

Consortium on Successful Aging Housing Action Plan

May 2, 2007

VISION: Johnson County a Livable Community for Successful Aging

GOAL: The Johnson County housing market will provide adequate options for aging in place that support Johnson County as a livable community for successful aging.

ACTION: Address barriers to obtaining accessible and universal designed homes.

Background:

This Housing Action Plan was developed in 2007 by the Housing Action Team of the Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging. The Housing Action Team was born out of a 2-hour working session of 128 community leaders, agency personnel and interested citizens who came together to determine the priorities to pursue in 2007 to move Johnson County forward in establishing itself as a Livable Community for Successful Aging. The top 3 priorities were:

- ⇒ Manage and create resources and activities to help persons age successfully.
- ⇒ Educate seniors about the benefits of physical activity and healthy lifestyles to affect behavioral change.
- ⇒ Address the barriers to obtaining accessible/universal designed housing.

The Housing Action Team, chaired by Amy Correia and Mike McKay, met three times between December and February and focused on removing the barriers to accessibility and universal design. The team members included:

Steve Long, City of Iowa City
Andy Johnson, Housing Trust Fund of Johnson County
Glen Siders, Southgate Development
Mike Cilek, Coldwell Banker Realtors
Lend Sandler, UI College of Law
Marilyn Belman, Community member
Betty Kelly, AARP
Marilyn Holland, Ecumenical Towers
Jane Gay, UI Center for Development and Disabilities
Rick Chambers, Chambers Electric
Rick Dvorak, Johnson County Planning
Jerry Anthony, UI Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Joan Tiemeyer, Greater Iowa City Area Homebuilders Association

The meetings followed structured discussions which lead to the identification of the components for action plans to move toward achieving the goal of eliminating barriers to accessibility and universal design in housing for seniors in Johnson County.

What is Universal Design?

Before moving ahead in developing recommendations on how to eliminate barriers to universal design in housing for seniors, it is important to define both what universal design IS and what it ISN'T. The following list of defining features was developed by the Housing Action Team. There is an abundance of material available on the Internet about universal design and its importance to creating livable communities for successful aging. A few to start on a deeper journey of understanding are:

- ⇒ The Center for Universal Design: <http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/>
- ⇒ American Association of Retired Persons (AARP): http://www.aarp.org/families/home_design/
- ⇒ Iowa State University: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/housing/>

What Universal Design IS:

- ⇒ The potential to be a fully accessible home
- ⇒ Has the following minimum items: first floor wider hallways; at least one stepless entry; turning radius; higher outlets; counter accommodations; grab bars (or blocking to add later); wider doorways (certain rooms – like a bathroom); first floor bedroom and full bath with an accessible shower; specific hardware, lever doorknobs, for example
- ⇒ The beginning of a “barrier free” home
- ⇒ A good marketing tool
- ⇒ Provides a competitive edge in the housing market
- ⇒ Increasingly relevant as baby boomers age
- ⇒ Important to Johnson County and Iowa – as one effort to improve the aging housing stock
- ⇒ A Continuum of features of home design – from the minimum to the maximum

What Universal Design ISN'T:

- ⇒ It ISN'T a bad idea!
- ⇒ An “institutional” home or “ADA” home
- ⇒ Not “just” for the elderly or persons with disabilities
- ⇒ ISN'T prohibitively expensive (especially if built in as design features)
- ⇒ ISN'T easy to retrofit

What are the Current Barriers to Obtaining Accessible/Universal Designed Housing?

This is the question that the Housing Action Team asked itself during its first meeting. The following list was generated and used to help inform the development of the Three Action for Results Areas. The Action Team then identified our communities strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

1. General lack of understanding of what universal design is.
2. Limited education available about changing needs of the individual and how universal design can be utilized.
3. The cost of renovations/rehab a home so that it has universal design features, and the high cost of in-home care.
4. Limited promotion to consumers from potential industry partners, for example, remodelors, homebuilders, realtors, and financial institutions.

5. Limited leadership in the community (champion lost).
6. Absence of standards.
7. Confusion surrounding existing code standards.
8. Lack of knowledge of existing programs available throughout the community.
9. Difficulty in finding someone to do small retrofit jobs.
10. Builders are not enticed to build accessible/universal designed spec housing.
11. Limited marketing/education of general public on the benefits of universal design.
12. Limited education of home builders/remodelors.
13. No coordinated education underway targeting both the consumer and the industry partners (homebuilders, remodelors, realtors).

SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forward looking/accepting community. 2. Home Builders Association is open for change. 3. Unlimited/untapped resources. 4. Recognition as a good place to live. 5. Educated community. 6. Iowa City has demonstrated an interest in the topic. 	<p>WEAKNESSES (CHALLENGES)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The public (consumers and industry partners) not coordinated in interest in the topic. 2. No central repository of information. 3. No mechanism to inform people about the topic when they are ready to make a home ownership decision. 4. Funding (\$\$). 5. The initiative for this is coming out of the JC Consortium on Successful Aging instead of the general community. 6. People are not ready to consider the accessibility/universal design option. 7. Fast growing population of older people—people moving in. 8. ADA and Fair Housing guidelines do not result in livable homes. 9. Population turnover in Johnson County – the average length of homeownership is 3 years.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create a list of people to do small retrofit jobs. 2. Elder Services 3. To create a simple, one document approach for assisting in home modification projects. 4. Private funding. 5. Centralize information sources. 6. Cost out universal design models. 7. Consolidate/tap into information from all agencies, departments, etc. 8. Educate Case Managers in accessibility needs and sources to meet the needs. 9. To do a demonstration project. 10. To put incentives in place for builders. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of money for any of our possible initiatives. 2. Code enforcement that discourages accessibility/universal design. 3. Old housing stock.

ACTION for RESULTS

Result 1: Education and awareness activities about universal design and functional accessibility are available to key community sectors: consumers, home builders, remodelors, care providers, realtors, etc. These activities will include those issues unique to new construction and those unique to rehab/remodeling.

Activity 1: Create a media insert for local newspapers to promote universal design widely

Activity 2: Develop education/informational materials for wide distribution (with an eye toward “branding”); to consider including a Universal Design Home on the Parade of Homes and have an on-going display at the Children’s Museum.

Activity 3: Identify funding sources for the production of print materials

Activity 4: Convene a leadership group to build the capacity for leadership

Activity 5: Conduct market research that will include cost estimation on universal design features

Result 2: A centralized repository (e.g. a web site database) is created and maintained to provide information and leadership about current resources and activities in place to support universal design and functional accessibility

Activity 1: Identify materials to include

Activity 2: Create a list of remodelors/community organizations that can do small jobs (ramps, grab bars) and that are familiar with universal design

Activity 2: Identify the location for the repository

Activity 3: Maintain and promote the information repository

Result 3: Policies and incentives that support universal design and functional accessibility are identified.

Activity 1: Research potential approaches and identify the pros/cons

Activity 2: Generate a list of recommendations

Activity 3: Present recommendations to industry partners, local government officials, and non-profit sector

Key Individuals/Organizations

<p>Public Sector: Government & Education: Iowa Program for Assistive Technology Elected Officials Building Departments UI Law School COGS – Regional Planning UIHC Public Schools Senior Center</p>	<p>Private Sector: Business and Media Financial Institutions Utility Companies Builders/Developers/HBA TV; Radio; Newspaper Realtors Chamber of Commerce Convention and Visitors Bureau</p>
<p>Voluntary: Non-profits & Faith Based Children’s Museum Service Clubs: Rotary, Optimist, etc. Ecumenical Ministries, local Churches AARP Housing Trust Fund of Johnson County Taskforce on Aging Uptown Bills VNA Mercy Elder Services</p>	<p>Informal: Interest groups and Kinship Marilyn Belman Charlotte Bailey Charlie Funk Jeff Dissterhoff Lynn Rowat Don Novack – Novack Construction Dan Lammers – Lammers Construction</p>