an unreasonable delay in construction or would result in non-reimbursable costs to the seller.

C. A residential development project subject to the requirements in CBC Chapter 11A or CBC Chapter 11B is exempt from the requirements of this chapter.

D. Any person aggrieved by the building official's decision under this section may appeal the decision to the construction code advisory and appeals board. The appeal shall be filed, processed, and heard in the manner described in chapter 2.48 for appeals to the construction code advisory and appeals board. (Ord. 2025-0020 § 5; Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.070 Universal design features-Standards-Primary entry.

A. The following options for the accessible entry on the primary entry level shall be offered and, if accepted, installed at the request and cost of the purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under Section 15.154.060:

1. An exterior accessible route that is either:
 - a. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A; or
 - b. Not less than forty (40) inches wide and having a maximum slope of one unit vertical in twelve (12) units horizontal.
2. The accessible primary entry that is consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A.
3. The floor or landing at and on the exterior and interior side of the accessible entry door that is either of the following:
 - a. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A; or
 - b. The width of the level area on the side to which the accessible entry door swings shall extend twenty-four (24) inches past the strike edge of the door.
4. The exterior accessible entry door that is either:
 - a. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A, or
 - b. Has a thirty-four (34) inch net clear opening.
5. A second exterior door that is installed in a manner so that it is accessible as provided in this section with a thirty-two (32) inch net clear opening.
6. Where at least one eyehole is provided in the accessible entry door, one that is between forty-two (42) inches and forty-four (44) inches from the finished floor must be offered.
7. Where at least one doorbell is provided for the accessible entry door, one that is between forty-two (42) inches and forty-eight (48) inches from the finished floor must be offered.

B. Design Standards. All exterior access features described in this section shall adhere to any applicable city design review process, guidelines, checklist or policy. (Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.080 Universal design features-Standards-Interior routes.

The following options for accessible interior routes on the primary entry level shall be offered and, if accepted, installed at the request and cost of the purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under Section 15.154.060:

- A. At least one accessible route through the hallways consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A from the accessible entry of the dwelling unit to the primary entry level powder room or bathroom, a common use room, and the kitchen if located on the primary entry level.
- B. No sunken or raised area in the bathroom or powder room, the common use room, and the kitchen, if on the primary entry level, on an accessible route.
- C. Handrails installed in a manner consistent with CBC Chapter 11A on one or both sides of the accessible route, at the option of the purchaser.
- D. Handrail reinforcement installed on one or both sides of the accessible route.
- E. An accessible route with a minimum width of forty-two (42) inches. A thirty-nine (39) inch hallway width may be provided when all doors leading to any bathroom, powder room, common use room, or kitchen, if on the primary entry level, that must be accessible have a minimum clear door opening of thirty-four (34) inches, and a thirty-six (36) inch hallway width may be provided when all doors leading to any bathroom, powder room, common use room, or kitchen on the primary entry level that must be accessible have a minimum clear door opening of thirty-six (36) inches. (Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.090 Universal design features— Standards—Primary floor powder room or bathroom entry and facilities.

If a bathroom or powder room is offered on the primary entry level, the following options for the accessible bathroom or powder room on the route from the primary entry shall be offered and, if accepted, installed at the request and cost of the purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under Section 15.154.060:

- A. A powder room or bathroom, at the option of the purchaser, that complies with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A.
- B. Clear space in the bathroom or powder room that is either:
 - 1. Consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A; or
 - 2. Outside of the swing of the door and either a 48 inch diameter circle, 48 inches by 60 inches, or a 60 inch diameter circle, at the option of the purchaser.
- C. A bathtub or shower meeting the requirements of ANSI A117.1.
- D. Either of the following:
 - 1. Grab bar reinforcement consistent with CBC Chapter 11A; or
 - 2. Grab bars installed in a manner consistent with CBC Chapter 11A for the toilet, shower or bath, or lavatory, or any combination thereof, at the option of the purchaser.
- E. Faucets and handles not requiring tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist and consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A.
- F. A lavatory (sink) installed consistent with CBC Chapter 11A.
- G. A toilet installed consistent with CBC Chapter 11A.
- H. Removable cabinets under the lavatory (sink).
- I. Where mirrors and towel fixtures are provided in the accessible bathroom or powder room, installation consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A. (Ord. 2025-0020 § 6; Ord. 2010-003

§ 1)

15.154.100 Universal design features-Standards-Kitchen and facilities.

If there is a kitchen on the primary entry level, the following options shall be offered and, if accepted, installed at the request and cost of purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under Section 15.154.060:

- A. An accessible route to the kitchen, with a pathway through the kitchen to the stove, oven, or combination stove-oven consistent with the requirements of CBC Chapter 11A.
- B. One or more of the following, at the purchaser's option:
 - 1. At least a forty-eight (48) inch by sixty (60) inch clear space in front of a stove at the base of a U-shaped kitchen;
 - 2. At least a thirty (30) inch by forty-eight (48) inch clear space in front of the sink (counting open access underneath, if available);
 - 3. At least one eighteen (18) inch wide breadboard and/or at least eighteen (18) inches in counter space at a thirty-four (34) inch height, or any combination thereof, at the option of the purchaser.
- C. Sink controls consistent with CBC Chapter 11A.
- D. Adjustable sink and/or removable under-sink cabinets consistent with CBC Chapter 11A.
- E. Hood fan controls at light switch level or lower level. (Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.110 Universal design features-Standards-Common use room.

The following options for a common use room on the primary entry level shall be offered and, if accepted, installed at the request and cost of the purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under section 15.154.060:

- A. If there is a common use room, such as a dining room or living room, it must be made available on an accessible route. Sunken or raised areas not exceeding 50% of the area of the room's floor space are permitted as an option to the purchaser in a common use room on the accessible route when an accessible route connects a usable portion of the common use room to the accessible bathroom or powder room and the accessible exterior entry door.
- B. No sunken areas in a common use room on an accessible route.
- C. Standards related to access to and flatness of any other common use room on the primary entry level. (Ord. 2025-0020 § 7; Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.120 Universal design features-Standards-Bedroom.

If there is a bedroom on the primary entry level, the following options shall be offered and, if accepted, installed at the request and cost of the purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under Section 15.154.060:

At least one bedroom on the accessible route of travel with all components meeting the requirements of Section 15.154.140. A closet shall have at least a thirty-two (32) inch net opening and adjustable closet rods and shelving. A family room or den may satisfy this bedroom requirement if a sleeping structure (such as a bed, futon, hide-away, or Murphy bed) can be placed in the room and if the room complies with provisions for emergency escape and rescue and smoke alarms in the California Building Code. (Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.130 Universal design features-Standards-Miscellaneous areas.

The following options shall be offered, and if accepted, installed at the request and cost of the purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under Section 15.154.060:

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 entry, either through the dwelling unit or around the dwelling unit. (Ord. 2010-003 § 1)

15.154.140 Universal design features-Standards-General components.

The following options shall be offered, and if accepted, installed at the request and cost of the purchaser, unless an exemption of this universal design feature is granted under Section 15.154.060:

A. Rocker light switches and controls installed pursuant to either of the following:

1. In all rooms required to be accessible and on the accessible route;
2. Throughout the residential dwelling unit.

B. On an accessible route in an interior room or hallway, interior doors or openings for rooms and routes of travel required to be accessible consistent with CBC Chapter 11A.

Exceptions: A thirty-four (34) inch clear doorway width may be requested from a hallway with a thirty-nine (39) inch width, and a thirty-six (36) inch clear doorway width may be requested from a hallway with a thirty-six (36) inch width.

C. The width of the level area on the side toward which an accessible door swings consistent with CBC Chapter 11A.

D. If the building official or purchaser determines that the accessible route and doorway width options prescribed by CBC Chapter 11A are not feasible and that a less wide accessible route is necessary, a functional alternative to ensure that all entries into rooms required to be accessible may be approved by the building official or purchaser if it meets at least one of the following requirements and if the hallway is not less than thirty-six (36) inches in width:

1. The entry door to the room must be at the end of a hallway or passageway, or open directly from another room on an accessible route of travel, so that no turn of ninety (90) degrees or more is necessary to enter the room;
2. The hallway wall opposite the room must be inset enough to allow an area of at least eight inches wide with at least a sixty (60) inch run centered on the center of the entry door opening (e.g., an eight-inch by sixty (60) inch notch or alcove);
3. The hallway wall on the same side as the room must be inset enough to allow an area of at least eight inches wide with at least a sixty (60) inch run centered on the center of the entry door opening (e.g., an eight inch by sixty (60) inch notch or alcove);
4. The hallway wall directly opposite the room door must open to another room with at least a sixty (60) inch opening on a level with the accessible passageway or hallway.

Note: Doors or openings to the rooms required to be accessible may be wider and the notch or alcove smaller if equivalent access is not impeded. In addition, for a doorway at the end of a hallway or in other circumstances, the notch or alcove need not be centered on the doorway if equivalent access is not impeded.

E. Hand-activated door hardware complying with CBC Chapter 11A.

F. Flooring throughout the residential dwelling unit consistent with CBC Chapter 11A.

G. The installation of all receptacle outlets, lighting controls and environmental controls throughout the balance of the residential dwelling unit must comply with CBC Chapter 11A or applicable provisions of the California Electrical Code.

H. Conduit for the future wiring of assistive technologies in all exterior walls consistent with the National Electric Code.

I. Outlets at the bottom and top of any stairs to facilitate the use of a chair lift. (Ord. 2010-003 § 1)