

Visitable Home Design Guidelines for new construction – one and two family dwellings

In order to begin to accommodate a growing population of individuals with disabilities, the City of Rochester is taking the first step in guaranteeing there is a housing stock that can at a minimum be visited by an individual with disabilities. In order to do so, design guidelines for visitable homes have been adopted as a requirement for all new one and two family dwellings constructed in the city of Rochester when supported by any one of the available programs through the Department of Neighborhood and Business Development.

Visitability: Visitability is a design method that incorporates simple basic accessibility features as a normal construction process into newly built single-family housing. The three main visitability features are: a no-step entrance; doorways with thirty-two inches of clear passage space; and a half or full bathroom on the main floor. These features can be easily assimilated inexpensively into the design and construction of new homes.¹

Applicability: Any proposed construction of a new single-family or duplex dwelling within the city of Rochester that has secured support from the City. City support includes grants, loans, sale of City owned land, Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) or other tax abatements. The guidelines shall apply to structures with habitable space on the first floor and shall be designed and constructed as a visitable dwelling in compliance with the five requirements listed below.

Compliance required at plan review: A permit application must include detailed plans prepared by a registered design professional or other certified professional demonstrating compliance with all applicable requirements of this section.

There are three defining design aspects that make a home visitable: approach, access, and functionality. The design needs to take into account the following elements for compliance:

APPROACH

1. Exterior Visitable Route

A visitable entrance must have at least one visitable route with a cross slope of no greater than 1:50 and a grade slope of not greater than 1:20 that originates from a driveway, public street, or public sidewalk. A ramp included in an exterior visitable route must comply with the current adopted version of International Residential Code.

Exception: Where site constraints restrict compliance with minimum slope requirements, the design professional and Manager of Code Enforcement shall review the design options to determine how best to accommodate a safe approach. Additional comment and feedback may be requested from third party advocacy agencies as part of this process.

¹ <http://cdrnys.org/blog/development/did-you-know-making-homes-visitable-and-accessible/>

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ACCESS

2. Visitable Dwelling Entrance

A dwelling shall be accessible by at least one no-step entrance with a beveled threshold of one-half inch or less and a door with a clear width of 32 inches minimum. The entrance may be located at the front, rear or side of the dwelling. The primary entrance designated for visitability shall not be designated through a garage.

Determining Door Width

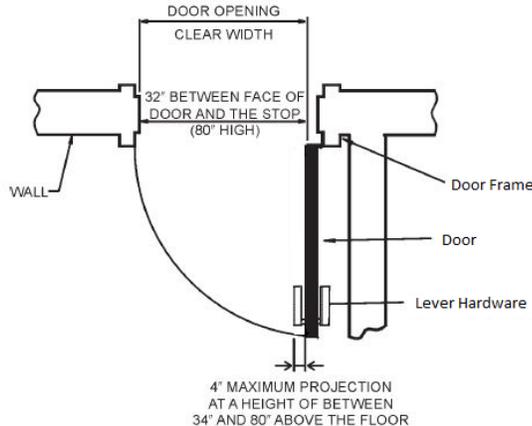
1008.1.1 Size of doors.

The **minimum width** of each **door opening** shall be sufficient for the occupant load thereof and shall provide a **clear width** of **32 inches** (813 mm).

Clear openings of doorways with swinging doors shall be measured between the **face of the door and the stop**, with the **door open 90 degrees** (1.57 rad).

The height of door openings shall not be less than 80 inches (2032 mm).

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Exception: Certain site constraints may restrict the ability to design a safe and compliant approach. The design professional and The Manager of Code Enforcement shall determine the feasibility and or exemption from this requirement. Additional comment and feedback may be requested from third party advocacy agencies as part of this process.

FUNCTIONALITY

All habitable space on the entrance level designated for visitability shall be connected by a circulation path with a minimum clear opening of 32 inches. The path begins at the visitable entrance and continues to all designated visitable interior spaces, which may include the living room, dining room, and bedrooms. The circulation path may include doorways, hallways, ramps, lifts or elevators. At a minimum, the visitable level shall include; one bathroom, one habitable space with a minimum 70 square feet of floor area and if a food prep area is provided, it too shall be on a visitable route and designed to be visitable.

Exception: visitable route is not required through an area located on a split-level or sunken floor, provided an alternative route is available.

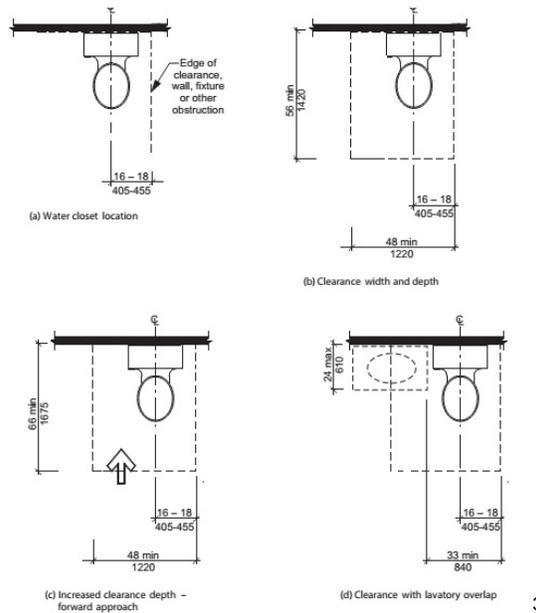
² <https://image.slidesharecdn.com/stairwayspartii-160429131535/95/stairways-part-ii-78-638.jpg?cb=1461935814>

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3. Food Preparation Area. When a food preparation area is provided, it shall include a minimum clear dimension of 40 inches between opposing cabinets, counters, appliances and walls.

4. Visitable Bathroom. A visitable dwelling shall be designed and constructed with at least one bathroom on the first floor that meets the following requirements:

- A minimum clear opening of 32 inches (see diagram above for measuring width).
- Lateral solid wood blocking must be installed flush with stud edges of bathroom walls to accommodate future grab bar installation.
- The centerline of the blocking must be 34 inches from and parallel to the interior floor level, except for the portion of the wall located directly behind the lavatory.
- Floor area shall be in accordance to the following diagrams:



Exception: A toilet room or bathroom shall not be required on an entrance level with less than 120 square feet of habitable space.

5. Visitable light switches, receptacles, and environmental controls.

The visitable floor level of a dwelling shall be designed to meet the following requirements:

- Light switches and environmental controls must be no higher than 48 inches above finish floor level; and
- Outlets and receptacles must be a minimum of 15 inches above the interior floor level, except for floor outlets and receptacles.

³ https://cdncodes.iccsafe.org/bundles/document/document_images/285/FIGURE%201003.11.2.4.jpg