What is Universal Design?
Universal Design incorporates features that increase the usability of the home by people of all ages, sizes, and abilities. A universally designed home enhances the ability of all residents to live independently in their own homes as long as possible.

Do Universal Design features make a home look different?
No. Some people think the homes seem more spacious, but these features are virtually unnoticeable. They simply allow the house to adapt to a lifetime of changing needs.

What is the Universal Design—New Mexico Initiative?
In 2001 under the administration of Mayor Martin J. Chávez, the City of Albuquerque’s Affordable Housing Committee formed the Universal Design Subcommittee to begin a “community conversation” about Universal Design. Engaging a small group of builders, architects, and a not-for-profit developer, the subcommittee created the Universal Design Package elements included in this brochure.

The statewide not-for-profit organization, Universal Design—New Mexico, was formed in 2008. Our goals include increasing awareness about Universal Design, and, in partnership with government, community organizations, home-builders, architects, developers, and home buyers, fostering the development of inclusive communities by encouraging the incorporation of Universal Design features in all new homes.
Why Universal Design?
More than 67% of the housing in the United States is owner-occupied, and over 60% are single family homes. Most of this housing has features that limit basic access, such as raised porches, steps at thresholds, and narrow bathroom doors. Retrofitting these features in a home is costly. Sometimes the home cannot be adapted sufficiently for the resident to remain in the home. Universal Design can change that, and incorporating these features at the building stage adds minimal cost to a new home.

What are the Benefits?
Universal Design makes a home friendly and easy to navigate for everyone. Steps at the front door can be equally challenging for strollers and wheelchairs. Families are able to welcome relatives and friends with disabilities. Residents who develop disabilities are more likely to be able to remain in their homes rather than having to move or remodel. The resale of the home is enhanced because home buyers are attracted to homes that welcome their aging parents and provide easy use for themselves.

The Future?
2008 U.S. Census Bureau statistics estimate that baby boomers and persons over 65 comprise more than 40% of our state’s population. According to an AARP survey, 82% of baby boomers said they wanted to age in their own home. By 2030, the 65+ population is estimated to double, and 1/3 of that population is projected to live in poverty. Retrofitting the home of a person at the poverty level requires taxpayers to pay the cost. In contrast, the costs of universal design are paid by the homeowner through the monthly mortgage payment.

Universal Design is simply good design. See the enclosed information for more details and ideas about how to incorporate universal design features in your home.
Site Access
1. A route that has no steps, a surface that is firm, stable, and slip resistant, and is 36” min. wide from the point of arrival to the primary or garage entrance
2. Lights at entrance to provide a view of the door lock

Primary Entry
1. Zero step entrance at primary or garage entrance
2. Doorway with 32” min. clear opening width
3. Low or no threshold – ¾” max. beveled
4. Lever door handle

Passage Doors
1. Passage doorways with 31 5/8” clear width min.
2. Low or no thresholds – ½” max. beveled
3. Lever door handles

Interior Route
1. A route to all living areas and to the bathroom described on page 2. This route must have no steps, a surface that is firm, stable, and slip resistant, and be 36” min. wide

Bedroom
1. At least one bedroom/den/study on the interior route described above

Electrical Outlets, Light Switches & Environmental Controls
1. All of the above located within standard reach range (15” min. to 48” max. above the floor)
2. Switches that require low physical effort such as rocker or touch type

Flooring
1. Ceramic tile, wood, brick or concrete flooring that is designed to be slip resistant
2. No carpet (preferable)
3. If carpeted, use of high density low pile (½” high max.) with firm pad

Kitchen
1. 40” min. clearances between all opposing base cabinets, counters, appliances and walls within the kitchen work area.
2. 60” min. clear floor turning area in U-shaped kitchens
3. Lever fixtures for sink
4. 30” x 48” min. clear floor areas for parallel approach centered on the sink and stove or forward approach with knee clearance
5. 30” x 48” min. clear floor area for forward or parallel approach to all other appliances
6. Refrigerator positioned so door opens toward the clear floor area
7. Controls for microwave, if provided, 48” high max.
Universal Design Package

Bathroom
One bathroom, on the interior route described on page 1, which incorporates the following (clear floor areas may overlap):
1. Door(s) that have 31 5/8" min. clear opening width
2. A 30" X 48" min. clear space beyond the swing of the door (If the bathroom is compartmentalized, this area should be provided in each separate compartment)
3. Reinforcement around the tub, shower, and water closet for future installation of grab bars
4. Shower and sink fixtures with lever handles
5. At least one sink or basin 34" high max. to the top of the rim with a 30" X 48" min. clear space centered for parallel approach, or for forward approach with knee clearance
6. A water closet that is 16 ½" min. high to the rim
7. A water closet with one of these clearances

8. A bathtub or shower with one of these clearances

Stairways
1. If stairs are provided, handrails on both sides with a grasping space for both knuckles and fingers

General
1. Adjustable height closet rods
2. Water based paints, finishes and other wet materials with zero or nearly zero VOC content
3. At least one window that can be opened in all major living areas
4. Laundry room on the route described on page 1
5. 30" X 48" min. parallel approach clearances to the washer and dryer

Page 2
In addition to the Universal Design Package elements listed:

**Site Access**
1. Lighting along route to the entry

**Primary and Garage Entry**
1. A 36” min. wide stepless route, to the primary and garage entrances.
2. 36” wide door ½” beveled threshold at 1:2 max.
3. View panel or peepholes in door for standing and seated view, or a full side light or window adjacent to door

**Passage Doors**
1. At least 18” (preferably 24”) on the pull side beyond the latch of the doors for maneuvering clearance

**Kitchen**
1. Cabinet storage space that is located within standard reach ranges (15” to 48” high)
2. Variable height work surfaces — pull out shelves stable enough to use as a work surface or portions of counter at a lower height (34” high max.)
3. Cabinets of glass, metal (preferably), or sealed hardwood (oak, mahogany, pine, maple, but not redwood or cedar) in lieu of composite wood
4. Wall mounted oven located between 15” to 48” above the floor
5. Side-by-side refrigerator

**Route throughout the House**
1. Hallways 42” min. width

**Electrical Outlets, Light Switches & Environmental Controls**
1. Thermostat easy to read and adjust

**Bathroom**
1. Adequate lighting for all covered areas including the shower
2. Hand-held adjustable shower
3. Tub and shower controls offset from the center toward the outside for easier reach
4. Telephone jack
5. Cabinets of glass, metal (preferably), or sealed hardwood (oak, mahogany, pine, maple, but not redwood or cedar) in lieu of composite wood
6. Anti-scald valve on shower and tub
7. A 30” by 60” min. curbless (roll-in) shower, or a 30” X 48” parallel approach from the control wall
8. A shower or bathtub with the clearance shown above
Stairways
1. If stairs are provided, electrical connections and adequate landing space at the top and bottom to accommodate the future installation of a lift.

General
1. Window sill height 36” max. from the floor
2. Front loading washing machine
3. No fluorescent lighting
4. Solid wood or metal (not pressed wood) for interior finishes
5. If two-story, stacked storage spaces so that with the removal of the intermediate floor, future installation of a lift or elevator is possible without major structural changes
6. Naturally termite resistant wood or physical barriers such as metal or plastic termite shields, in lieu of termicidies
7. Pitched roof, membrane roof, or other alternative to flat tar roofs which tend to leak and create water infiltration and potential mold growth
8. Utilities that do not use gas (i.e. electric, solar) for those who have chemical sensitivities