

Visitability – Building Today's Housing for Tomorrow

February 23rd, 2021



Disclaimer

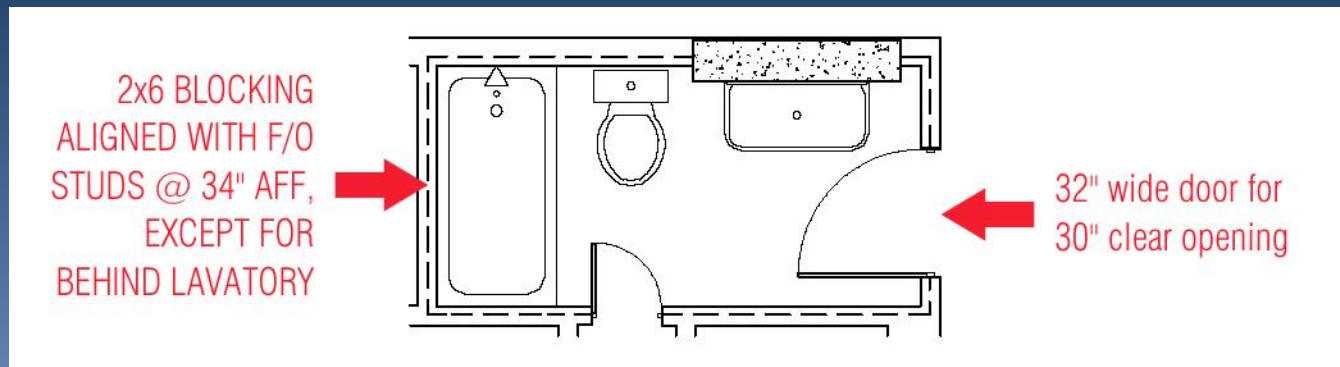
- This presentation is for the City of Austin's Visitability Ordinance No. 20140130-021 which only applies to certain private residential projects.
- An accessible house presumes that a person with a disability will live in the unit, while a visitable house provides the ability to visit it and is more adaptable for future need.
- The Americans with Disability Act (ADA), which only applies to commercial, public and governmental buildings, is not covered in this presentation.

Outline

- The City of Austin's history/background of accessible code requirements.
- Components of the 2014 ordinance
 - interior requirements
 - exterior requirements
 - waiving out of the exterior requirements
 - submittal requirements

History/Background

- There have been provisions for providing some type of accessibility inside the new construction of a single family dwelling or duplex residence since the early 1980's.
- The requirements were limited to providing a 30" clear opening and 2x6 min lateral wall reinforcement @ 34" from and parallel to the interior floor finish.



- As we are living longer, there was a growing need to expand upon the existing regulations allowing for better access into & around a home so that more people can age-in place.

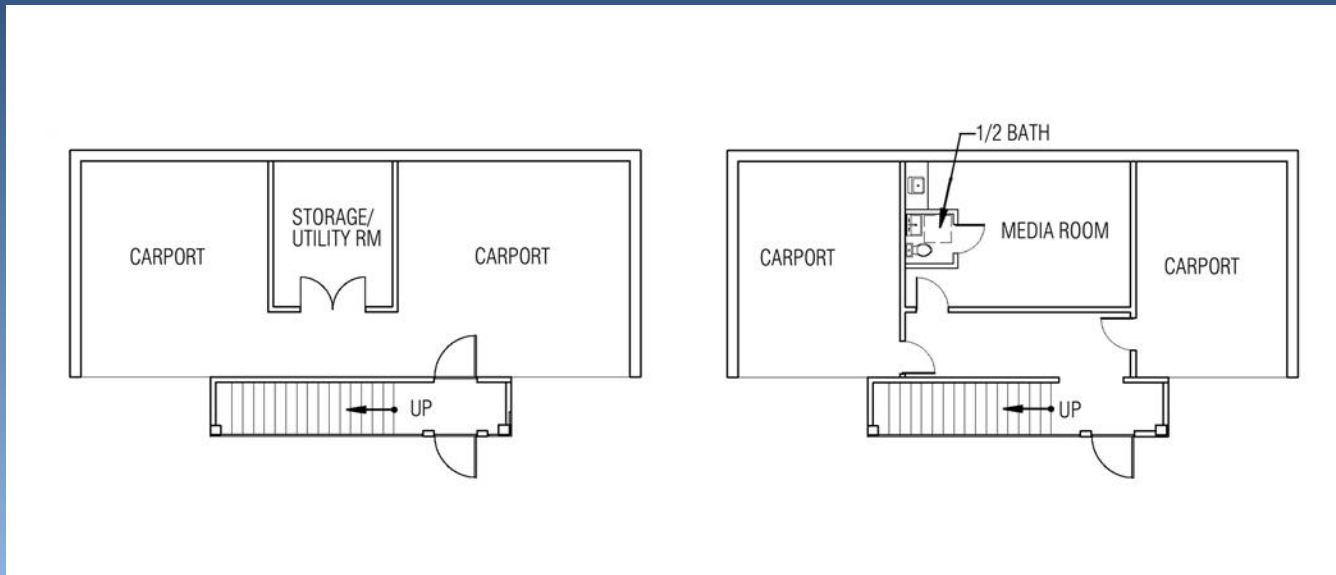
Components to the ordinance

There are (7) sections which are as follows:

- *R320.1 Applicability (eff. February 10st, 2014)*
- *R320.2 Compliance req'd at plan review*
- *R320.3 Visitable bathrooms*
- *R320.4 Visitable light switches, receptacles and environmental controls*
- *R320.5 Visitability bathroom route*
- *R320.6 Visitable dwelling entrance*
- *R320.7 Exterior visitable route (eff. July 1st, 2015)*

R320.1 Applicability.

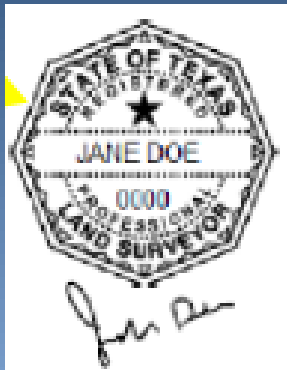
*A permit for construction of a new single family or duplex dwelling with **habitable space on the first floor** must be designed & constructed as a visitable dwelling in compliance with the requirements of Section R320. The requirements of this section are limited to **new construction** and do not apply to remodels or additions.*



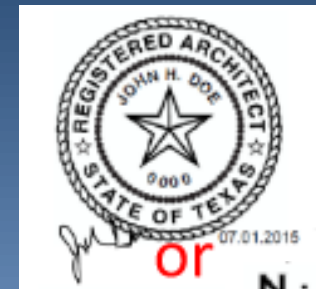
R320.2 Compliance req'd at plan review

A permit application that is subject to this section must include detailed plans prepared by a registered design professional or other certified professional demonstrating compliance with all applicable requirements of this section

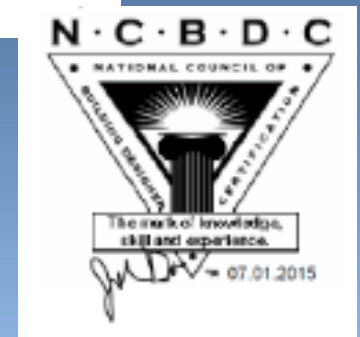
Survey from a
Professional Land
Surveyor



Plan requirements documented
by an architect or certified
building designer



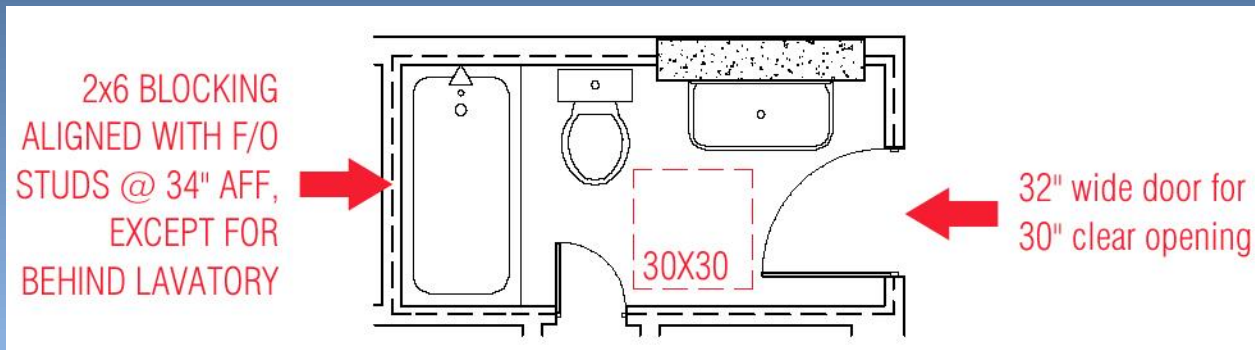
or



R320.3 Visitable bathrooms.

A visitable dwelling must be designed and constructed with at least one bathroom group or a half bath on the first floor that meets the following requirements:

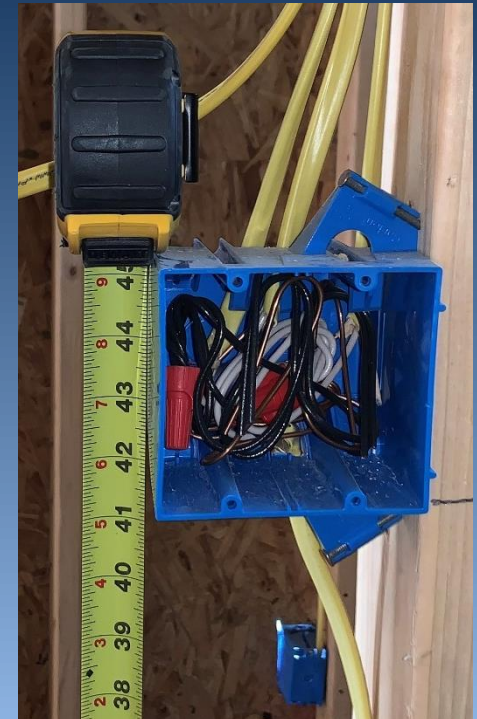
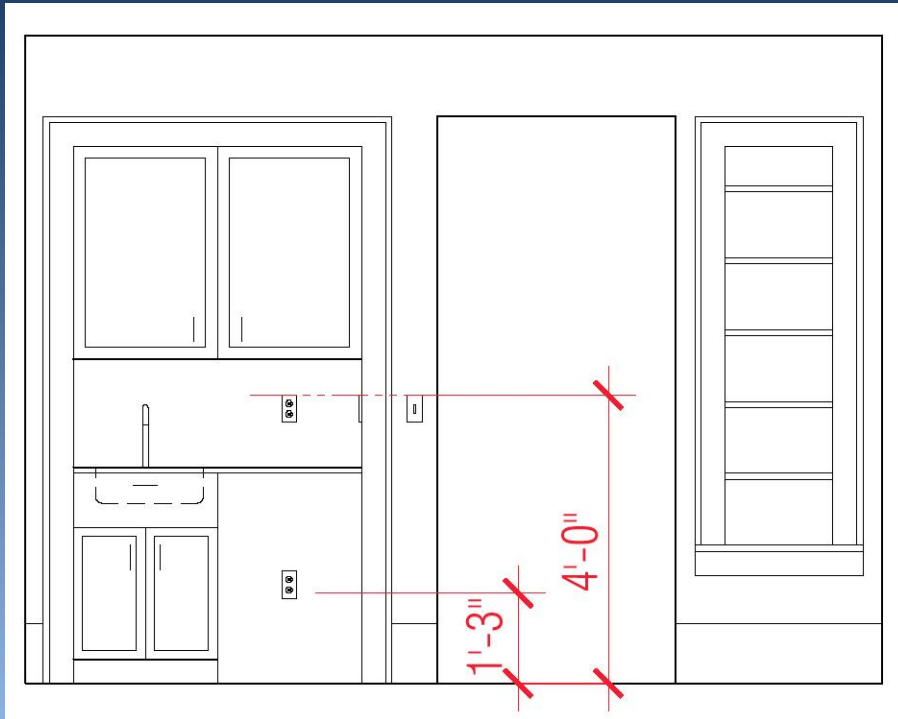
- 1. a minimum clear opening of 30"*
- 2. lateral 2x6 or larger nominal wood blocking installed flush with stud edges of bathroom walls*
- 3. the centerline of the blocking must be 34" from and parallel to the interior floor level, except for the portion of the wall located directly behind the lavatory*



R320.4 Visitable light switches, receptacles, and environmental controls.

The first floor of a visitable dwelling must meet the following requirements:

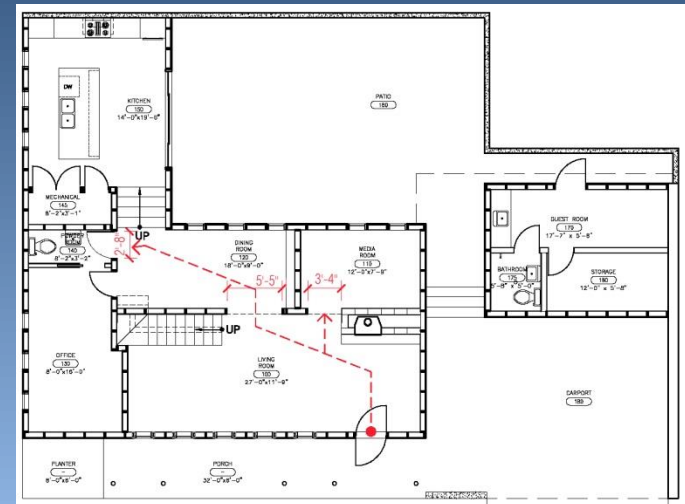
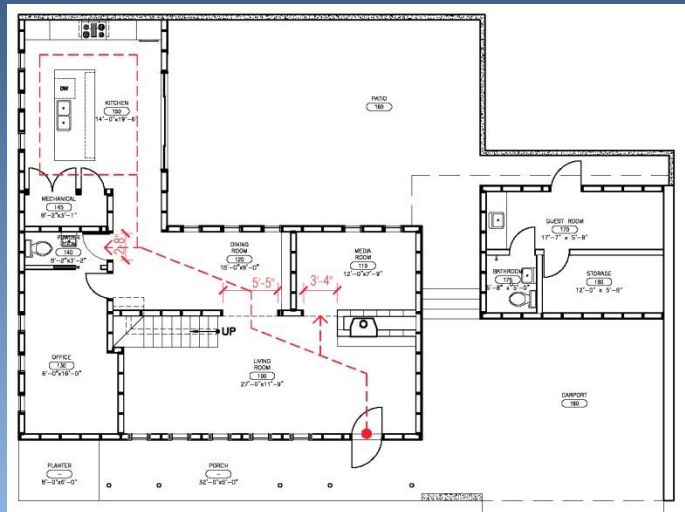
- 1. Light switches and environmental controls must be no higher than 48" above the interior floor level; and*
- 2. Outlets and receptacles must be a minimum of 15" above the interior floor level, except for floor outlets and receptacles.*



R320.5 Visitability bathroom route.

A bathroom group or half bath designated for visitability must be accessible by a route with a minimum clear opening of 32" beginning at the visitable entrance and continuing through the living room, dining room, and kitchen, and be level with ramped or beveled changes at door thresholds.

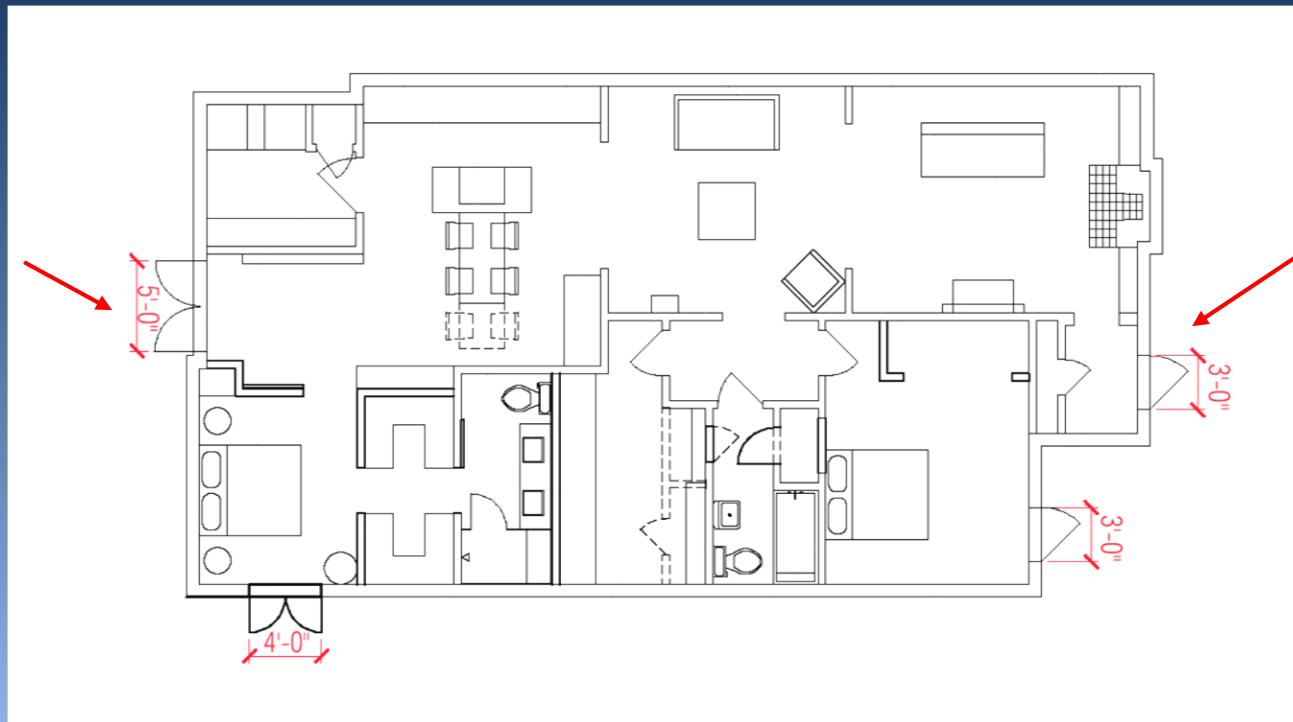
***Exception:** A visitable route is not required through an area located on a split-level or sunken floor, provided an alternative route is available.*



R320.6 Visitability dwelling entrance.

A dwelling must be accessible by at least one no-step entrance with a beveled threshold of one-half inch or less and a door with a clear width of at least 32". The entrance may be located at the front, rear, or side, or in the garage or carport, of the dwelling.

Entrance from garage to home is the second most common



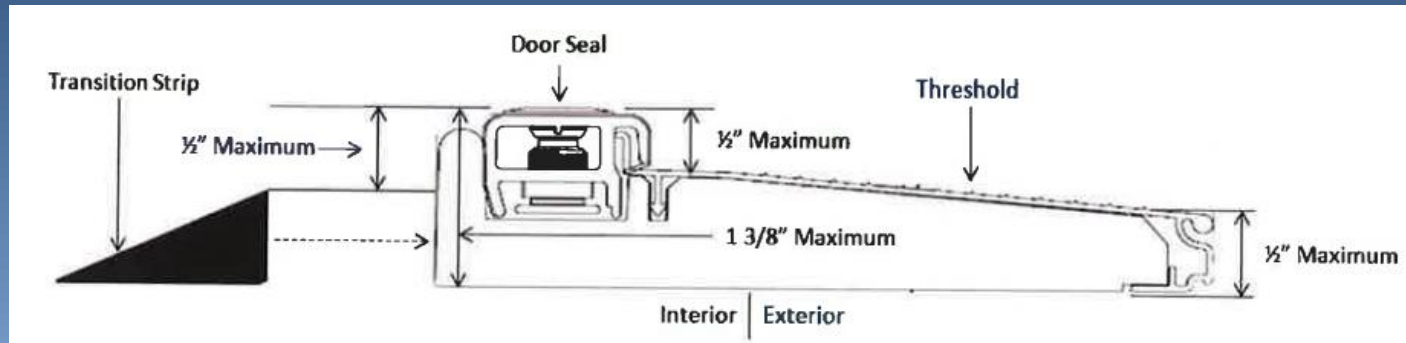
Front door location is most common

Approved Threshold Detail

Code interpretation CI2013-0002 is an approved method of compliance pertaining to the threshold.

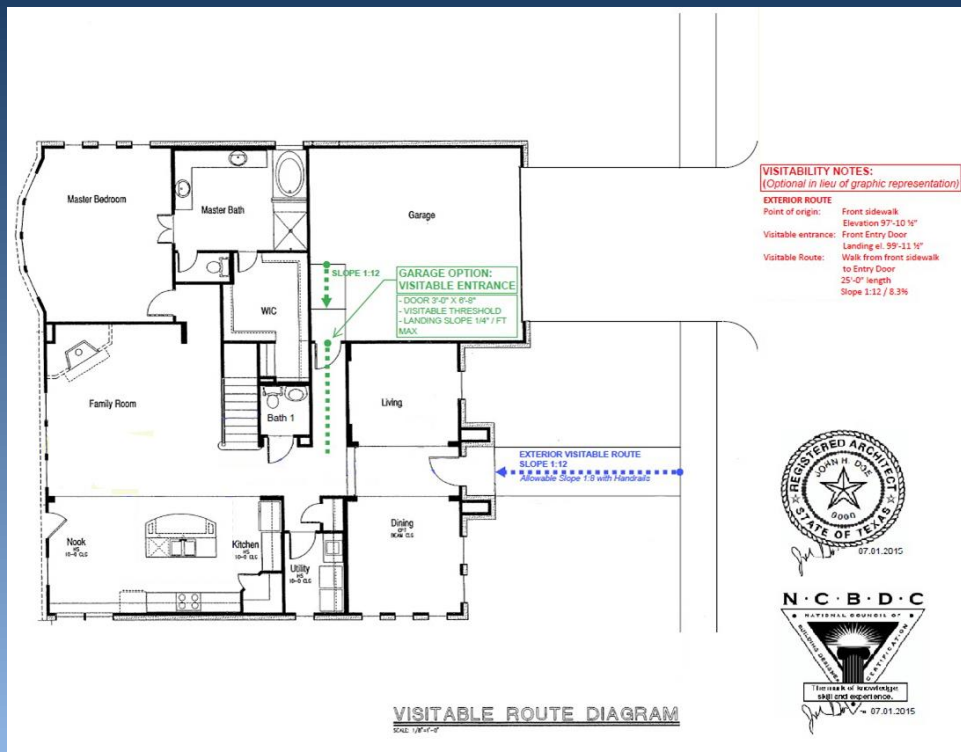
Read the entire interpretation here:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/building-technical-codes>



R320.7 Exterior Visitable Route.

A visitable entrance must have at least one visitable route with a cross slope of no greater than 2% (1:50) that originates from a garage, driveway, public street, or public sidewalk. A ramp included in an exterior visitable route must comply with the Residential Code (i.e. section R311.8 of the 2012 IRC).



Waiver Requirements

The requirements of Section R320.7 do not apply to:

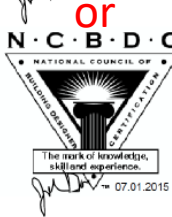
1. lots with 10% or greater slope prior to development; or
2. properties for which compliance cannot be achieved without the use of a switchback ramp.

Topographic information shall be performed by a Texas Registered Professional Land Surveyor. This survey shall be provided at the time of application submittal. The registered or certified design professional shall substantiate request for waiver.

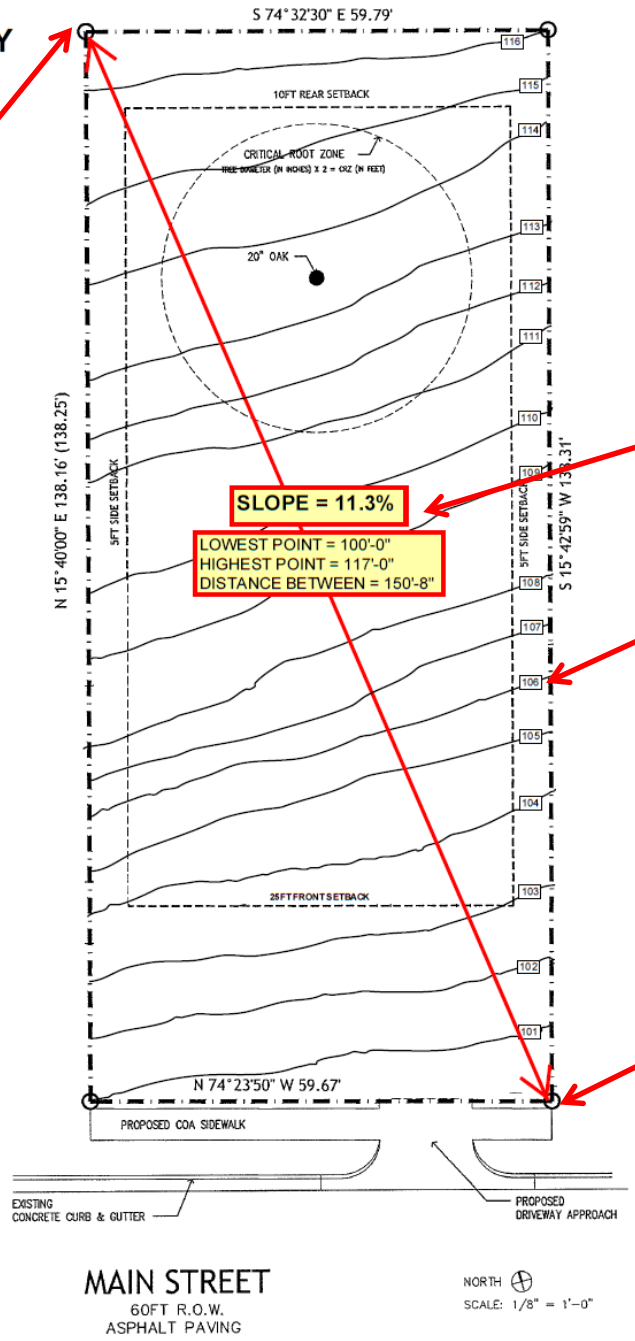
**SAMPLE VISITABILITY
WAIVER REQUEST -
SLOPE > 10%
R320.7.1.2**

**High Point
117'-0"**

I, John Doe, request a waiver for the exterior visitable route in compliance with R320.7.1.2 due to slope of lot between highest and lowest point prior to development exceeding 10%.



SURVEY DATE: 07-01-2015
SCALE: 1" = 40'



Slope Waiver Request

Slope Calculation
 $17' \text{ rise} / 150'-8'' \text{ run} = 11.3\%$

Contours
(1'-0" or 2'-0" intervals preferred)

Low Point
100'-0"

Substantiation from Design Professional

Design Professional Seal, Signature, & Date

Survey from Professional Land Surveyor

MAIN STREET
60FT R.O.W.
ASPHALT PAVING

NORTH
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Switchback Waiver Requirements

A switchback waiver shall be determined by the slope between the elevation of the finished floor at the visitable dwelling entrance and all potential origin points as defined in section R320.7. The horizontal distance shall be reduced by 6ft to account for code required landings at the top and bottom of the ramp.

Potential Origin Points: Garage, Driveway, Public Street, Public Sidewalk.

R311.8.1 Maximum slope.

Ramps shall have a maximum slope of 1 unit vertical in 12 units horizontal (8.3-percent slope).

Exception: Where it is technically infeasible to comply because of site constraints, ramps may have a maximum slope of one unit vertical in eight horizontal (12.5-percent slope).

SAMPLE VISITABILITY WAIVER REQUEST - SWITCHBACK REQUIRED R320.7.1.2

I John Doe, AIA confirm that each origination point was reviewed for compliance with IRC R320 Visitability and all slopes from origination point to the Visible Entrance finish floor exceed 12.5%

SLOPE CALCULATIONS

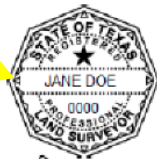
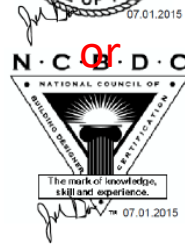
Finish floor at Visible Entrance to:

A. GARAGE: 4'-0" Rise / 14'-0" Run = 29%

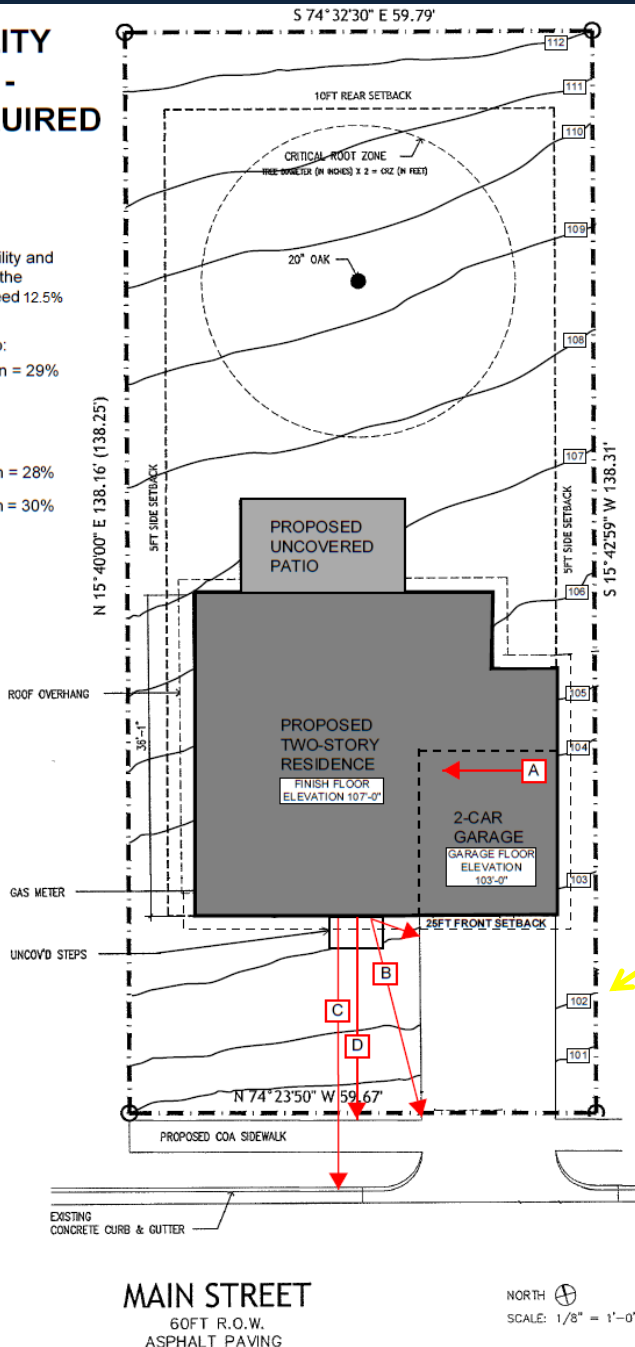
B. DRIVEWAY: Varies:
4'-6" Rise / 8'-0" Run = 56%
7'-0" Rise / 19'-0" Run = 37%

C. STREET: 8'-0" Rise / 29'-0" Run = 28%

D. SIDEWALK: 7'-6" Rise / 19' Run = 30%



SURVEY DATE: 07-01-2015
SCALE: 1" = 40'



Switchback Waiver Request

Overall Site Slope is
< 10%

Investigated
routes shown
in red

Substantiation
from Design
Professional

Slope
Calculations

Design
Professional
Seal,
Signature, &
Date

Survey from
Professional
Land Surveyor

SLOPE CALCULATIONS

Finish floor at Visitable Entrance to:

A. GARAGE:

$$4'-0'' \text{ Rise} / 14'-0'' \text{ Run} = 29\%$$

B. DRIVEWAY: Varies:

$$4'-6'' \text{ Rise} / 8'-0'' \text{ Run} = 56\%$$

$$7'-0'' \text{ Rise} / 19'-0'' \text{ Run} = 37\%$$

C. STREET:

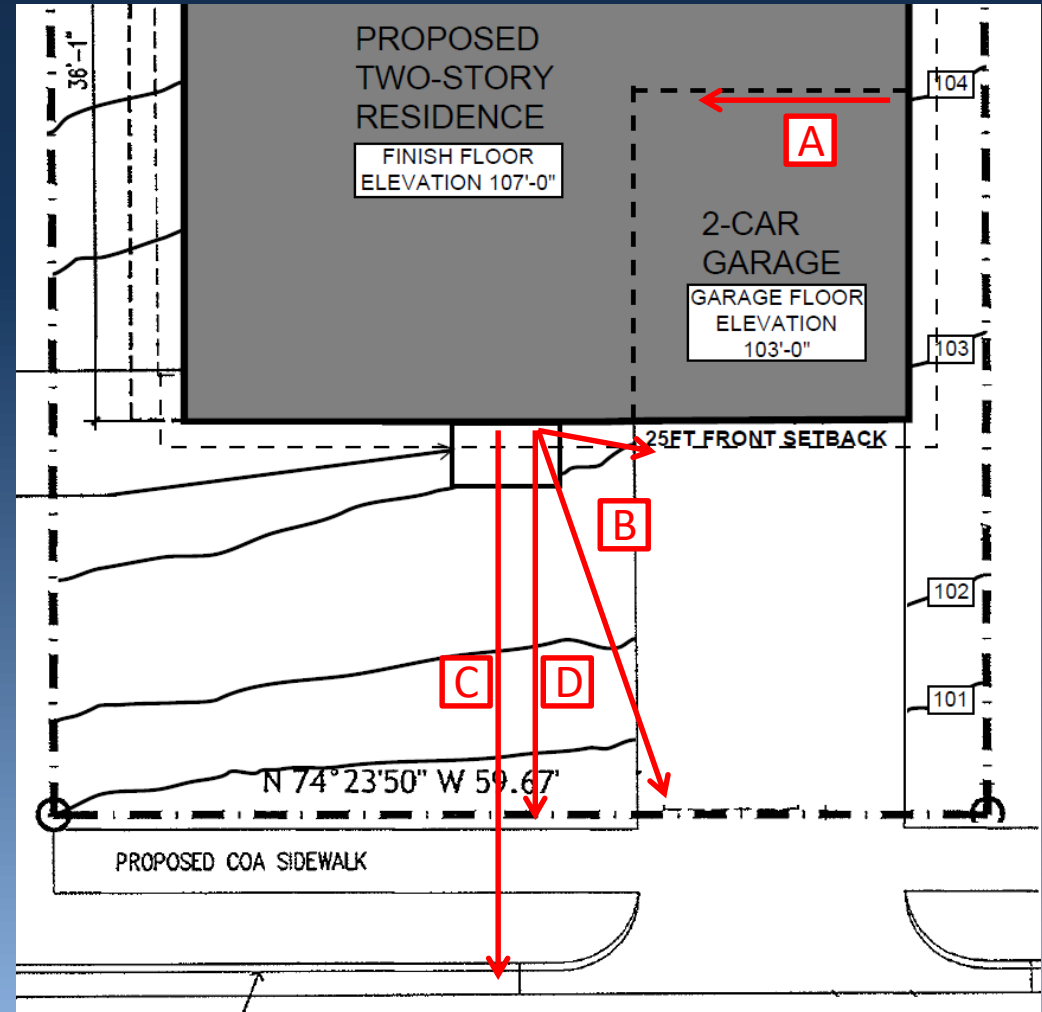
$$8'-0'' \text{ Rise} / 29'-0'' \text{ Run} = 28\%$$

D. SIDEWALK:

$$7'-6'' \text{ Rise} / 19' \text{ Run} = 30\%$$

**6'-0" has been subtracted from all Runs to account for landings.*

Switchback Waiver Request Calculations



Submittal Requirements

- Interior visitability
 - Plan with graphic notations
 - OR Plan with descriptive notes
- Exterior Visitability
 - Plan showing Exterior Route and components
 - **Waivers:** Survey with contours and Registered Design Professional substantiation letter or notes.
- Plan sheets and/or submittal exhibits that are necessary to demonstrate Visitability compliance must be sealed by a Texas-registered Architect or NCBDC Certified Building Designer.

Visitability Plan

VISITABILITY NOTES:
(Optional in lieu of graphic representation)

EXTERIOR ROUTE

Point of origin: Front sidewalk
Elevation 97'-10 1/4"
Visible entrance: Front Entry Door
Landing el. 99'-11 1/8"
Visible Route: Walk from front sidewalk
to Entry Door
25'-0" length
Slope 1:12 / 8.3%

VISITABLE ENTRANCE: Front Entry Door

1. Minimum clear width of 32"
2. Beveled threshold 1/2" max

INTERIOR COMPLIANCE

Bathroom Route: Front Entry Door, Bath 1,
Kitchen, Dining, Living
and connecting hallways.

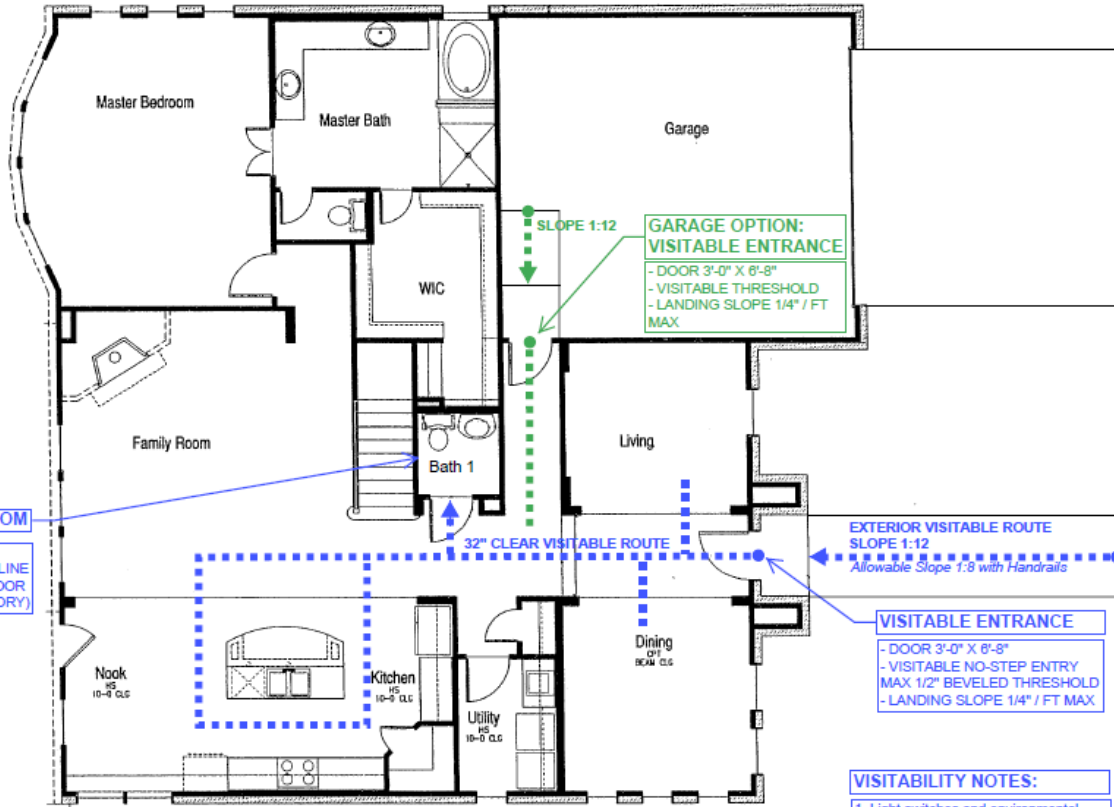
1. Minimum clear width of 32"
2. Thresholds and transitions shall be ramped or beveled

VISITABLE BATHROOM: Bath 1

1. Minimum clear opening of 30 inches at door
2. Lateral 2 x 6 wood blocking shall be installed flush with stud edges of bathroom walls. Centerline of block at 34" a.f.f. except for portion of the wall located directly behind the lavatory.

ELECTRICAL

1. Light switches and environmental controls no higher than 48" above the interior floor level
2. Outlets and receptacles minimum 15" above interior floor level except for floor outlets.



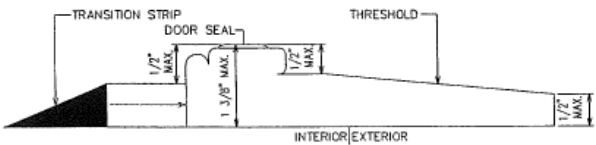
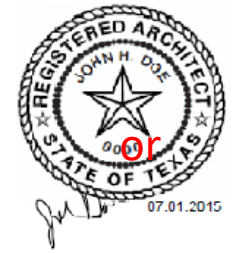
VISITABLE BATHROOM

- DOOR 2'-8" X 6'-8"
- 2x6 BLOCKING CENTERLINE AT 34" ABOVE FINISH FLOOR (EXCEPT BEHIND LAVATORY)

GARAGE OPTION: VISITABLE ENTRANCE
- DOOR 3'-0" X 8'-8"
- VISITABLE THRESHOLD
- LANDING SLOPE 1/4" / FT MAX

VISITABLE ENTRANCE
- DOOR 3'-0" X 8'-8"
- VISITABLE NO-STEP ENTRY
MAX 1/2" BEVELED THRESHOLD
- LANDING SLOPE 1/4" / FT MAX

VISITABILITY NOTES:
1. Light switches and environmental controls no higher than 48" above the interior floor level
2. outlets and receptacles minimum 15" above interior floor level except for floor outlets



THRESHOLD SECTION
N.T.S.

VISITABLE ROUTE DIAGRAM
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

Visitability Notes

Notes must be
descriptive about
each component

VISITABILITY NOTES:

(Optional in lieu of graphic representation)

EXTERIOR ROUTE

Point of origin: Front sidewalk
Elevation 97'-10 ½"
Visitable entrance: Front Entry Door
Landing el. 99'-11 ½"
Visitable Route: Walk from front sidewalk
to Entry Door
25'-0" length
Slope 1:12 / 8.3%

VISITABLE ENTRANCE: Front Entry Door

1. Minimum clear width of 32"
2. Beveled threshold 1/2" max

INTERIOR COMPLIANCE

Bathroom Route: Front Entry Door, Bath 1,
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ELECTRICAL

1. Light switches and environmental controls no higher than 48" above the interior floor level
2. Outlets and receptacles minimum 15" above interior floor level except for floor outlets.

THANK YOU



The logo for Ability360, featuring the word "ABILITY" in white, "360" in blue, and a blue circular arrow icon to the right.

ABILITY360

The event title and date, displayed in white text on a dark blue background. A large, semi-transparent blue circular arrow icon is positioned behind the text.

**“VISITABILITY: BUILDING TODAY'S
HOUSING FOR TOMORROW”
FEBRUARY 23, 2021**



Darrel Christenson, Vice President of
Community Integration
Ability360
Phoenix, Arizona



Today's Objectives

1. Why should I care?
2. Benefits of Visitability
3. Top 10 Myths Dispelled
4. How to make Visitability a reality in your community
5. Building Partnerships is the key to moving forward
6. Playbook to Pass Visitability

Why should I care?

- * Americans move every 7 years on average
- * Homes last between 50-100 years
 - * Homes built in 1971 = 7 families
 - * Homes built in 1921 = 14 families

Single family homes

Only 38% of single family homes built before 1970 are visitable

Half of America's single family homes built before 1980 are visitable.

There is a 60% chance that at least 1 person with a disability will be living in today's newly built homes.

Visitability Trends

70 years ago (1950's) home accessibility increased to meet the needs of veterans coming home from war.

By 2030, there will be 70 million Americans ages 65 and older

By 2035, 1 in 3 households will be led by a resident 65 or older

Visitability Trends

80% of Americans over age 50 want to remain in their current homes

95% of Americans over age 75 want to remain in their current homes — *AARP*

Don't forget aging Baby Boomers too.....

“These features hurt nobody.....and help a lot of others” Eleanor Smith – Concrete Change 1986

Benefits of Visitability

- Resident with a permanent mobility impairment
- Resident with a temporary mobility impairment
- Parent with infant stroller
- Grandparents visiting family (grandkids)
- Moving furniture in and out

Additional Benefits of Visitability

- Eliminate costlier modifications later
- Reduce falls, injuries, hospitalization or nursing home placement
- In 2020 falls & injuries cost \$43.8 Billion!
- Increased convenience and comfort
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Fully marketable to the general public

Top 10 Myths Dispelled

- 1. MYTH: Only a small percentage of houses need to have access because only a small percentage of people need disability-friendly features.***

Fact: 60% of all new houses are projected to have a resident with long-term, severe mobility impairment over the lifetime of the house itself.

Dispelling Myths

2. MYTH: In practice, a variety of construction and enforcement complexities make it impractical to mandate access in virtually all new houses. It can't be done.

Fact: It already has been done.

Existing ordinances since 2002 and earlier demonstrate indisputable success. For example, the 22,000+ houses built to date in Tucson, AZ and the 3,000+ houses built in Bolingbrook, IL show that administration and construction can be accomplished without negative unintended consequences.

Dispelling Myths

3. MYTH: A long list of universal design features, like lowered cabinets, knee space under kitchen sinks, and roll-in showers should be included in every new house.

Fact: It is not practical to include a long list of features in all new houses. That would undermine the overall housing affordability essential for millions of people with and without disabilities.

But it *IS* practical to construct the most crucial features in all new houses: at least one step-free entrance, and wide enough interior doors, including bathroom doors (32 inches or more of clear passage space).

Dispelling Myths

4. MYTH: A zero-step entrance requires a conventional ramp, with 90-degree drop-offs at the edges and hand rails.

Fact: On new construction, the lot can be graded so that a sidewalk ties directly to a porch.



Dispelling Myths

5. MYTH: A zero-step entrance works only on a flat lot.

Fact: A steep lot is often even easier than a flat lot.

The driveway may need to be steep, but a gently-sloped sidewalk can lead from the driveway to the porch. Or, an alley or attached garage may provide access.



Dispelling Myths

6. MYTH: *The zero-step entrance must be located at the front of the house.*

Fact: The best location for the zero-step entrance depends on the specific site.

Depending on the lot and house type, a zero-step entrance can be located at the front, back, side or through the garage.



Dispelling Myths

7. MYTH: A Zero-Step entrance is not practical when building over a basement or crawl space.

Fact: Building over a basement or crawl space does *not* deter a cost-effective zero-step entrance.



Dispelling Myths

8. MYTH: Basic access on new houses undermines affordability.

Fact: Basic access is compatible with affordability. A zero-step entrance and 32-inch-clear doorways add \$110 or less to a new house built on a concrete slab, and about \$610 to a new house built over a basement—less than the cost of one bay window.

But the current norm of constructing barriers IS unaffordable—in human distress and financial consequences. Steps at all entrances and narrow bathroom doors undermine affordability through renovations that strain family and public funds; through health and safety problems caused by inability to exit one's home independently or enter one's bathroom; and through institutionalization when barriers contribute to moving into a nursing home.

Dispelling Myths

9. Myth: Homebuilders and architects will need to scrap their existing approved plans and start over, causing huge expenses to the homebuyer

Fact: This is simply not true and has been proven over nearly 3 decades.

Visitability features do not require this type of dramatic overhaul.

Making these features the STANDARD saves everyone.

Dispelling Myths

10. Myth: A man's house is his castle and the government would be over reaching rights and freedoms.

Fact: In public interest there are already electrical, plumbing, and set-back etc. codes.

Houses are not being built the way they were built in 1920 or 1970.

Materials have changed and improved over the years.

Energy efficiency, Energy Star standards and green codes are desired, enhancing the end product.

How to make Visitability a reality in your community

1. **Educate yourself – What do your local codes include?**
2. **What have other communities and states done to increase accessibility in private single family and duplexes?**
www.visitability.org is a great resource
3. **Cities of Austin, San Antonio and the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC) are good examples locally here in TX.**

How to make Visitability a reality in your community (cont.)

4. **Nationally - Habitat for Humanity & AARP are advocates of Visitability**
5. **Do your homework. Identify the advantages of Visitability and the “hot buttons” of various individuals or groups.**
6. **Start to identify your allies and key players in your community.**

Building Partnerships

Persons with disabilities in your community

Disability organizations, including Centers for Independent Living (www.ilru.org) for a list near you

Housing advocates

Mayor's Commission on Disability Issues/ Gov. Committee on People with Disabilities

Elected officials who have a personal story of a family or friend with a disability.

Building Partnerships (cont.)

Homeowners

Codes enforcement officials

Disaster planners

Housing tech experts

Building Partnerships (cont.)

Design & planning professionals

Architects

Developers

Homebuilders

Realtors

Why should people care?

- Helping housing developers build better housing for all families (sales)
- Helping homebuyers achieve the American dream of homeownership
- Helping homeowners sustain homeownership and improve their financial situation
- To meet community needs
- To make money and be successful
- It is good public policy for your community
- Economic growth

You need to identify why people should care & how Visitability meets their needs. Build your coalition.

Playbook to Pass Visitability

Learn the political process:

- * What Department oversees the housing ordinance policy and procedures?
- * What Committee(s) does the process go through?
- * Attend meetings and be visible!
- * Bring people in – both supporters and those not initially supportive, and understand people's views and concerns
- * Some are going to be slow to change, but be persistent

Playbook to Pass Visitability (cont.)

Knowledge & Relationship Building are the keys:

- * Always speak from a foundation of facts and information
- * Ask questions to learn from others' experiences
- * Speak from the heart and share your passion
- * Learn what is most important to others and “speak their language”
- * Make a difference in your community!

Additional Benefits of Visitability

Visitability Standards (§2306.514): The visitability standards codified in state statutes provide a minimal accessibility standard that all newly constructed homes must meet. TSAHC also requires that rehabbed homes meet these standards, with some exceptions related to costs and level of rehab being completed. Here is a summary of the accessibility features listed under §2306.514:

Questions?

THANK YOU ALL!

Darrel Christenson M.S.

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Phoenix, AZ

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(602) 296-0530

And National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

Board Member-At-Large & Housing Sub Committee

Co-Chair