



access by design

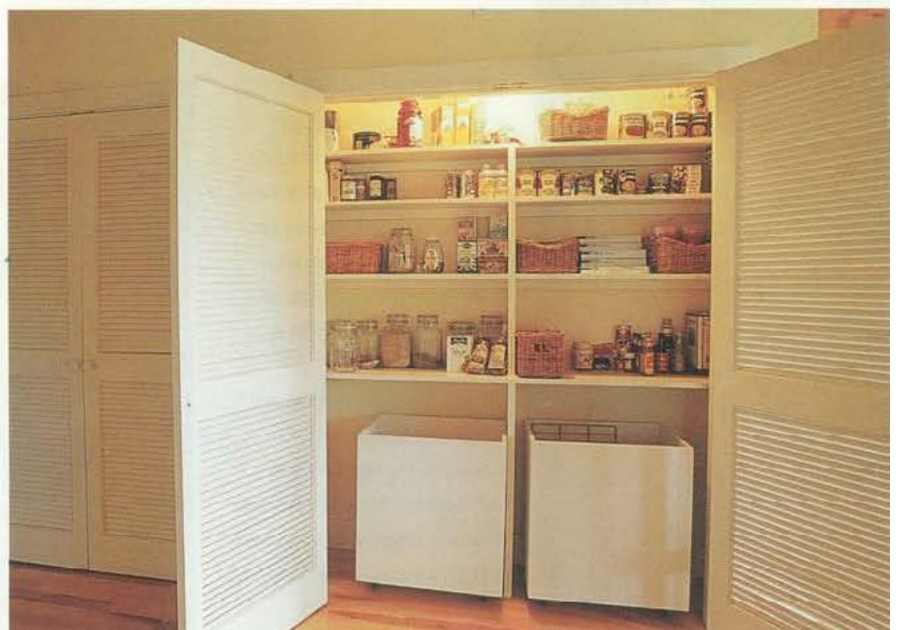
Framed by the great outdoors, a carefully planned kitchen becomes inviting to all.

LEFT: Bathed in sunlight, this contemporary design of polished granite and knotty pine contrasts with stainless steel for a warm, open look. **ABOVE:** A 28-inch counter at the window matches an ample work space with a mountain view. **RIGHT:** Wide passageways make wheelchair maneuvering easy for the homeowner while open-front cabinets provide easy access and give the room an airy feel.





ABOVE: Wood with a clear finish is the material of choice, while window trim has been painted to blend into the background for further visual emphasis on the great view.
RIGHT: Slightly wider doors and rolling bins make access to the pantry easier for all.
OPPOSITE: Counters were kept uncluttered and barriers to a minimum to promote ease of maneuverability.
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design points

- Warm and airy, the room boasts natural materials such as knotty pine used for cabinetry.
- Light fixtures over the island echo the window frames.
- Window frames are painted a light color and brought nearly to the countertop. The effect is to make the outdoor scenery a visual extension of the green counters.

style

function

- Open cabinets with sliding shelves are custom built to give the wheelchair-bound owner easier access to kitchen supplies.
- Natural-honed slate is heirloom durable and usually no more expensive than Corian or other synthetic countertop materials.
- Counter heights have been adjusted for specific tasks.

Creating a home—not to mention a kitchen—for a person with a physical disability presents special challenges to design professionals, but the adaptations and modest modifications often result in a comfortable space that anyone can appreciate. Milford Cushman, a principal in Cushman + Beckstrom, a Vermont-based architectural firm, says that their client asked for a comfortable, easy-to-manuever space that, while specifically geared to a disabled person's needs, “didn’t come across as confined to those parameters.”

Cushman says that subtle adjustments in dimensions make it easy to move about the house, while maintaining a familiar scale: doorways are wider to accommodate a wheelchair, for instance, but not overtly so. Kitchen cabinets are kept open and shelves are on slides, making access to the contents easier. They are painted a light color to blend with the walls and windows and to contrast with eye-catching touches such as the kitchen’s green Vermont-slate counters. Cushman also maintained a 58-inch passageway between the counter and the island in the 130-square-foot space, leaving plenty of maneuvering room even with the refrigerator door open.

“If we didn’t have to get a wheelchair in there we might try to squeeze the passageway down,” he says. “But it has been satisfying for me; this particular space has opened our eyes and our minds to seeing the kitchen in a slightly different light.”—*Stephen Titus*

Milford Cushman is a design professional with over 30 years of practice committed to creative and thoughtful design solutions. He is not a registered architect as inferred in this article.

