

# DESIGN and remodeling trends

## universal design

### It has always been standard design practice for BRHI

Hear the words universal design, and your eyes might glaze over. Either you don't know what it is, or you don't think you need it. But the truth is, if you want your home to be a place that is comfortable, functional and safe, it needs to be a part of your remodel.

#### What Makes a Home Universal?

It's simple. Everyone can live there and enjoy it! It doesn't matter if you are young or old, short or tall, healthy or ill. You might have a disability. Or you may be a top athlete. Because of universal design, people who are very different can all enjoy the same home.

Let's say you have a teenage son who is a six-foot tall high school basketball player and a 78-year-old mother-in-law who stays with you during the summer each year. Your hall bathroom has a standard bathtub/shower unit. But your son is too tall to fit comfortably under the shower head, and your mother-in-law has trouble safely stepping over the edge of the tub. If you redesign the bathroom with a walk-in tile shower and adjustable hand held sprayer, both your son and mother-in-law can safely and comfortably use the space.

A remodel with universal design will allow the home to grow with the family, as everyone's needs and abilities change. It

makes it easier for residents to live in, and for guests to visit now and in the future.

#### Universal Design = Good Design

When you get right down to it, universal design is really just good design. Which is why it's standard practice for BRHI.

Good design lasts a long time. For example, a mid-range major kitchen remodel costs around \$50,000 according to the 2012 Cost vs. Value Report from Remodeling Magazine. You want your investment to last, so you don't have a major remodel ten or twenty years later when you have trouble moving around your home.

Good design is also functional and accessible. This means for everyone, not just the disabled or aging. For example, doorways and halls should be at least 36 inches wide for a standard wheelchair to pass. But there are advantages for everyone with wide doorways and halls. Moving furniture, wheeling luggage, and carrying laundry are all tasks made much easier with universal design.

So when you think about it, a professional remodeler that incorporates universal design principles is a sign you will receive peace of mind no matter what your future holds.

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# 4 SIMPLE *universal design solutions*

## Lighting

According to the AARP, our pupils decrease in diameter and become less responsive with age, needing as much as three times more light than younger persons to see shapes and fine details. Design to bring in as much natural light as possible by placing activity areas like breakfast nooks near large windows. In kitchens, use recessed LED for task areas, pendants over islands, and under- and in-cabinet lights. Use pathway lights to lead the way from one room to another, and place light switches and lamps next to the bed. These changes not only benefit seniors, but small children and adults as well.



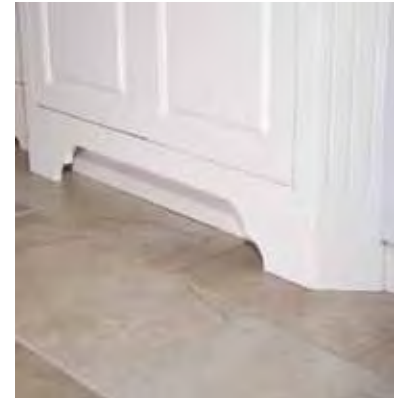
## Cabinets

As we age, it becomes harder to bend over and pull items out of cabinets. But it's inconvenient at any age to get down on our hands and knees to hunt for hard-to-reach items. Deep pull-out cabinets, plate inserts and pull-out racks increase accessibility and maximize space. About 50% of a kitchen should be reachable from a seated position for those in wheelchairs, small children and older adults who have trouble reaching high cabinets. Pull-out breadboards are an easy way to "lower" a countertop and provide different counter heights. They also increase usable counter space without permanently affecting the floor plan or traffic flow.



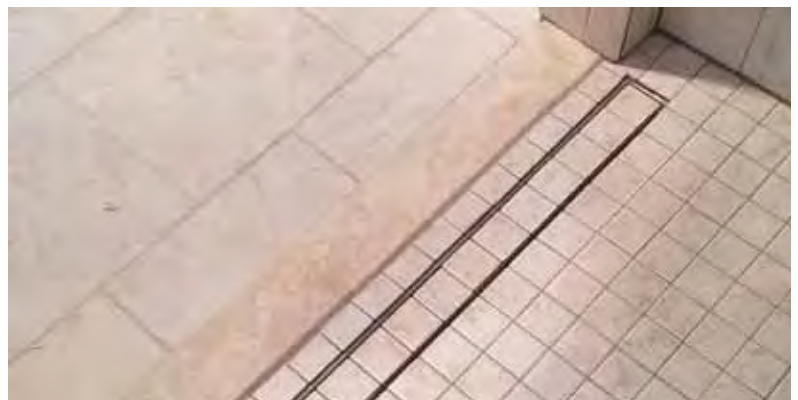
## Flooring

The College of Optometrists found that poor eyesight directly affects falls in older adults. Contrast floor and counter colors, plus make sure they're level. Examples of flooring are vinyl composite tile, cork, low pile carpet, hardwood with a matte finish and ceramic tile. Make sure flooring is low maintenance, durable, slip-resistant and has "rollability." It should also be resilient to allow minimal injury from falls. You can also create zero transition points and reduce tripping hazards by taping down rugs.



## Walk-in Shower / Grab Bars

The CDC estimates that 21.8 million people over the age of 15 sustain non-fatal injuries from bathroom falls. High friction-coefficient tiles are less slippery, plus small tiles work better than large ones. A walk-in, zero threshold shower allows wheelchairs, small children and older adults to access the shower area safely. Whether you choose to install them now or later, ask your remodeler to build the proper blocking in the walls for grab bars, creating extra safety for all users. Handheld sprayers are not only accessible for older adults, but they also offer easy options for washing children, pets or cleaning the shower itself.



# employee SPOTLIGHT

When she was little, Lindsy Lawrence used to “help” her dad, Tim, with her own play tools. Over the years, she has worked with the BRHI office team and helped stage homes with her mom, Joyce, for final project photos. But these days, Lindsy is trading in her toolbox for a stethoscope and scrubs.

This past May, Lindsy graduated from New River Community College with an Associate of Science degree. After passing her RN exam, she became a registered nurse on the orthopedic/neurology/pediatric floor at LewisGale Medical Center in Salem.

While we will miss Lindsy’s help around the BRHI office, we are so excited as she begins this next stage in her career and life.



## INTRODUCING WELLBORN CABINETS!

BRHI is proud to offer Wellborn kitchen and bath cabinets to our customers. Since 1961, the Wellborn family has owned and operated Wellborn Cabinet, Inc., located in Ashland, Alabama. For more information on this exciting cabinet line visit: [www.blueridgehi.com/news](http://www.blueridgehi.com/news).



questions to  
**ask about**  
universal design

## WHO VISITS YOUR HOME? #1

Do you have older family members who stay with you often? Can they easily enter and walk around your home? Can they safely do daily activities without supervision?

## DO YOU HAVE KIDS? #2

Do you have small children and plan for them grow up in this home? Is it easy to help them bathe and reach things in the kitchen? Do you worry about them moving around at night? How about when they get older? Will your home accommodate growth spurts and growing families?

## WILL YOU LIVE THERE? #3

Do you plan to retire in this home? If so, will your home be accessible when you start to have trouble reaching high and low cabinets? Is there enough light or do you strain your eyes while doing daily tasks? Will you be able to safely and comfortably maintain your daily routine in this home?

**NEED HELP WITH  
THESE QUESTIONS?**

**WE CAN HELP. CALL  
US TODAY FOR A  
CONSULTATION.**

NEWSLETTER OF:



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# Project Files

## Missing Support Beam

### problem

A previous contractor removed an important support post from the basement, posing a serious safety risk over time. Had they not remodeled again, this problem would have been hidden until it was too late.

### solution

We brought the basement back to code while keeping the open feel that was created when the post was removed.

We braced the ceiling with a large structural t-shaped steel beam and connected it to the fireplace. To disguise the new framing, we wrapped it with decorative trim and tied it into the mantel. Not only does it look like it was always there, but it also adds visual interest making the brick fireplace a focal point.

However, this problem could have been avoided by hiring a professional remodeler the first time.

