

June 5, 2018

**Ask the Experts**

**Innovative Design Converges with Technology as Architects Enhance Residential Accessibility**



**By Ariel Aufgang**  
**Aufgang Architects LLC**

Access for those with disabilities is expanding at a faster pace, spurred by creative new residential designs enhanced by technology, as architects take creative approaches to bring greater ease and convenience to the daily life of individuals with mobility issues.

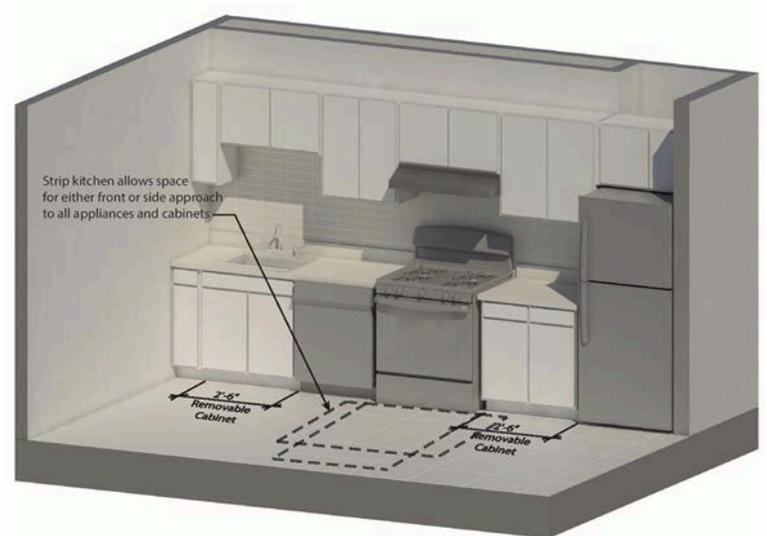
My colleagues and I strive to transcend required features in our designs in order to make the quality of life better for those coping with accessibility issues.

My architectural firm takes a “resident-centric” approach to our designs. We are heavily influenced by the importance of family and the feeling of “home.”

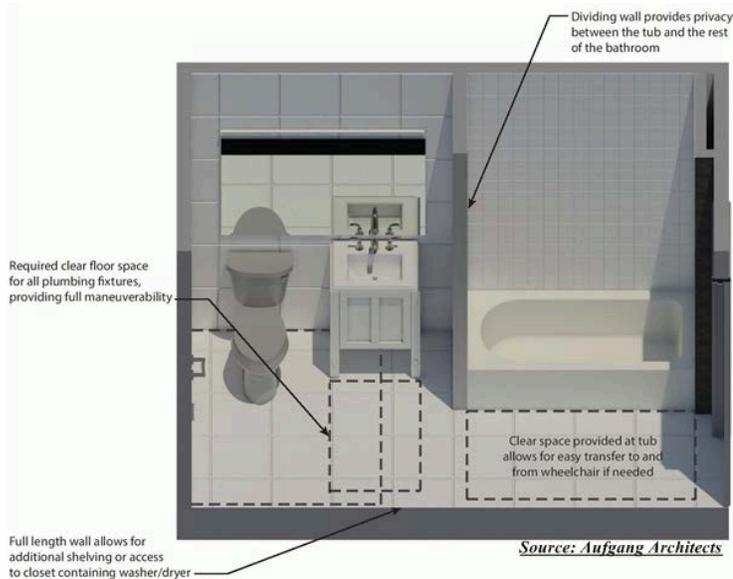
Our residential designs affect people’s lives in profound ways. They are places where people live and raise their families. Our designs influence their lifestyles, spirits and their sense of well being.

As architects, we are guided by our desire to apply our creativity and technical know-how to provide the greatest access, utilization and enjoyment to residents across a full spectrum of mobility capability.

For example, consider how innovative layouts of bathrooms can enhance accessibility: By rotating the bathtub to be in line along the same wall with the sink and the toilet, it makes it easier to transfer from a wheelchair to the tub and back. It also allows use of the elongated wall opposite for easily accessible shelving and storage.



*Source: Aufgang Architects*



We apply similar thoughtfulness and creativity throughout the residence, including kitchen design, the locations of closets and the layout of shelves, to be more convenient for those with mobility issues, including impaired vision.

Architects should do much more than simply meet regulations and code requirements that specify dimensions for counter heights, door widths, power receptacles, light switches and thermostat heights. We must continually exceed those standards with imaginative design solutions.

Technology, particularly artificial intelligence, is becoming increasingly pervasive in architectural design and plays a growing role in improving accessibility. Now that wifi has become a common feature in our designs such things as door access, environmental controls and other functions of daily life are considerably simplified for those with physical challenges.

This convergence of architectural design creativity and new applications of technology, especially artificial intelligence, not only enables architects to surpass statutory requirements to address the needs of those with impaired mobility, these features actually enhance the intrinsic value of projects. This is increasingly the case since innovative designs that reduce barriers for those with handicaps are inclusive, benefiting all residents.

***Ariel Aufgang, AIA, is the principal of Aufgang Architects, LLC, Suffern, N.Y.***