
Inclusive Housing: A Pattern Book is an important addition to the literature of accessible design, particularly in terms of its emphasis on creating socially supportive neighborhoods for aging in place. The author, Dr. Edward Steinfeld, a pioneer in universal design and now a distinguished professor at the University of Buffalo, has developed many contributions to design for the aging and on accessibility in general. His research in the 1970s was a foundation for both the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines and ANSI A117.1 and he firmly believes that such concepts do more than just accommodate special needs but rather provide convenience for everyone.

In this new work, Steinfeld and his Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access colleagues provide a framework for creating stable neighborhoods through diversity of population and types of housing. The text is clear and the mission fulfilled through a well-organized approach to the topic. The book covers the concept of the “neighborly house,” presenting the rationale in terms of changing household needs, affordability, social interaction, and security. Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is one of the ways in which Steinfeld and the Center feel that inclusive housing needs can be met.

The book explores overall access including visitability, lifespan housing, and inclusive design. Visitability implies that the house is intended for everyone and can easily be visited by anyone. Lifespan housing is a new concept associated with aging in place or the idea that many older people prefer to remain in their own homes rather moving elsewhere. Thus, the housing design should allow for quality of life through its design features as well as adjacency to livable neighborhoods. Both visitability and lifespan housing are part of inclusive or universal design which aims to increase usability, safety, and health for a diverse population.

Inclusive Housing first focuses on the block, then the lot, and finally the actual living space. Each of the topics is thoroughly reviewed with rationale presented along with substantive ways in which overall access can be improved. Clear diagrams and plans add to the text. While some of the suggestions may seem basic, few have probably thought about how simple functional changes like a larger doorway clearance or varied workstation heights in a kitchen can reduce effort for all.

The section entitled “Architectural Applications” gives examples of both single-family detached as well as attached housing. One problem with Inclusive Housing is that the “patterns” presented, like those in this chapter, are all very traditional in nature. The inclusion of some more contemporary plans would have added to the book’s appeal to the architectural community.

Despite its emphasis on traditional design, Inclusive Housing is to be recommended for academic programs in architecture, gerontology, and disability studies as well as for public libraries charged with addressing broad community needs.

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