The intent of universal design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environments more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal design benefits people of all ages and abilities.

Picture and information from www.lowes.com

Many UD kitchen features are similar to ones used in an accessible bathroom:

- Plenty of lighting

- Easy-to-reach controls

- Slip-resistant flooring

- Low or no threshold

- Countertops at a comfortable height for those most in need of accommodation

If most of the countertop surfaces are 34 inches above the floor, the kitchen might also include a work surface at 30 inches, with kneehole space for accessibility.

This information is brought to you by members of the Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council's housing committee. Our goal is to educate Missouri's communities about the benefits of universal design.

The philosophy of utilizing universal design shows that it is not the person with the disability who has the limitations, but it is the design of our programs, policies, procedures, and our environments that have limitations. The limitations do not reside in the individual, but in our society, how we perceive disability, and how we design things. Once we get people to change how they think about disability and utilize universal design, only then will we truly have equal access.

Contact Information:

The universal design concept considers those changes that are experienced by everyone as they grow from infancy to old age...Because all groups are placed within the context of normal expectations of the human condition, trying to justify the importance of each vulnerable population group becomes unnecessary.
Leon A. Pastalan, PhD
Gerontologist and Urban Planner

Universal Design:

Working for more "livable communities"

Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.
—Ron Mace

UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLES TO BUILD BY

Principle One: Equitable Use
The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

Principle Two: Flexibility in Use
The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Principle Three: Simple and Intuitive
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Principle Four: Perceptible Information
The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Principle Five: Tolerance for Error
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Principle Six: Low Physical Effort
The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.

Principle Seven: Size and Space for Approach and Use
Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of a person's size, posture or mobility.

Covered Entry

Levered handle

Sloping walk instead of ramp

Stepless Entry

This picture shows the main entrance of Renaissance Place in St. Louis. You can approach the main entrance from either direction. Rather than using steps and a ramp, they created a sloping walkway with stepless entry. The doors have a lever handle and there is a covered entry to protect people from the elements as they enter.

Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University:

"The authors, a working group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers, collaborated to establish the following Principles of Universal Design to guide a wide range of design disciplines including environments, products and communications."

According to an AARP survey, almost 90 percent of adults 50+ prefer to stay in their homes as long as possible.

—AARP Public Policy Institute

Examples of universal design:

- Smooth, ground level, entrances without stairs

- Wide interior doors and hallways

- Lever handles for opening doors, rather than twisting knobs

- Light switches with large flat panels, rather than small toggle switches

- Buttons and other controls that can be distinguished by touch

- Bright and appropriate lighting, particularly task lighting

- Zero entry access into swimming pools

Resources:

www.livablehomes.org

www.transgenerational.org

www.universaldesign.com

www.centerforuniversaldesign.org