

A large crowd of people is gathered on a grassy field, likely at a music festival. In the foreground, a man and a woman are embracing. The man is wearing a dark jacket and the woman is wearing a grey jacket. They are looking towards the crowd. The crowd is spread out across the field, with many people sitting on the grass. In the background, there are trees and a hill. The sky is overcast.

# "Gimme Shelter!"

Retiring Boomers Demand



# Livable Homes

The first wave of “baby boomers,” the 78 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964, are turning 60 this year. ■ Some famous Americans celebrating their 60th birthday this year include President George W. Bush and former President Bill Clinton. Others include Cher, Donald Trump, Sylvester Stallone and Dolly Parton. ■ They aren’t alone. According to projections by the U.S. Census Bureau, a whopping 7,918 Americans will turn 60 every day in 2006. That amounts to 330 people every hour. ■ As the boomers flood into retirement over the next 18 years, they are set to reshape the marketplace, tilting the country toward a more mature demographic and redefining buying patterns and preferences.





Features such as this walk-in bath tub by Home Living Solutions (top) or the grab bar (right) by Moen's Home Care Bath Safety can be easily included to make the bathroom more accessible for those with limited range of motion or those that just need a little extra help. Lower wall oven height makes it easier to transfer hot food to the countertop and reach control panel.



The Census Bureau projects that 20 percent of the population will be 65 and older by 2030. This fact, coupled with the growing Hispanic population (which is also projected to make up slightly more than 20 percent of the marketplace in 2030), will reshape residential real estate.

#### RESHAPING MARKET DEMAND

The demographic sea change has not been lost on architects. In 2005, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) focused its attention on the aging population, with designs and features catering to this new market force.

Its national convention featured extensive discussions and presentations related to aging, mobility impairments and accessible designs, handrails in the bathrooms and "zero-step" entries. Representatives from the Manufactured Housing

Institute (MHI) attended the meeting to explore the features that the industry can adopt to better provide options for the aging population.

While many of the boomers currently have no mobility problems, they are concerned about the future and how health issues will affect their living arrangements. Many boomers are simultaneously dealing with housing issues related to their aging parents as well as the needs of other family members.

According to Kermit Baker, AIA's chief economist and survey manager, the new Quarterly Home Design Trends Survey, the first of which was conducted in the third quarter of 2005, found that 62 percent of architects surveyed reported that clients were demanding more accessible homes, with features such as wider hallways and fewer steps.

One in four firms reported more clients seek a single-story floor plan—a



Champion's Generation Homes Series offers universal design features inside

## ONLINE RESOURCES

**AIA Home Design Trends Survey**  
[www.aia.org/econ\\_designsurvey\\_results](http://www.aia.org/econ_designsurvey_results)

**AARP Research**  
[www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility](http://www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility)

**Shared Solutions America**  
[www.livablehomes.org](http://www.livablehomes.org)

**Champion Generations Home**  
[www.generationshome.com](http://www.generationshome.com)

**R-Anell Homes**  
[www.r-anell.com](http://www.r-anell.com)

**Fleetwood Homes**  
[www.fleetwoodhomes.com/news](http://www.fleetwoodhomes.com/news)

significant finding because of the bigger footprint of the house and the considerable cost of land.

Some other trends reported in the AIA study include designs that allow one generation to care for the other while still allowing for privacy. This flexibility is especially important for the “sandwich generation,” which finds itself caring for both children and aging parents. There is also a growing trend for homes to have interior spaces geared for casual living and fewer formal rooms. People also want design that better blends indoor and outdoor spaces for maximum use and flexibility. And, despite the recent dominance of “McMansions” on the home design scene, there is a growing demand for more modestly sized homes that are outfitted with high-quality amenities, products and finishes.

These factors play to the natural advantages and benefits of today’s manu-

factured and modular homes. The challenge is to position them to be seen as a logical housing option to this generation as they enter retirement and look for a place to live.

While factory-built homes have always had a strong presence in the more traditional “retirement” market, aging boom-

ers and their plans for a more active retirement require a new way of thinking by manufacturers, designers, community owners and managers, and retailers in order to grab a significant portion of this evolving market.

### THE LIVABLE HOME

The largest national organization serving the needs of America’s aging population, AARP (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons) with a current membership of over 35.2 million members age 50-plus, has launched a new five-year Livable Home Initiative to target consumers, residential architects, interior designers, home builders, component suppliers and realtors.

“Some people call it Universal Design. Others call it Lifespan Design, or Design for all Ages. Whatever title you wish to give it...it can be appreci-

ated by everybody because it is about designing homes that meet the diverse needs of everyone...in all stages of life," said Laurence "Larry" Weinstein, a four decade veteran product designer, architect, builder, and executive of Shared Solutions America, a non-profit dedicated to the concept of livable housing. Weinstein is serving as National Housing Consultant for the AARP's Livable Home Initiative.

"Adopting the principles of Uni-

versal Design in 'The Smart Design Livable Home' when designing and building new homes, and renovating existing homes, will make them more comfortable, safe and functional," said Weinstein.

"Universal Design can be appreciated by everybody because it takes into account people of all ages, sizes and abilities. Universal Design features accommodate the aging of the entire family, allowing family members to

remain in the home throughout the various stages of their life cycle—from childhood through parenthood through retirement."

Weinstein's company worked closely with Roberto Kritzer, vice president of design for Champion Enterprises, and Champion's Western Division Builders in Chandler, Ariz. and Woodland, Calif. to develop the Generations Home Series. The home is sold by American Land Lease Corp. and California retailer Advantage Homes.

#### UNIVERSAL DESIGN MAXIMIZES COMFORT

Weinstein noted that Universal Design has been around for many years, but only recently taken on new market momentum.

Universal Design, which was first

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#### TAKEAWAY ►

##### Common features of Universal Design:

- 36-inch wide interior and exterior doors with lever door handles;
- 1/2-inch high thresholds throughout the home;
- 60-inches in diameter of barrier-free open space in bathrooms and kitchens;
- interior electrical receptacles raised to 18-inches above the floor;
- lowered light switches;
- roll-under bath vanities;
- raised "comfort height" elongated toilets;
- large curb-less shower in the master bath;
- single-lever water controls;
- backing for safety bars in bathroom walls;
- open area under sink and cooktop cabinets;
- wall-mounted oven at ergonomic height;
- raised dishwasher; and,
- front-load washer and dryer on a platform or base stands.



developed at the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University more than 20 years ago, includes features that can be easily and inexpensively incorporated into a home's design (see *Common Features of Universal Design*).

Additionally, Universal Design also includes energy-saving features. The new Energy Star for Manufactured Homes program tax credit, which brings an extra \$1,000 per home built to the standard, can help offset some of the cost related to developing and marketing these homes.

Universal Design features increase a home's value and enhance its beauty and function, while maximizing safe and independent living for everyone... through ALL stages of life!

According to Weinstein, Universal Design features are standard design elements that are placed or sized differently, such as entrances without steps, which make it easier to enter the home, whether pushing a baby stroller or carrying groceries.

Lever door handles are easier to use than round knobs, especially by parents carrying infants and a person of any age with grasping difficulty, such as arthritis.

Light switches and electrical outlets are located at heights more convenient and accessible to both youngsters and seniors, while a raised dishwasher will facilitate use without causing unnecessary back stress and possible injury.

"Universal Design features enhance the quality of daily living in a home without adding much more cost than standard features," said Weinstein.

And they aren't just for retirees. There are well over 54 million Americans of all ages that have some form of permanent disability and many millions more who incur unexpected injuries or illnesses resulting in temporary disability. At least one in five Americans is affected by a functional limitation that impacts daily living activities. We live in an aging society where people are living much longer, but not necessarily healthier!







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**or 800.293.9558**

## ROLE FOR FACTORY-BUILT HOUSING

Weinstein is a strong advocate for the manufactured and modular home industries to embrace the concept of Universal Design and develop market strategies to capture a substantial portion of the enormous housing market now serviced by traditional on-site builders.

"As an architect and builder with more than 40 years of experience, I believe there is a natural synergy and compatibility between the kind of home envisioned in the Universal Design concept and what the manufactured and modular housing industries are offering today," Weinstein said.

"Incorporating Universal Design features should be seen as the next evolutionary stage for these home builders and marketers."

Weinstein notes that the challenge is to convince industry leaders that Universal Design features are easily accomplished in a factory setting, make good economic sense and can generate additional home sales.

"Many manufacturers question how they can incorporate these features and still remain competitive in the housing marketplace. 'My question is,' said Weinstein, 'How can they ignore the tremendous changes taking place in the marketplace and NOT build these homes?'"

Weinstein feels that catering to this market will result in more home sales and play a significant role in changing public perception of the image of factory-built housing. Especially considering the mounting difficulties that face the site-built industry that include difficulty in locating and retaining experience subcontractors, construction times and escalating costs.

## EMBRACING THE CONCEPT

To that end, the Manufactured Housing Institute is coordinating a special exhibit of manufactured and modular home designs that incorporate universal design features at the upcoming AARP 2006 National Event & Expo, **Life@50+**, to be held in Anaheim, Calif. October 26–28, 2006. Many HUD-Code and

R-Anell is in the process of bringing several home designs that incorporate Universal Design to market. This concept modular home won an award in MHI's 2004 New Home Design Awards.



modular manufacturers have already begun incorporating these Universal Design features into various models and will feature their designs before the estimated 50,000 attendees at the three-day convention.

"This conference will provide participating MHI members a wonderful opportunity to connect with the many thousands of consumer attendees coming to Anaheim from all parts of the nation," Weinstein added.

Fleetwood Enterprises was the first to display a prototype Universal Design manufactured home called "LifeStages" at the 1999 National Association of Home Builders' International Builders Show. Champion Enterprises exhibited a prototype Universal Design home at the AARP 2002 National Convention and Expo and last year introduced its Generations Series manufactured home at the 2004 AARP National Event & Expo held in Las Vegas.

Byron Stroud, vice president of Champion Enterprises' Western Region, has been a supporter of Universal Design home for several years.

"I'm a strong believer that HUD-Code manufactured homes can play a significant role in delivering Universal Design featured homes to growing numbers of Americans and, at the same time, make good economic sense for our industry," Stroud said.

"In addition to providing homebuyers with the benefits and flexibilities of Universal Design features, these homes can be a desirable upgrade in an existing manufactured home communities and

help maintain or achieve 100 percent occupancy."

"It will be critically important that the manufactured and modular home industries exhibit and market these homes with a special focus on a features and benefits package that qualifies them as 'livable homes,'" Stroud added.

"Understand who we are building for is essential to delivering a home that meets or exceeds its owners expectations," he added.

R-Anell Homes of Denver, North Carolina has developed a family of home designs, consisting of six exterior appearances with five interior plans, which incorporate Universal Design features throughout the homes. The design expands from 1,245 square-feet to 2,075 square feet, with the exterior elevation changing as the home expands.

This design won MHI's 2004 New Home Design Award in the category Concept Modular Home over 1,400 square-feet.

"We at R-Anell Homes are pleased that our Universal Design home has been recognized and honored by our peers," said R-Anell President Dennis Jones.

"We feel strongly that now is the crucial time to provide a Universal Design plan that allows the home to fit all aspects and stages of a homebuyer's life. With an aging population that continues to grow dramatically, the Universal Design home concept anticipates what the future will bring with a home design that literally works for everyone," he said. ■

# TO THE TOP

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