



# News Brief – August 2008

Livable for a Lifetime

*Applying Universal Design  
in homes & communities*

## Updates

**Livable Home Tax Credit:** The 2007 Virginia General Assembly expanded the existing Home Modifications Tax Credit program to include new construction and to move its administration from the Department of Taxation to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). In preparation for its new responsibilities, DHCD held public comment forums across Virginia in September 2007 to inform their understanding of universal design and other accessibility features needed by individuals with both mobility and sensory disabilities. Based on this input, DHCD developed guidelines for the expanded tax credit, which became effective on January 1, 2008, and posted them to its website at [www.dhcd.virginia.gov](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov). Virginia's expanded \$500 "visitability" tax credit, renamed the Livable Home Tax Credit, now applies to new homes that meet three key requirements: 1) a step-free entrance must be no more than a half-inch higher than a driveway, sidewalk, or other firm route into a step-free living area; 2) passage space between rooms must be ample and doorways no less than thirty-two inches wide; and 3) the main floor must include no less than one bedroom, a kitchen, some entertainment area, and at least one full bathroom with sufficient maneuvering space. The tax credit also continues to apply to retrofitting of existing residential units to make them more accessible, regardless of whether an owner or resident has a disability requiring these visitability features. Homeowners incurring costs must apply to DHCD by February 28 following the year in which expenses were incurred.

**EasyLiving Home:** Representatives of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD), Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA), Home Builders Association of Virginia (HBAV) and other partners joined together as directors of the non-profit Virginia Assistive Technology Solutions, Inc. and obtained a license to certify EasyLiving Homes in Virginia. On March 13, 2008, the new home at 2332 Thomas Kenney Drive in Glen Allen was officially certified as Virginia's first EasyLiving Home. Additional Virginia EasyLiving Homes are planned or under construction. EasyLiving Home is a voluntary certification program that encourages the inclusion of key features which make a home cost effective, accessible and convenient for everyone without sacrificing style or adding substantial construction costs. The replication of the EasyLiving Home program in Virginia resulted from a year-long effort. For more information, visit [www.easylivinghome.org](http://www.easylivinghome.org).



**Tax Credit Scoring:** The L4L Steering Committee was instrumental in collecting information and support to enact a change in the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) scoring system. The revision added points for incorporating visitability features into multi-family housing, resulting in more accessible units through the program. The Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is sponsored by the U.S. Treasury Department and administered by VHDA in Virginia. The LIHTC program encourages the development of affordable rental housing by providing owners with a federal income tax credit. The program also serves as an incentive for private investors to participate with developers in the construction and rehabilitation of low-income housing. For more information, visit [www.vhda.com](http://www.vhda.com) under Rental Development, Builders/Developers, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits Program.



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*Designing homes and communities to be usable by all people regardless of ability or age.*