



DEPARTMENT OF
HOUSING AND HUMAN CONCERNS
COUNTY OF MAUI

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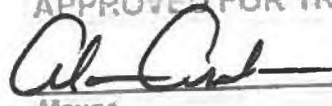
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

October 17, 2018

Honorable Alan M. Arakawa
Mayor, County of Maui
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

For Transmittal to:

Honorable Elle Cochran, Chair
Infrastructure and Environmental
Management Committee
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

APPROVED FOR TRANSMITTAL

Mayor Date 10/19/18

Dear Chair Cochran:

**SUBJECT: VISITABILITY STANDARDS IN THE COUNTY'S BUILDING CODE
(IEM-81)**

Thank you for your letter dated October 3, 2018 requesting comments on the proposed resolution entitled "URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS TO INCORPORATE VISITABILITY STANDARDS IN THE COUNTY'S BUILDING CODE FOR NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION."

We have reviewed the October 1, 2018 IEM Committee meeting and the proposed resolution. Our comments are below:

The Department supports inclusion of visitable design in new construction where it may be practical and economical to do so. We believe that increasing visitability in construction is important and we appreciate the Committee's interest in this area.

At this time, we request that additional research be done to ensure that any resolution that moves forward will be most responsive to the needs of our residents as well as the most feasible for implementation into new housing construction. We request that research be done in the following areas:

1. The recommended essential visitability features. In reviewing the *2016 State of Hawaii Analysis for Impediments to Fair Housing Choice with a Focus on People with Disabilities*, there were recommendations that were not included in the proposed resolution, such as reinforcing the bathroom walls for future grab bar installation and space to maneuver a wheelchair in food preparation areas. Additionally, while the proposed resolution has referenced the 2009 ICC's A117.1 Standard for Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities, we have found the ICC has released updated versions since 2009; the most recent edition was approved on March 28, 2017. At this time, we are not sure how the 2017 edition may differ from the initial edition

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published in 2009, but feel that the most recent data should be used in any proposal passed by Council.

2. Policies and legislation adopted by other States and the outcomes of those policies. Our research has shown that as of 2014, more than 30 states have initiatives related to visitability standards ranging from advocacy efforts to tax incentive programs to mandatory laws and zoning requirements. There may be tangible lessons we can learn from what has already been done elsewhere that will enable us to increase our own success here in Maui County.
3. We feel that it is important to solicit feedback from the construction industry here in Maui County to best determine what the actual impacts to construction costs may be. While the general consensus is that incorporating visitability features into the design of new construction is significantly cheaper than retrofitting costs, it is also acknowledged that there are several variables that determine the actual cost to incorporate them upfront. We did find a letter from the Pima County Chief Building Officer, stating that although builders were initially resistant to the Pima County, AZ visitability requirements, "it became evident that with appropriate planning, the construction could result in no additional cost." On the other hand, a document from VisitAble Housing Canada notes the following:
 - "Many professionals such as builders, developers, architects and realtors have different ideas and understanding of the costs of VisitAble homes.
 - Costs will vary in different regions.
 - Costs associated with making a house bigger to compensate reduced living space due to larger doorways or bathroom are not included in these estimates."

We are confident that additional research into these areas will offer the additional insight that is critical to ensuring that the most meaningful and effective policy will move forward to support the needs of our residents. Our Department is happy to assist in conducting this research as the Committee sees fit.

A copy of the Pima County letter and the VisitAble Housing Canada document is attached for the Committee's reference.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this subject. Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at Ext. 7805.

Sincerely,



WILLIAM R. SPENCE
Director of Housing and Human Concerns



Chairwoman Maxine Waters,
Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito;
House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity
2129 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20910

Dear Mesdames Waters & Moore Capito:

September 29, 2010

In light of the proposed Inclusive Home Design legislation (H.R. 1408), this letter aims to provide a local testimonial regarding the Pima County local mandate for accessibility experience, builder reactions and the real estate environment.

Pima County, AZ, a community of approximately one million inhabitants adopted an inclusive home design ordinance in February, 2002 to provide basic accessibility for homes built within the unincorporated areas of the jurisdiction. The main impetus for these requirements was twofold: to provide disabled persons with basic accessibility to homes when visiting neighbors, friends or family, as well as to provide homes with basic infrastructure in the event a resident experienced a disability. In fact, approximately 70 percent of people experience a temporary, if not permanent, disability at some point in their life and so providing basic housing which can accommodate these circumstances can save the community extensive expenses associated with retrofitting existing non-accessible building stock.

The Pima County Inclusive Home Design Ordinance requires basic accessibility for single family dwellings to include a zero-step entrance, an accessible route through the first floor of the dwelling incorporating clear width and approaches, adjusted heights for electrical devices, compliant door hardware, and bathroom blocking for future installation of grab bars. Since the effective date of the ordinance, over 21,000 homes have been built in the County incorporating the above features.

While these requirements were at first resisted by builders based on the fact that they would require costly changes to conventional design and construction practices, it became evident that with appropriate planning, the construction could result in no additional cost. Indeed, the jurisdiction no longer receives builder complaints regarding the ordinance and the ordinance has been so well incorporated into the building safety plan review and inspection processes that there is no additional cost to the County to enforce its requirements.

From a real estate perspective, homes built to this standard are deemed more marketable, but even more importantly; the accessible features of these homes remain unnoticed when toured by individuals not seeking accessibility. One of the initial concerns of the ordinance implementation was that it would result in homes appearing institutional in nature. This has not occurred within Pima County. As such it would seem reasonable to anticipate like benefits and impacts by extending these requirements on a national level in line with the proposed Inclusive Home Design Act.

Sincerely,



Yves Khawam, PhD
Pima County Chief Building Official

COSTS OF BUILDING VISITABLE HOMES



Concept of VisitAble Housing: VisitAble housing is the concept of designing and building homes with basic accessibility features that provide easy access on the main level for everyone.

VisitAbility Features: VisitAble homes have three basic accessibility features on the main floor: 1) A no-step entrance (at the front, back or side of the house), 2) Wider doorways and hallways (minimum 36") on the main floor with a path of accessible travel to the washroom, 3) At least a half bathroom on the main floor that people with mobility devices can use.

Benefits of VisitAbility: Easy access to the house and convenience within the house, reduced risks of falls or injuries on stairs, resale value, enhanced aging in place potential, and a welcoming environment for friends and family with mobility issues.

Costs associated with the three basic VisitAble features for new construction:

No-Step Entrance

Costs: Varies widely - with planning, it can be less than \$250.

Dependent Upon:

- Whether the no-step entrance is achieved with a ramp or by lot grading.
- Topography of the lot.
- Building methods and materials.
- Design of features such as drainage pipes, earthwork, and depth of utilities.

Wider Doors and Halls

Costs: \$0-\$25. Approximately \$5 per door.

Dependent Upon:

- The type of house and materials used.
- Number of doors.
- No significant cost to increase the width of the hallway.

Main Floor VisitAble Bathroom

Costs: \$0-500.

Dependent Upon:

- Whether other accessibility features are added, such as grab bars.
- On average, VisitAble bathrooms don't cost extra in new home builds.

Incorporating VisitAbility features in the design stage of building a new home reduces the cost of modifying a non-VisitAble home to meet changing accessibility needs of residents over the course of their lifespan.

- The cost ranges provided here are general estimates based on various projects and studies in North America and Europe.
- Many professionals such as builders, developers, architects and realtors have different ideas and understanding of the costs of VisitAble homes.
- Costs will vary in different regions.
- Costs associated with making a house bigger to compensate reduced living space due to larger doorways or bathroom are not included in these estimates.
- For more information, contact a local builder.

For more information, visit:

VisitAbleHousingCanada.com • facebook.com/visitablehousingcanada

Canadian Centre on Disability Studies

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