

# Conduct Your Own Universal Design & Green Home Survey

**Universal Design, Sustainable, Green and Smart Design**

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When universal design is mentioned, people often ask whether it makes sense for them personally. They wonder what the term means and if their home will have visual and market appeal, cost more to build or remodel, increase in value, or enhance their family's safety, comfort and convenience. Many buyers focus on the moment and consider only their current age, family size, physical abilities and day to day activities—even though they want homes that will keep up with them through whatever change life brings, whether that change is having children, aging, or injury. The purpose of this survey is to help people anticipate and plan for their current or future housing needs and budgets. Each of these groups may find the survey particularly useful:

**Homeowners:** Can use the checklist and survey when contemplating buying or remodeling a home to find out what features might make life easier for themselves and other household members. They could rank each feature in terms of livability, resale value, marketability, aesthetics and costs.

**Architects, Builders, Developers & Realtors:** Can use the materials to pinpoint and evaluate the potential market for specific features and amenities in all types of residential facilities. They can also educate customers and determine which life-cycle features customers consider important before and after the sale or remodel.

**Funding Agencies & Government:** Can use the materials to identify universal design (UD), green and sustainable features that should be included in every residential building constructed with taxpayer dollars. Agencies can also pilot programs and offer incentives for builders and developers to include minimum UD features in publicly financed projects. They can ask tenants to take the survey after they have moved into the building.

**Lawmakers and Policymakers:** Can use the results of these surveys to review and revise residential building and accessibility codes, create a universal design housing code, establish tax incentives for consumers, builders and buyers and fund pilot projects to promote and evaluate multigenerational housing design and construction.

There is no such thing as a perfect survey or questionnaire. We have tried to furnish you with a simple framework to find out more about your target audience or market and the features customers believe are essential. For a complete and detailed survey please refer to the Phone Scripts in the appendix that have more than 280 questions particular to Washington Court. You should feel free to review surveys developed by the AARP, the National Association of Home Builders and other sources. The next section includes instructions for our Three-Step Survey and a list of questions to choose from. Good luck.



## STEP ONE: FIND OUT ABOUT THE PEOPLE, YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

First, create a profile of your target audience, typically the people who rent an apartment from you, have bought a home from you, or are in the market for a home, apartment or remodel. Individuals and consumers should answer these questions to find out more about their current and future needs; the answers might be quite unexpected and helpful.

The survey asks people to disclose information about health problems and disabilities in the interest of better understanding the usefulness of certain features. Please make it clear that participation is voluntary, they can decline to

answer any or all of the questions and the information will be kept private and confidential. You might consider consulting housing and human rights agencies about questions that could be considered discriminatory.

- Select the questions that provide basic information you want to know about current or prospective residents of your homes or apartment buildings.
- Select the questions that help you learn more about the functional abilities and daily activities of the residents, including the use of assistive devices or personal care services.

### **BASIC HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION**

How many people are in your household (live with you)?

How many children under age 18 live with you?

How many people live with you who are 60 years of age or older?

How many people in your household are less than five feet tall?

How many people in your household are more than six feet tall?

What age group are you in (How old are you)?

- 18-30
- 31-44
- 45-65
- Over 65
- Prefer not to answer

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to respond

What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widow/Widower
- Live-in Partner

What is your occupation (what do you do for a living)?

What is your annual household income?

- Less than \$7,500 a year
- Between \$7,500 and \$25,000
- Between \$25,000 and \$50,000
- Between \$50,000 and \$100,000
- More than \$100,000 a year
- Prefer not to respond

What are the primary sources of your household income? (check all that apply)

- Full-time job
- Part-time job
- Day-to-day or temporary job
- Worker's Compensation
- Pension or Retirement
- Social Security Disability Insurance benefits (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income benefits (SSI)
- Veteran's Benefits (VA)
- Other Governmental Assistance
- Spouse or Roommate
- Contribution of other family members and/or friends
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What is the highest level of school you completed?

- 1-8<sup>th</sup> grade
- High School Graduate
- Some college
- Technical/Vocational school graduate
- College graduate
- Graduate/professional degree
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATION ABOUT FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES AND DAILY**

**ACTIVITIES**

Do you, or does anyone else in your household, have any condition that limits your daily activities?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which, if any, of the following health conditions do you or does anyone in your household currently experience? (check all that apply)

- Diminished eyesight (difficulty seeing)
- Diminished hearing (difficulty hearing)
- Trouble walking
- Trouble standing
- Trouble stooping, bending, or kneeling
- Diminished manipulative ability (difficulty holding or grabbing objects, using arms or hands)
- Difficulty processing or understanding information
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

Please describe or explain the nature of the health condition you indicated in the previous question.

Do you, or does anyone else in your household, have any other problem or difficulty with daily living activities, such as laundry, cooking, cleaning, etc.?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you, or does anyone in your household, use any of the following assistive equipment? (check all that apply)

- Wheelchairs
- Crutches
- Canes
- Walkers
- Grabbers
- Text telephones or communication devices
- Hearing Aids
- Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important, how important to you is the assistive equipment you noted in the previous question?

Do you, or does anyone in your household, require any help from other people or family members with personal care or other daily activities, such as shopping, bathing, cooking, laundry, etc.?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you, or does anyone else in your household use a home health care agency or other service organization to help with daily living activities?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**STEP TWO: COMPLETE THE UNIVERSAL DESIGN & GREEN HOME SURVEY**

Second, get organized. Our checklist does not cover every possible feature, but it does provide a good starting point. Try to imagine the family members, coworkers, friends and other people who might want to visit you or buy your home. Think about each room and space from different vantages. Consider the perspective of young family that would benefit from having wide hallways and doorways so they can easily move in large furniture and appliances, use strollers, carry

laundry and groceries and provide space for their children to play. Think about an elderly grandparent or returning veteran who could visit without having to negotiate stairs to enter the home or get from room to room.

The survey is much easier and much more fun to do in groups. Get the checklist, a clipboard, a pen or pencil, a tape measure and other materials you might need. We recommend that you first review any available floor plans, drawings or pictures of each room. The checklist starts from the outside, looking into the home, but you can start anywhere inside or outside the home.

- Check all of the features and amenities that are in each room. Note how much each feature cost, if you know.
- Using a different copy of the checklist or a different color ink, check all of the features and amenities that you or your customers might want to add, buy, or install in homes or remodeling projects.



### **STEP THREE: FIND OUT WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT EACH FEATURE**

Next, select and tailor the questions to best serve your goals. Ask as few or as many questions as you would like using a phone survey, a paper or web-based survey, focus groups or individual interviews. There are many different ways to administer surveys or ask questions, and there are pros and cons to each approach.

Open-ended questions can result in either too much or too little information; however, these questions often provide the most descriptive accounts. Closed-ended -- yes or no questions -- limit how much information you can gather but provide data that is easier to measure and quantify. We recommend using a combination of open- and closed-ended questions and varying the type of questions. We also use scaled questions; for example, you could ask how important each feature is based on a numerical scale (using a 1 to 5, or other scale) or a weighted scale (important, somewhat important, not important). We found the following approach to be useful:

- First, select open-ended questions to discover why people were attracted to the home, what features impressed and motivated them to move there, and the features they would like to have but are missing from the home.
- Second, select the questions you want to ask about each feature included in the home that is noted in the Universal Design Survey Checklist.
- Third, select the questions you want to ask about the features noted in the Universal Design Survey Checklist that are not included in the home that you might consider including in a “spec” home, custom home or remodel.

#### **OPEN-ENDED AND FIRST IMPRESSION QUESTIONS**

When you first saw your current apartment or residence, did you believe or think that it was a place you could call home?

Was there anything about the features in your home or residence that you thought appeared out of place or did not look homey?

Are there any features in your home that address the special needs and abilities of people who live in your household or who come to visit?

Which features do you feel would make it easier for you or your family to live or stay in the home in the next:

2 years? \_\_\_\_\_

5 years? \_\_\_\_\_

10 years? \_\_\_\_\_

Were there any features missing from the home that should have been included?

**FEATURE-BASED QUESTIONS**

Do you, or does anyone in your household, use [insert a specific feature from the universal design survey checklist that is present in the residence]?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How important is [insert feature] to you or anyone else in your household on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the most important, 1 being not important at all?

- \_\_\_\_\_

Do you or does anyone else in your household have problems using [insert feature]?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did the presence or absence of [insert feature] influence your decision to buy (or rent) your current residence?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did your previous residence have [insert feature]?

- Yes
- No

Do you think that you or anyone else in your family may benefit from [insert feature] in the future, considering aging or the possibility of temporary injury?

- Yes
- No
- Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much more would you be willing to pay for [insert feature]?

- \$0 to \$50
- \$50 to \$100
- \$100 to \$250
- \$250 to \$500
- More than \$500
- Other \_\_\_\_\_