



Housing and Planning Commission Agenda Report

November 8, 2017

Item 1.a.(2)

- SUBJECT:** P17-0903
- APPLICANT:** City of Pleasanton
- PURPOSE:** Joint meeting with the Housing and Planning Commissions to discuss policies related to Universal Design and accessibility to promote City goals and policies related to affordable housing.
- LOCATION:** Citywide
- GENERAL PLAN/
SPECIFIC PLAN/
ZONING:** Various
- EXHIBITS:** A. [Existing and Proposed Standard Conditions of Approval related to Universal Design](#)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Housing and Planning Commissions discuss policies related to Universal Design and accessibility, take public comment, and provide direction to staff so the matter can be brought forward for formal action at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND

The City's Housing Element currently includes programs and policies that encourage multi-family residential units to include Universal Design and accessibility features. There is no official definition or standard for "Universal Design" but typical Universal Design features make a home safer and easier to use for persons who are aging or frail, or who have certain temporary or permanent activity limitations or disabilities. Multi-family accessibility standards are found in the California Building Code (CBC) and substantively amending the standards is only permitted if reasonably necessary and based on local climatic, geological or topographical conditions. Adopting Universal Design requirements, above and beyond what is required within the CBC, is not considered reasonably necessary based on local conditions and therefore would not be permitted. The City however may implement the Housing Element goals and policies related to Universal Design by applying standard conditions of approval to new multi-family residential developments.

In 2013, in accordance with the City's Housing Element goals and policies, the City created a standard condition of approval that requires all multi-family residential projects of 15 units or more to include a range of Universal Design features to be installed during construction that

allow units to be adaptable,¹ meaning usable by those with accessibility issues (included in Exhibit A). All recent multi-family residential projects of 15 units or more in the City have implemented these requirements.

DISCUSSION

Current City policy requires all multi-family residential developments with 15 units or more to provide a variety of Universal Design features. Additional amenities can be provided upon request, to make the units fully accessible (see condition of approval included in Exhibit A). Universal Design features currently required include, but are not limited to, variable height (28 to 42 inches above finish floor) work surfaces, such as pull-out cutting boards; blocking in walls around toilets, tubs, and showers for future installation and/or relocation of grab bars; and pre-wiring for both audible and visual capability of doorbells within units.

While the current policy and condition addresses many design features that are helpful to those with accessibility issues, they do not address all needs. The requirement to incorporate additional Universal Design features would help to implement various goals, policies and programs in the City's General Plan Housing Element. The following program from the Housing Element will be promoted by further broadening the City's Universal Design requirements:

Program 42.2: Require as many low- and very low-income units as is feasible within large rental projects to utilize Universal Design standards to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and to allow for aging in place.

Staff believes that an additional standard condition of approval should be considered to address the installation of roll-in showers and permanent variable height fixed surfaces where pull-out cutting boards would not be sufficient. These amenities are not easily incorporated into already-built units and are costly to construct. Staff believes there is a need for these features and therefore, should be made available in some units in new residential projects. Since the population requiring these amenities is much smaller than the greater aging or disabled community, staff has recommended that only a limited number of units be constructed with these features. Staff recommends these two features be provided in a minimum of one unit for each bedroom type offered (one-bedroom, two-bedroom, etc.) and a minimum of 5 percent of all units required to be usable by those with accessibility issues². In applying and calculating the number of units this condition would apply to, the total number of units should not be less

¹ **Adaptable:** Adaptable design means readily adjusted without involving structural or finished material changes. An "adaptable" dwelling unit has all the accessible features of a fixed accessible unit, but allows some items to be omitted or concealed until needed so the dwelling units can look the same as others and be better matched to individual needs when occupied, e.g., including the backing and structural components for a grab rail behind the finished wall, but not installing the actual grab rail. In this instance, the building owner is responsible for accommodating and making changes to meet the needs of a tenant, if a request is made.

² The number of dwelling units required to be usable by those with accessibility issues in any newly constructed development varies based on the total number of units on a site, the number of those units considered to be on the ground-floor, and whether a multi-story building is served by one or more elevators.

- All dwelling units on the ground-floor of apartment buildings are required to be usable by those with accessibility issues on an accessible route and have adaptable features.
- In buildings without an elevator, the number of adaptable units usable by those with accessibility issues must comprise a minimum of 10 percent of the total number of apartments on the site.
- In buildings with an elevator, all residential units on all floors served by the elevator(s) are required to be usable by those with accessibility issues, adaptable, and on an accessible route, regardless of specific site impracticality (such as on a steep hill).

than the number of bedroom types offered, even if the number of bedroom types is greater than 5 percent of all units required to be usable by those with accessibility issues. If the number of bedroom types offered is less than 5 percent, then the total number of units required would be rounded up or down to the nearest 0.5 unit. Staff has included draft language for the recommended condition in Exhibit B.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE MEETING

This meeting will allow the Housing and Planning Commissions to provide direction to staff and further refine a recommendation so the matter can be brought forward for formal action at a future meeting. Although staff is recommending the Universal Design condition detailed in this report, staff would like to hear all comments and alternative amendments that may be proposed by the Commissioners or public regarding the proposal.

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