

DESIGNING FOR **ACCESSIBILITY** WITHOUT SACRIFICING **AESTHETICS**



**CREATING KITCHENS
AND BATHS THAT ARE
AS FUNCTIONAL AS
THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL**





Recent changes in accessible design mean big opportunities for architects, designers, builders, and homeowners. Gone are the days in which accessible design is synonymous with sterility, clunkiness, and spaces where function trumps form. Today, in kitchens and bathrooms across the world, spaces can deliver the benefits of accessibility while adhering to the same design principles that fill the Pinterest boards of the HGTV-obsessed.

In this ebook, we'll demonstrate how advances in technology, homeowner preferences, and building materials are making aesthetically-pleasing accessibility more accessible than ever.

Universal Design Presents a Huge Opportunity.
Bathroom remodels can yield up to a 62% return on investment.
"There's no reason to fear resale or the cost of investing in a safe and accessible remodel. You're adding dollars and functionality to your living spaces."

— MEGAN MULTANEN, MPA, CAPS, BESTBATH CEO



NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY: *In this ebook, we'll refer to accessibility, universal design, and aging-in-place. While all these terms have different specific meanings, they share a common vision: to make spaces more safe and functional for more people. So for the purposes of this ebook, they may be used interchangeably.*

This ebook is based on a webinar given by Bestbath CEO Megan Multanen for Building Design + Construction magazine. View the complete webinar [here](#).

DESIGN FOR ALL

We live in a unique time. Some big trends are intersecting and creating an incredible opportunity for architects, designers, and contractors.

What are those trends?

- An aging population
- Ubiquitous technology
- Demand for great design

As these trends come together, we're seeing an environment ripe for spaces that are as beautiful as they are functional. This means that trends such as open floor plans, barrier-free showers, trench drains, non-reflective surfaces, and mixed texture and colors are not only hot design trends, they are also components of universal design.

These trends are exacerbated by other key issues...

- We're building fewer homes than nearly any time in U.S. history
- Healthcare costs are escalating
- Technology is everywhere – the average baby boomer spends more time online than their grandchildren. More than 2 hours longer, in fact!

Taken together, this points to a great opportunity for those who help families remodel their homes. A shortage of homes means more remodels. Rising healthcare costs means people are looking for alternatives to expensive long-term care facilities or hospitals. And acceptance of technology means homeowners are more receptive to change than ever before.

The data overwhelmingly supports this. For example, LightStream's home improvement survey revealed 45% of homeowners plan on spending more than \$5,000 this year on projects. And of those, 90%+ are doing so with the intent of staying in their home longer.

The bottom line: the future of universal design (and accessible design) is bright for professionals who embrace it, learn it, and communicate its benefits to their customers.

TIMES THEY ARE A'CHANGING

Designing for accessibility used to mean an abundance of white tile, stainless steel, levered handles – a hospital aesthetic. But, things have changed. Now professionals can create environments that work for people of all ages and abilities, so everyone has the ability to interact with the home and one another in a more meaningful and comfortable way. This is broadly called universal design.

Universal design is a little different and more comprehensive than the commonly-referred to concept of aging-in-place. While aging-in-place addresses specific issues that people may face as they age, universal design addresses issues faced by every member of the home, no matter their age.

These movements — along with accessibility principles — are solving the same real-world design challenge of people with differing abilities... they just do so looking through a different lens.



The good news? In many cases, universal design, aging-in-place, and accessibility all embrace similar solutions, including open space, zero entry showers, trench drains, non-reflective surfaces, and mixed texture and color.

The even better news? Now many of these solutions are easily incorporated into current design trends across the country, meaning that an accessible home can also be a beautiful home.

Good For Business AND Good for Humanity

Everyone agrees: housing starts are at or near record lows across the U.S. As housing inventory declines, more families plan to stay in their homes — creating a tremendous opportunity for remodels.

- **Bathroom remodels yield up to a 62% return on investment**
- **Bathroom remodels account for 8% of \$192 billion spent on home improvement**
- **Home builds are the lowest they've been in 60 years**
- **90% of couples 65 and over want to stay in their current homes**
(www.forbes.com/forbes/2008/0616/060.html#16f69d346dcf)
- **58% of Americans plan to tackle home improvement this year**
(www.lightstream.com/annual-home-improvement)
- **45% of those families plan to spend \$5,000 or more**
(www.lightstream.com/annual-home-improvement)
- **Only 7% of those are remodeling with the intent to sell** *(www.lightstream.com/annual-home-improvement)*

PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN:

For a more detailed look at these, please see our ebook on [Universal Design in the Bathroom](#).

1. Equitable use
2. Flexibility in use
3. Simple & intuitive use
4. Perceptible information
5. Tolerance for error
6. Low physical effort
7. Size & space for approach & use

THE AVERAGE HOME IS BUILT FOR THE AVERAGE FAMILY

The trouble is, there's no such thing as an "average" family.

We're all different. We have different wants, needs, and abilities. And our homes should reflect this. Whether you're short or tall, old or young, fully capable or physically challenged, your home should work for you.

Instead, too many common home design features aren't functional for everyone living in a home. Consider high, deep kitchen cabinets. They may be the "standard," but for many segments of the population — the elderly, wheelchair users, children — they are impractical or even downright dangerous.

We can do better. And universal design provides a practical framework. For example, in the case of high cabinets, we could employ the principles of universal design by incorporating pull-down shelving within them, or designing lower cabinets to store all necessary kitchen tools down low within easy reach of nearly everyone. All options that would make the space more functional without sacrificing aesthetics.

Universal Design Works with Any Decor

There are many changes that make space more usable — and even trendy — no matter the decor. As professionals, one of our aims should be to present attractive design solutions that also happen to be functional for everyone. Having those conversations helps us to bring the benefits of universal design to our clients without focusing on the negative associations of "ADA-compliant" or "accessibility." Instead, we can talk about long-term value and improved functionality.

Consider these top trends that all look good and utilize universal design features...

In kitchens...

- A mix of higher and lower countertops that work for different purposes and different people.
- Matte cabinets and countertops reduce glare and make edges easier to see.
- Touchless faucets and D-shaped drawer pulls are easier to use for everyone, particularly those who don't have fine motor skills.
- Recessed lighting converted to pendant-style lights and lampshades that reduce glare help the visually impaired and provide a softer, more pleasant look for homeowners.



In bathrooms...

- Zero-entry showers (especially those with a linear or trench drain) prevent tripping — and a very on-trend look. Look for designs where the trench drain is integrated into the shower pan to ensure a watertight seal.
- No-glare, matte countertops and shower surfaces to reduce glare.
- Varied surface textures such as shower walls with the look of tile and a textured floor surface to help visually indicate a difference in surfaces.
- Wide entryways that are free from barriers.
- Weighted curtains to reduce shower “blowback” and keep water in the shower.
- Anchored curtain rods to ensure that it doesn't come tumbling down should someone slip and try to steady themselves as they fall.
- Properly secured grab bars — look for composite showers that include integrated wood backing.

Technology Can Help

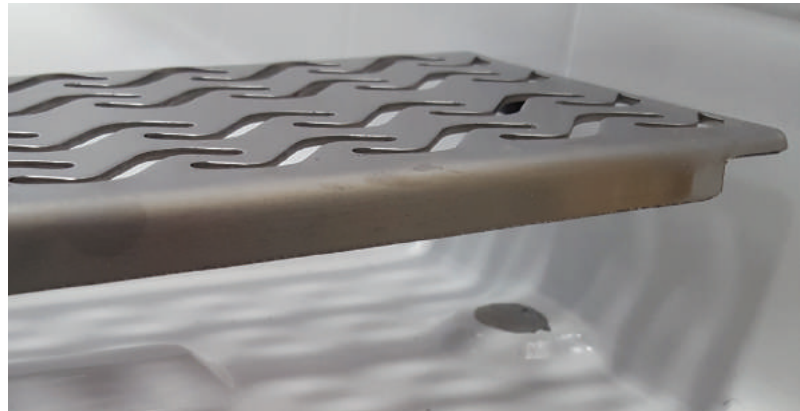
- Alexa/Google Home can be used to control lighting or a thermostat using voice when fine motor skills are limited. The reality is younger people, older people and people with many medical conditions have reduced motor skills.
- Layered lighting using smart bulbs can reduce glare and direct light precisely where you need it.
- Thermostatic mixing valve maintains a steady temperature to ensure safe temperatures in kitchens and baths.

“Low Tech” Works, Too

- Lampshades can reduce glare and direct light.
- Matte (or honed) finishes are chic and modern... and also very universal design-friendly. They provide a textural difference, which provides a great indicator of where you are in a space.
- Contrasting colors help eyes pick up differences on different surfaces.

5 SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE BATHROOM ACCESSIBILITY:

- 1. Make shower pan/tub contrast with shower walls**
 - 2. Choose accessories (towel bars, shower wands, benches) that stand out and are properly anchored**
 - 3. Utilize a matte finish shower to add texture and reduce glare**
 - 4. Identify features that perform double duty (towel bars that also function as grab bars, barn doors to widen entryways)**
 - 5. Choose quality, custom composites**
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INTEGRATING COMPOSITES FOR EASY WINS

Composites are a great choice for accessible design in bathrooms because they are watertight, easy to clean, add texture, and require no long-term maintenance. They're also simpler to install. In the case of Bestbath® shower pans, they are pre-leveled at the factory to ensure that water goes into the drain without the pans recessing into the floor. And with all Bestbath showers integrating full wood backing, adding accessories now or in the future is easy!

From kitchens to bathrooms, composites offer a great solution for universal, accessible design — but not all are created equal. While some provide affordable, high-end looks, others offer generic, cheap solutions that look like they belong in long-abandoned hospital facilities. When choosing a quality composite, look for a custom design that offers non-glare surfaces, low maintenance, integrated trench drains, doorless or curtain-designed and slip resistance.

When it comes to design, the devil is in the details — the best options offer custom designer looks, recessed niches for tile insets, subway tile finishes, shower valves that match and offer an easy-to-install design.

When installing a barrier-free or zero-entry shower, look for a product that can be installed above grade while maintaining a barrier-free entry. Some pans require you to cut away supports, which adds time and cost to the remodel. Bestbath offers many options that can be installed above grade, while maintaining a barrier-free entry.

Sell the Functionality and the Value

Universal design presents tremendous opportunities for homeowners and building professionals alike. While integrating such features once meant creating sterile, hospital-like spaces, that's no longer the case. Today, thanks to new technology, products, and knowledge, we can utilize the universal design principles to create spaces that increase the value and functionality of a space with almost no additional expense.



But this won't happen on its own. Professionals need to communicate the value of universal design, accessibility, and aging-in-place principles, and explain why it is valuable to homeowners.

For homeowners, the value is in increased customization and performance, no matter their stage of life.

For design and contracting professionals, the value is in differentiation and improved customer experience.

And for everyone, the value is a world designed and built to work for everyone.



ABOUT MEGAN MULTANEN:

Megan L. Multanen, MPA, CAPS is an Idaho native and a graduate of Boise State University, where she earned a degree in Sociology and Economics. Post Boise State, Megan attended the University of Arizona where she earned her Masters of Public Administration. While working in the Department of Training and Public Policy development for Pima Prevention Partnership in Tucson Arizona, Megan worked with the Governor's office for Children, Youth, and Families to deliver curriculum and grassroots

training to 30 community coalitions throughout the state of Arizona. Megan returned to Idaho in 2010 to join Bestbath, working in the Marketing department, Commercial Sales department, and Dealer Sales department.

An active member of the American Composite Manufacturers Association (ACMA) Government Affairs Committee and Architectural Committee, Megan has also served the industry in Green Composites initiatives. Megan has served as Chair of the Board for the Caldwell Chamber of Commerce, as well as on the Executive Committee of the Chamber Board and enjoys being an active member of the community. In addition to her work with the Chamber, Megan serves on the Superintendent Search Committee, appointed by the Caldwell Education Board of Supervisors.

About Bestbath

Bestbath is a leading manufacturer of bathing products for people of all abilities. Our products — from walk-in tubs to traditional shower inserts — are designed to be functional and beautiful now, but also to be easily modified as needs and abilities change. Bestbath works closely with architects, commercial project developers and homeowners to ensure that our designs provide them with function and value today and for years to come.

Better living begins with Bestbath.



BESTBATH PRODUCTS ARE MADE IN THE USA
and come with a 30-year limited warranty so you can
relax knowing you're covered now and in the future.

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