



“Experience the Difference”

BUILDING SUCCESS 101

Q: Why is workers' compensation so important?

A: The answer is it protects both the contractor and the homeowner. That's because workers' comp is known as a no-fault system—workers who collect insurance for injuries sustained on the job generally give up their right to file a personal injury lawsuit. No responsible contractor lets anyone on the job without such coverage.



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Hidden in Plain Sight

Intelligent universal design fades into the background and makes everyone happier

Today's biggest demographic trend poses a challenge and also presents an opportunity. That's because more and more working-age people are asking for a home with space to accommodate senior parents with age-related mobility or physiological issues.

The challenge is that they don't want the senior suite to look like an assisted living residence; the opportunity is that, done right, it can end up as one of the home's most appealing spaces.

What these homeowners want is universal design. Universal means the space works for people of all abilities, but that doesn't mean it has to be clunky or ugly. A good design build team will emphasize the design, creating a finished space that looks and feels like just a great place to live. In fact, the possibilities of universal design make it a good choice for the entire home.

Consider the accessible bathroom. Some people may remember a hotel with a bathroom that looked like it belonged in a hospital, but that's a poor comparison. Hotel baths are more about meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements than they are about aesthetics. In a well-designed home bath, what you will notice instead are the high-quality finishes and the fact that there's plenty of elbow room.

And those grab bars? A skilled designer and builder can incorporate them into the shower in subtle ways. Or if you won't need grab bars for a while, the builder can put blocking behind the wall to make it easy to bolt the bars in place later.

Other universal features can be made to look and feel like amenities:

- A zero-step walkway can be a convenient entry that flows naturally from the driveway to the front door.
- If the parents won't be moving in for a while, the senior suite can serve as a convenient guest space or TV room.
- Wide interior doorways help everyone move around more freely and make it simpler to move furniture in and out.

- Young family members find it easier to open a large casement window than a heavy double-hung window.
- Light-colored walls make the space more cheerful overall.
- And no one objects to having more overhead lighting.

Even if you don't think you need universal design, there are reasons to consider it in any home. One reason is that the over-65 slice of the population is growing every year, so universal design makes the home more marketable when you decide to sell. And if you plan on staying put, it will serve as future proofing.

Of course, no one likes to think about their mobility decreasing. Maybe their mother lived until 90 and never had a problem climbing stairs, so they expect the same for themselves. Fair enough, but also we've known people who broke a leg or had a knee replacement and were grateful for a first-floor bedroom and a front door with no steps.

Any competent builder can add universal features, but making them look and feel great requires an experienced professional design build team. Ask potential builders or architects for examples of work they have done. Look for pros who have built accessible homes that *you* would love to live in.

The point is that thoughtful universal design features combined with good architecture will make a home more comfortable for *all* family members—both today and ten years from now. Once you get used to these features, you may wonder how you lived without them.

Warm Regards,

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