

Arizona Civil Rights Advisory Board

1275 West Washington

Phoenix, Arizona 85007

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April 7, 2015

To: The Citizens of Arizona

Re: Inclusive Home Design Guidelines for New, Single-Family Residential Development

Dear Fellow Citizen:

The Arizona Civil Rights Advisory Board (ACRAB) was created in 1965 by the Arizona Legislature. Since its inception, ACRAB has examined and conducted hearings on civil rights issues in Arizona. ACRAB has publicly disseminated its fact finding as a result of these hearings and has enacted resolutions proposing legislation or legal action as a result of such fact finding.

ACRAB's members are appointed by the Governor and it is part of the Civil Rights Division of the Arizona Attorney General's Office. The members act independently of the Arizona Attorney General, and ACRAB may vote to act, such as by publishing this letter, by the concurrence of four of its members. An act of ACRAB reflects only the position of its members and does not reflect the position of the Arizona Attorney General unless so stated.

This letter is being written to promote awareness of Inclusive Home Design Guidelines and to report results of ACRAB's studies, investigations and research on this issue. Inclusive Home Design Guidelines, which consist of five specific features, are an important option for new, single-family homes in Arizona. The guidelines make new homes work better for all, however, more immediately for the disabled, the aged and the impaired. These guidelines have been codified in Pima County (since 2002) and the City of Tucson (since 2007) as part of their respective building code ordinances. There is now a coalition of different groups seeking to promote these existing inclusive home design guidelines throughout Arizona.

How This Letter Came to Be Written

In December 2014, ACRAB toured a new, single-family housing development in Tucson being constructed by Habitat for Humanity in accordance with Inclusive Home Design Guidelines. ACRAB conducted public hearings on Inclusive Home Design Guidelines in Tucson in December 2014 and in Phoenix in January 2015.

The Board received oral and written presentations at these hearings from participants who included: government officials; representatives of various advocacy and support organizations for the disabled, aged or impaired; members of the public who are disabled, aged or impaired; members of the architectural, engineering and design communities who work to meet the needs of the disabled, aged or impaired; and members of the real estate brokerage and the construction communities who specialize in serving the needs of the disabled, aged or impaired. Members of ACRAB directed questions to the live participants at these hearings and received meaningful and helpful responses to these questions.

As a result of this fact finding and upon due deliberation, ACRAB enacted a resolution in January 2015, which supports Inclusive Home Design Guidelines. This letter is being written in furtherance of the ACRAB's commitment and support for this goal.

Home Owners and Their Guests Benefit from Accessible Housing

President Obama recently visited celebrated American war hero Corey Remsburg at his home in Gilbert, Arizona. Mr. Remsburg uses a wheelchair. If you had the honor of hosting this American hero at your home for a meal or social event, could Mr. Remsburg and his wheelchair get through your front door? He could if you lived in a home built in accordance with the Inclusive Home Design Guidelines.

All of Arizona's homebuyers should strongly consider making their homes accessible to people experiencing disabilities. If a disabled person cannot enter the front door or navigate the hallways of a host's home, they are cut off from the social experiences others take for granted.

Seven out of ten people will experience a temporary or permanent disability in their lifetime. Disability comes in many forms. There is ambulatory disability which means that a person is not able to move without the aid of a wheelchair, walker or crutches. There is disability that comes with age such as arthritis, rheumatism and joint disorders. There is disability that comes with impairment due to injury.

Disability, accessibility and new, single-family housing are interrelated concepts that every Arizona homebuilder and homebuyer should consider. Arizona, with a total population of 6,373,367, is home to 395,889 people with ambulatory disabilities.¹ Inclusive Home Design considers the needs of the 6.2% of the state population with ambulatory disabilities. Moreover, about 20% of Arizona's population, or one out of five Arizonans, are 60 years of age or older. There are 1,185,950 Arizonans, comprising 18.3% of the state population, who are between 60 and 84 years of age. Another 108,159 Arizonans, comprising 1.7% of the state population, are at least 85 years of age. Persons over 65 years of age are the fastest growing segment of the Arizona population.

One central purpose of Inclusive Home Design is to allow people to stay in their homes. Small but significant additions that would cost thousands of dollars done later can be included at a

¹ The demographic statistics are from the *Arizona Counties Demographics and DES Client/Provider Summary Handbook 2014* prepared by the Arizona Department of Economic Security Financial Services Administration (FAS) and the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Program last updated December 2014, available online at https://www.azdes.gov/InternetFiles/Pamphlets/pdf/Arizona_County_Demographics.

relatively low cost in new, single-family homes because of the forethought inherent in the design. "Aging in place," a term used to describe a person living in the residence of their choice for as long as they are able, is a vital issue not just for this 20% of our population who are 60 years of age and older, but also for any Arizona homebuyer who wants to live in their home as long as possible.

By providing the basic infrastructure, Inclusive Home Design can cost-effectively adapt homes to the long term needs of residents who may become disabled or impaired. Inclusive Home Design would result in substantial savings for homeowners when compared with the higher costs of retrofitting traditional non-accessible residences with accessible features after disability or impairment strikes.

The Inclusive Home Design Guidelines Addressed in this Letter

The Inclusive Home Design Guidelines being addressed in this letter are a set of simple and cost-effective options for new, single-family home construction. These modest modifications permit new, single-family homes to work better for a longer period of time in meeting the long-term needs of residents and their guests.

Homes built pursuant to the Inclusive Home Design Guidelines look, feel and work like traditionally designed homes. The guidelines come from select, straightforward provisions based on the American National Standard Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities Code approved by the International Code Council and the American National Standards Institute.

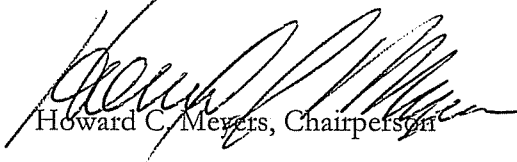
The features of the Inclusive Home Design Guidelines are as follows:

1. At least one zero-step entrance (with a threshold no more than 1/2" high) sufficient to accommodate wheelchair access or access by someone using a walker [this entrance may be through a garage using the overhead door for ingress with the door being a minimum of 32" (2'8") wide];
2. An accessible route through the first floor of the dwelling incorporating clear width of at least 36" (3') and approaches sufficient to accommodate a wheelchair [which contemplates slightly wider hallways and doors having a clear opening of 30" wide minimum which can be satisfied by a 32" wide door];
3. Adjusted heights for electrical plugs (no lower than 15"), light switches (no higher than 48") and thermostats (no higher than 54") so that someone in a wheelchair or of limited mobility can more easily operate them;
4. Lever door openers instead of door knob openers, which are easier to operate for persons who are wheelchair bound or with arthritic hands; and
5. Grab bar reinforcement behind the drywall in bathrooms for the potential future installation of grab bars and shower seats at water closets, bathtubs and shower compartments (reinforcement is not required in a powder room so long as it is not the sole bathroom facility on the accessible level of the dwelling unit).

Because of their ability to meet the long-term needs of its residents, Inclusive Home Design Guidelines are an option that every Arizona homebuilder and homebuyer should consider.

Sincerely,

Arizona Civil Rights Advisory Board



Howard C. Meyers, Chairperson