



Building Success 101

Q: Where can I learn more about universal design?

A: There are several information resources about universal (or accessible) design for residential settings. I suggest you start with the [Center for Universal Design](#) in Raleigh, N.C. and the [NAHB Research Center](#) LifeWise Home project and Directory of Accessible Building Products (2006 ed.); Bowie, Md.

Bath Trends: The Royal Treatment

How far the bathroom has come in housing history, from an unheated, outside shack to a treasured private retreat. Sure, the basic functions of a bathroom are intact and in place, but in today's master suites, the space has evolved to include a variety of spa-like amenities and luxury features.

As in the kitchen (the other "hot button" room of any house), design professionals and product manufacturers have focused their efforts on the bathroom with an increasing variety of styles, finishes and features. Consider these current bath trends:

Shower Power: Forget about a single showerhead hung from the wall. Today's showers offer multiple, adjustable heads on every wall and from above, with wall-mounted control pads to set and manipulate spray patterns, intensity and temperature. Some heads, called shower tiles, are set flush to the wall or ceiling to provide a gentle spray, while handheld shower wands allow users the ultimate in water control.

Tub Time: Bathtubs are not only getting longer and deeper, with requisite whirlpool jets, but also can include mood lighting and spillover troughs to create a more relaxing experience. Called "chromatherapy" by one plumbing manufacturer, these tubs feature underwater LED lights that gently change color across a wide spectrum of soft pastels; effervescent bubbling action from multiple underwater ports enhances the soothing effect. Meanwhile, overflow tubs enable a deeper soaking experience without the worry of making a mess.

Wellness Centers: In addition to featuring luxury items, bathrooms (especially master baths) are getting larger—large enough, in some cases, to include in-home spa amenities including massage tables and yoga or dance studios that offer more convenience, privacy and cleanliness.

Clothes Care: Along the same lines as the in-home spa and studio concept is the home-based laundry center. This can include personal dry-cleaner, closet-like clothes fresheners, or flat-rack dryers in addition to traditional laundry equipment. If the bathroom has the footage, why not install such products to make life easier, cut down on errands, and save a bit of money while attaining a higher level of quality care for your clothes?

Personal Service: Master bathrooms have become destinations. As such, they need additional conveniences, including laundry and clothes storage as well as a place to prepare snacks and refreshments. Often called "morning kitchens" these mini-service areas offer built-in coffee and espresso makers, compact refrigerators, bar sinks, microwave ovens,

and perhaps undercounter dishwasher drawers to privately serve the owners as they get ready for work in the morning or wind down at the end of the day.

Universal Access: Whether to accommodate a temporary injury, a more chronic disability, young child or an elderly relative or guest, the concept of universal or accessible design can be easily and affordably achieved in any bathroom without sacrificing style or luxury. Multiple-height vanities, level-handled faucets, D-shaped cabinet pulls and zero-threshold showers with built-in seating and handheld heads are just a few design and product ideas that support universal design.

We have incorporated many of the features described above in the work that we have done and that we are currently doing for our clients. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss including "The Royal Treatment" in your home.

Warm regards,

Richard

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