

BOOK REVIEW: Universal Design Ideas for Style, Comfort & Safety

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“If you’re building or remodeling, it’s a great time to incorporate universal design—an approach that helps people of any age and physical ability more fully and safely enjoy their homes,” as expressed on the back cover of this book. And it is a truism. If you want to be able to live at home and you are getting older or are caring for an aging person, it is imperative that you study each aspect of your home’s environment so that it is safe and functional.

Universal Design Ideas... wrote about “Aging in Place”: Today, Americans are staying in their homes longer than ever before. Yet even as we’re remaining active and living longer, physical changes are inevitable. That means the two-story house that works for a thirty-something couple raising children may not cut it once that couple reaches retirement. “As we age, we can anticipate one or more physical and sensory impairments, such as heart disease, stroke, arthritis, diabetes and declining eyesight and hearing,” says James Joseph Pirkl, FIDSA. At the same time in your life that you’re trying to eat well and exercise regularly to minimize your changes of acquiring such impairments, you can be creating a house that’s livable should they occur. That’s where universal design comes in. Regardless of how old you are when you remodel or build your home, transgenerational design can make your home livable for the long run by combining elements of safety convenience, and comfort.

Just reading this beautifully color-photographed book makes you want to fix up your home right away. It shows kitchens, baths, bedrooms, family rooms, and garages, even yards

and patios. It will help you get professional design ideas for room and furniture arrangement; lighting materials and even budget estimates. I wish I had this book when I had our last home. I’m sure it would have sold for more if we had incorporated some of their ideas.

And that is why this book is so important at this time in our economy. If you have a home you wish to sell or if you want to buy one that is a “fixer-upper,” *Universal Design Ideas...* will be your best friend! In the back, there is a grid and illustrations to help you place your furniture before making any actual

changes or additions. There is also a list of items to be aware of before you buy that smaller condo or townhouse. For example, make sure there are elevators and that they are reasonably sized and public areas are well lit. In your home make sure that doorways are at least 36 inches wide.

Green building is the big thing now and there is a very good explanation about that and how you can make your home “healthier” and more comfortable while lowering your utility bills.

In Florida, we tend to spend a lot of time outdoors, so their chapter on “Outdoor Living” is very helpful. It covers “Access & Traffic Flow,” “Transitions & Pathways,” “Shade,” “Lighting,” “Decks,” and Patios & Courtyards, “Pools & Spas,” and “Gardens.”

Before you consider remodeling or even buying a new home, please purchase this well-written and comprehensive book. The cost is \$21.95 and you can get more information by going to www.rsmeans.com or calling 781-422-5000 and referring to RSMMeans Catalog 67354.

