



Ramping Up

Summer 2009

Universal design is the benchmark for building inclusive communities

Universal design has many subtle and far-reaching features. It's about protecting the rights and enhancing the opportunities of all people, and it represents the standard against which inclusiveness is measured.

At the heart of universal design is usability. The idea is to design and create environments that are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible. This approach is guided by seven basic principles (on the right), which cover the essential elements of creating a truly universal space.

A common misconception about universal design is the cost. Despite assumptions about higher costs, the reality is that research shows there are minimal costs to create homes using universal design.

The cost of building a zero-step entrance, for example, is \$150. The cost of building wider doorways is

even lower at \$50 for the entire home. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation estimates the cost of installing reinforcements (to allow for the future installation of grab bars) to be from \$50 to \$90.

In contrast, retrofitting a home to accommodate accessibility features can be quite costly. For this reason alone, it makes sense to adopt the seven principles as a starting point for all new housing construction.

Universal design is an emerging concept in housing design. To make it a standard in Calgary will require a real commitment to collaboration. Service providers, builders, and local and provincial governments, share a common goal of developing vibrant and healthy communities. Together, we can create usable environments that respond to the diverse housing needs of all people—of all abilities.

Seven Principles of Universal Design

1. **Equitable Use:** useful and marketable design for people with diverse abilities.
2. **Flexibility in Use:** accommodates a wide range of preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple and Intuitive:** easy to understand, regardless of experience, knowledge, language skills, or concentration level.
4. **Perceptible Information:** communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's particular sensory abilities.
5. **Tolerance for Error:** minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or other unintended actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort:** the design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of body size or mobility.



Universal design requires collaboration from the ground up

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Expansion a pleasant result as AHS acquires new shared living facility

“A house is a home when it shelters the body and comforts the soul.”

—Mark Twain

In the coming months, up to eight Calgarians will have a new place to call home. Thanks to the hard work and persistence of many. It gives the Society great pleasure to announce the acquisition of a new shared living facility on April 30, 2009.

The new property is a duplex that will provide housing for up to eight people. This initiative is designed to assist those who are facing issues of homelessness by providing necessary supports to promote independence and community integration.

Located in the Mount Pleasant community, about two blocks from our existing group home facility (the Fourth Dimension), the proximity of the site is ideal for the coordination of resident support services, and for scheduling consultations with AHS occupational therapists.

The number and range of people being housed through this initiative is also ideal. Individuals who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness, in addition to persons who are in need of affordable housing, will be housed. Residents will have various abilities and disabilities.

Intake will take place through Aug—Sept. As part of this process, AHS staff will collaborate with other service providers serving the homeless and disability populations.

In line with the Calgary Homeless Foundation’s priorities, this initiative follows the housing first model, to be supplemented with support services to ensure residents thrive long-term.

In this case, the supports will come from a Case Worker who will provide access to community resources to assist with employability, education, and access to income rent supplements. Residents will also receive personal care services coordinated by AHS.



AHS acquires Northwest duplex

Renovations on both sides of the duplex will take place in late August, with a tentative opening scheduled for October. The Society’s Residential Assessment and Design (RAD) program is now working with designers to ensure the site is appropriately accessible.

The success of this initiative is largely due to the tremendous contribution from Alberta Seniors and the Calgary Homeless Foundation. Thank you for making this initiative a reality, and for your commitment to creating new housing options for persons with mobility issues.

Service update: RAD tweaks program delivery to enhance client experience

The Residential Assessment and Design (RAD) program is a service that is designed to improve the lives of individuals with mobility issues by addressing accessibility challenges.

Since its inception, RAD has quickly become the Society’s most accessed service, with more than 500 people contacting the program each year for design solutions that will allow them to stay in their community.

As demand for RAD continues to grow, the challenge is to evolve in a way that maintains the energy that each project needs, and the support that each client deserves, using the same number of human resources to operate the administrative and front line aspects of the program.

Given that the most important aspect of program delivery is the client, RAD undertook a process of exploring those elements of the service that are most valued by its clients. RAD has since:

- Revised the client satisfaction survey
- Centralized appointment booking
- Standardize follow-up procedures
- Implemented a new database to track and measure client progress
- And added new contractors to its list

These adjustments reflect an ongoing effort to find new and more effective ways of delivering the RAD service to community clients—to meet demand today, to ensure that every client can remain in their home tomorrow.



Enabling people of all abilities



Website redesign to provide clarity, consistency, and a little bit more

Keeping up with technology is not easy, but the rewards for doing so are tremendous. This realization is what propelled Accessible Housing Society toward a website redesign that is sure to boost users online experience.

Most important to the redesign is the clarity and consistency of content. While vibrant layout schemes and

technical design are essential elements of the site, it is the content that users are ultimately seeking. As a result, AHS will implement a CMS or Content Management System, which is a software system that will allow the Society to manage the flow of its online communications in-house.

The CMS also allows the Society to change photos and headlines, and

to implement new pages, if necessary. In keeping with our goal of maximizing usability, the site will have navigation support tools that will allow every user to more easily explore the site.



Visit www.ahscalgary.ca

In the coming months, the final touches will be made to the site. Users can look forward to the features already noted, and perhaps even more importantly, the subsequent realignment of the site with the Soci-

ety's strategic priorities aimed at addressing community need.

Although the physical work of upgrading the site is characterized as a redesign, the result will be a realignment of this communication tool with the mandate of housing persons with mobility issues.

Visit www.ahscalgary.ca for more on the Society and its programs.

Charitable tax credit benefits Albertans

Currently, 82 per cent of all financial donations come from just 25 per cent of the donors. That 25 per cent needs to grow! The increased charitable tax credit, announced in last years provincial budget, gives Albertans a chance to show their giving spirit.

Alberta's tax credit has increased by more than 60 per cent for total annual charitable donations over \$200. Including the federal tax credit, Albertans will now receive a 50-cent tax credit for every dollar donated over the \$200 threshold.

How can you benefit from this new enhanced tax credit? Simply claim your total charitable donations on your next income tax return. It's an easy way to put money back in your pocket and in the pocket of charities like Accessible Housing Society.

Visit www.culture.alberta.ca and click the community spirit program link for more information.

Services: Accessible Housing Society

Housing Registry - To help you find affordable and accessible rental housing in the city, please call 282-1872 (ext: 242).

Residential Assessment and Design Program - To have your new or current housing situation evaluated for plans or renovations to achieve greater mobility, please call 735-2428 or 735-2430.

Residential Care and Support - To access the personal care provided at three locations in Calgary, please call 735-2427.

Resource Materials - To research a mobility solution, please feel free to browse our resource materials at our main office.

Barrier-Free Design Workshops - Call AHS at 735-2428 to arrange a workshop for your group.

Funding opportunities available

Did you know that there are programs out there that may assist you financially if you need to renovate your home to improve accessibility? Each of the following programs has specific eligibility requirements. To determine your eligibility, call the individual program or call AHS at 282-1872.

- ◆ **Residential Access Modification Program (RAMP)**: through Alberta Seniors, 310-0000, then enter (780) 427-5760
- ◆ **Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)**: through CMHC, (403) 515-3000
- ◆ **Home Adaptation for Senior's Independence (HASI)**: through CMHC, (403) 515-3000
- ◆ **Alberta Easter Seals**: equipment only, (403) 235-5662



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"Creating safe, affordable, barrier-free housing"

RAMPING UP

Jason Yule—Editor

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Make a difference: join the AHS Board of Directors

Accessible Housing Society is a non-profit organization and registered charity with a mandate to create opportunities for safe, affordable, barrier-free housing for persons with physical disabilities and mobility issues. The AHS board of directors is a policy-governance board that is responsible for the highest level of decision making. As an organization, we value independence, equal opportunity, integrity and trust, collaboration and team work, respect, and excellence.

We encourage community members who share the Society's passion and values to apply to become board members. Please call Soraya Saliba @ 403-735-2425, to discuss this opportunity further.

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One issue—\$200; 3 issues—\$500

Contact Jason at 735-2426



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