



Get the facts!

Design and Construction Requirements under the Fair Housing Act¹

Open Communities is committed to accessible housing in our service area.

According to the 2004 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 51 million Americans (nearly one in five) have some form of disability. Of that number, more than 2.7 million people over the age of 15 use a wheelchair, and that number is expected to increase as the population ages. Another 7 million use a cane, crutches, a walker or other mobility aid.

In order to ensure housing that is accessible to all, the Fair Housing Act contains seven basic design and construction requirements that must be met. These requirements are:

Requirement 1: An accessible building entrance on an accessible route.

All covered multifamily dwellings must have at least one accessible building entrance on an accessible route unless it is impractical to do so because of the terrain or unusual characteristics of the site.

- An accessible route means a continuous, unobstructed path connecting accessible elements and spaces within a building or site that can be negotiated by a person with a disability who uses a wheelchair, and that is also safe for and usable by people with other disabilities.
- An accessible entrance is a building entrance connected by an accessible route to public transit stops, accessible parking and passenger loading zones, or public streets and sidewalks.

¹ From: <http://www.fairhousingfirst.org/fairhousing/requirements.html>



Requirement 2: Accessible public and common use areas.

Covered housing must have accessible and usable public and common-use areas. Public and common-use areas cover all parts of the housing outside individual units. They include -- for example -- building-wide fire alarms, parking lots, storage areas, indoor and outdoor recreational areas, lobbies, mailrooms and mailboxes, and laundry areas.

Requirement 3: Usable doors (usable by a person in a wheelchair).

All doors that allow passage into and within all premises must be wide enough to allow passage by persons using wheelchairs.

Requirement 4: Accessible route into and through the dwelling unit.

There must be an accessible route into and through each covered unit.

Requirement 5: Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls in accessible locations.

Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls must be in accessible locations.

Requirement 6: Reinforced walls in bathrooms for later installation of grab bars.

Reinforcements in bathroom walls must be installed, so that grab bars can be added when needed. The law does not require installation of grab bars in bathrooms.

Requirement 7: Usable kitchens and bathrooms.

Kitchens and bathrooms must be usable - that is, designed and constructed so an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver in the space provided.

For more information, or to schedule a free, fair housing training at your office, please contact Viki Rivkin, Director of Fair Housing, at (847) 501-5760, x408 or email viki@open-communities.org.

