

General Approach to Accessibility Questions

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Consented by PDD and GC 07/15/18

Relevant values and P&Is:

- ❖ We want HM's residences to be as physically accessible/manageable, welcoming and accommodating to as many potentially differently-abled residents as possible, for sake of justice as well as diversity; to provide for residents throughout the lifespan (note that children have distinctive ability and capacity needs too) and for aging in place.
21. We affirm a variety of family needs... we will design systems that support the needs of children, parents, the elderly, and their care-givers.
- ❖ We want and need the village also to be affordable – also for the sake of both justice and diversity. Economic accessibility is an accessibility issue too.
27. We aim for socially and economically just relations within the community.
- ❖ We believe that creative design and proactivity can take us a long way toward both a high level of accessibility and affordability, though there still will be tradeoffs.
12. Buildings and infrastructure will be designed for minimal or positive impact and maximal liveability.

Basic policy questions:

1) Should we all design and build all residences to the same accessibility standards, or build designated units to higher standards than others?

We could build some residences to high UDC standards, but not all of them. Members could move to one of the more accessible units if they become less able. (Note that we expect the Common House to be built to the highest UDC standards.)

Advantages:

- we could provide some fully UDC-compliant dwellings, at lower cost to the community overall, than if we built all of them to high standards when many would not be needed.

Disadvantages:

- more costly up front -- would increase the necessary number of architectural plans, permitting process, etc.
- disruptive in people's lives if they have to move when abilities change; moreover, places for them might not be available.
- less flexibility for all residents to adapt to changing needs of family members and guests with various ages and physical abilities

***Agreed:** Build all homes to the same standard, modified to take account of costs and other community aims and values.*

2) How do we approach the tradeoff between higher accessibility and other aims, such as affordability and reduced footprint, when those are in conflict?

Sometimes accessibility features may add significant square footage and therefore significant costs. In addition, designing everything with the needs of those in wheelchairs as the standard discounts the needs of those with other types of physical limitations. For example, lowering the placement of a wall oven would make access difficult for those with lower back issues, and could be dangerous to small children.

Feedback from various people who have first-hand experience with these issues is that not all of the UDC recommendations are necessary. Some are essential, of course, but many can be omitted or modified without significant impact on livability.

The question is: How do we approach these tradeoffs in general?

Agreed:

- Sometimes the best we can do is try to strike a balance – choose those features that give us the most bang for the buck and align most strongly with community values, but decline those with more marginal gains that are more expensive and/or align less strongly with community values.

- Let's get creative. For example, where extra space is mandated for wheelchair access, design so that such spaces can easily be opened up if needed, but otherwise filled with readily moveable cabinets, storage, etc., or otherwise designed for multi-purpose use. Another example is placing toilet adjacent to a curbless shower so the shower floor area doubles as wheelchair access space.

- Apply the principle of multi-use adaptability into flexible spaces. For example, a room

area with a potential combination of laundry, toilet, storage, work-counterspace, etc. that is pre-planned for simple remodeling for changing needs of the residents. This could resolve a number of the stickiest issues about toilet access, laundry, etc.

3) How might the conventional UDC standards be rethought in a community context?

Two other P&Is are also relevant:

5. We value cooperation and efficiency at the appropriate scale for sustainability
34. We commit ourselves to rethinking the contemporary culture of consumerism and convenience. We are willing to accept certain inconveniences to make greater self-sufficiency possible, and commit ourselves to transmuting them into positive opportunities...

It strikes us that in some ways, the existing UDC standards do not readily apply to our *community* because their essential goal is to maximize elders' independence and self-sufficiency, as if they had to do and provide everything for themselves, and with standard types and sizes of appliances.

Agreed:

- *Plan with interdependence in mind instead. Design to readily enable community assistance as needed with cleaning, meals, and laundry.*
- *Design to support small, supplementary, possibly temporary appliances as needed (e.g., portable mini-washing machines, hanging drying racks on pulleys, etc.)*