

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ARCHITECTURE

00;00;00;00 - 00;00;31;03

Karen Brown

Welcome to real life Renos the podcast. My name is Karen Brown, and I'm an aging in place and accessibility strategist. Today, our favorite guest, Ron Wickman, returns. Ron is just back from a couple of conferences and brings us some promising news from the world of architecture. We also find out if Ron sneaks accessibility features into his designs for Unsubs in clients.

00;00;31;05 - 00;00;39;04

Karen Brown

Welcome, everybody, to this edition of Real Life Renters The podcast, and we are thrilled, as always, to welcome back Ron Wickman. Hi, Ron.

00;00;39;06 - 00;00;39;26

Ron Wickman

Hi.

00;00;39;28 - 00;00;51;23

Karen Brown

I understand that since we last met, you've been to a couple of conferences that were, done for and by architects. Tell us a little bit about what happened there.

00;00;51;26 - 00;00;52;06

Ron Wickman

Yeah.

00;00;52;06 - 00;01;41;06

Ron Wickman

So the the first conference was, just a couple of weeks ago, in Bamf. So every two years, the Alberta Association of Architects holds a, conference called the Bam session. So this is something that started in the 1950s and has been ongoing for all these years now. And, it's always the the original intent of the conference was to bring architects together in, in one of the most beautiful places in the world, bounce and, and listen to architects that are world

renowned in the work that they do and, and, as, as an audience, we could get inspired, by these talks by, by architects that are doing some pretty amazing

00;01;41;06 - 00;02;08;22

Ron Wickman

things and hopefully take, take some of the lessons we've learned back to, back to our own offices. certainly being in Banff and having a couple of days to, mix and mingle with our peers is something that, is something that we really enjoy to and many architects to this day. I only see, every two years at the Bam sessions, so, it's good.

00;02;08;24 - 00;02;39;09

Ron Wickman

It's a good chance to, it's a good chance to catch up. And, I personally actually, starting in 1994, I guess overall, I've done, I've helped, chair six bounce sessions, so I did three, three consecutively, then took two off. And, the idea of bringing in speakers that were compelling was always what drove me to help organize the bounce sessions.

00;02;39;11 - 00;03;02;22

Ron Wickman

I, I do a lot of my own research and, and try to keep up to date with what's happening, especially around the world with, innovative, designers, innovative architects. And, so after a couple of sessions where, I didn't think the speakers were bad by any stretch, but, just not really talking about the subject matter that that I take a personal interest in.

00;03;02;22 - 00;03;17;06

Ron Wickman

And, so I, you know, I just said, could I just get slightly involved to, help at least get one or the keynote speakers? And the next thing I knew, I, you know, I chaired three more sessions.

00;03;17;08 - 00;03;19;21

Ron Wickman

so, so,

00;03;19;24 - 00;03;44;22

Ron Wickman

so it's something that's near and dear to my heart. I, I, I really enjoy the, the time, and the, the education that you get. what happens now at these sessions is there are four keynote speakers, world renowned speakers, and then there are, a whole bunch of different sessions that we call continuing education. So they're they're a bit more modest.

00;03;44;24 - 00;04;10;18

Ron Wickman

and talk specifically about sometimes products or issues. Of course, issues such as sustainability and, and green architecture are high on everybody's list. Today. We talk about climate change and the environment. And, other than myself, accessibility was never really, presented at, at, at the Bam sessions.

00;04;10;20 - 00;04;12;00

Ron Wickman

Eric Teller.

00;04;12;03 - 00;04;33;13

Ron Wickman

yeah. And and this year, I didn't, I didn't do a presentation, but there was a, there was a very good continuing education, presentation on, on accessibility. So it really, it really was encouraging to hear another architect talking about it. a a a slightly bigger, well, a bigger firm than me.

00;04;34;10 - 00;04;37;05

Ron Wickman

That doesn't take much. You just need to. And then you're bigger than me.

00;04;37;08 - 00;04;38;18

Ron Wickman

And, I.

00;04;38;20 - 00;04;41;00

Karen Brown
Was this architect from Canada.

00;04;41;02 - 00;04;43;27

Ron Wickman

Yes. Yeah. Okay. From from the Vancouver area.

00;04;43;29 - 00;05;08;13

Ron Wickman

Okay. very good architect. well known for a lot of their, their public buildings, all across, all across Canada and, very good architect, very good designer, and, very, very good, discussion about their work. And, he also made his way to, to the, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's conference that happened in Vancouver.

00;05;08;13 - 00;05;34;11

Ron Wickman

So the weekend, in Banff, allowed me to drive back to Edmonton on the Sunday and then, that Monday, the next Monday, I was on a plane to Vancouver. And that week in Vancouver was, the the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's Festival of Architecture that they hold, every year in a different city. So, so this year it was, this year it was in Vancouver.

00;05;34;14 - 00;06;01;08

Ron Wickman

And that same architect, did a similar presentation, a lot of the same slides, the same discussions, but also a slightly different, discussion around, work that he's been doing with the, recounts and foundation in Vancouver. So there was, there was, prominence of of, people who work with Rick Hansen and the foundation, there at the conference as well.

00;06;01;08 - 00;06;11;16

Ron Wickman

So there were there were at least four, separate sessions on accessibility, at the RK conference, mine being one of them.

00;06;11;19 - 00;06;22;26

Karen Brown

Yours was one. And of course, you've presented to the Rick Hansen Foundation conference in the past and I'm a Rick Hansen Foundation professional. So that resonates with both of us for different reasons I suppose.

00;06;22;26 - 00;06;24;21

Ron Wickman

But yeah. Yeah.

00;06;24;23 - 00;06;51;10

Ron Wickman

And so it was it was very, very interesting and really got me thinking, you know, a bit more philosophically too, I guess, you know, all these years having kind of felt like a bit of the, the lone wolf, you know, sort of yelling or screaming at everybody to, you know, pay attention to this stuff. now people are paying attention to it, which is really, really, really great to, to see.

00;06;51;13 - 00;07;18;15

Ron Wickman

I don't think it was far away from people's minds. architects are, typically, you know, we're trained to be creative, but generally very compassionate people that want to do good things. But we're often guided by, circumstance and our clients and the business and all the rest. So, sometimes it is hard to, to find yourself in a position where you can really focus in on, on issues around accessibility.

00;07;18;17 - 00;07;57;24

Ron Wickman

but the presentations were from people that, had something happen in their lives that made them, really, rethink their, their attitudes and beliefs towards how they practice architecture, which I found, very interesting and, and, and challenged me now to think more about the way that I present my own, my own work and my own experiences and, and and the kind of education that I want to provide for not only architects, but people in the general public, home builders and, you know, even politicians.

00;07;57;26 - 00;08;16;20

Ron Wickman

what is the message that that, that I am trying to get through to other people, knowing that there's other, other people out there really pushing, for, for some, some change and some and, and and some more work to be done in this, in this area of accessibility.

00;08;16;22 - 00;08;42;00

Karen Brown

That is really encouraging. and, you know, it's always very compelling as, as you certainly know better than most when something happens in your own circle of friends or family that changes your thinking. You know that expression when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. And it it sounds like these presenters had that kind of a change happen in their lives.

00;08;42;05 - 00;08;49;16

Karen Brown

Can you tell us like a couple of sentences on a couple of the presentations, what they were talking about in particular?

00;08;49;18 - 00;09;20;10

Ron Wickman

Yeah. Yeah. So so I can because I mean, that's really that's been always at the heart of what I, what I present is, are these stories about my experiences and thinking that other people would, would find those, those experiences and stories quite compelling and, and want to try to do the same sort of thing? the, the one architect that did the two presentations, he talked about, an experience where he.

00;09;21;15 - 00;09;55;00

Ron Wickman

He, he designed a recreation center. And it was at a time in his life when he had a young child and he thought, wouldn't it? You know, this will be so nice. I'm designing a building that myself and my child can, swim together and enjoy the facility. And then sometime later, maybe six months. I can't remember exactly if he gave a timeline, but, he he got a, a letter or or some kind of notification

from from a mom who said, you know, my son can't use your recreation facility because he has a disability.

00;09;55;02 - 00;10;22;15

Ron Wickman

And that really, hit home for him. And he said, especially being that this new dad, he he, you know, he felt that that that, how how harmful it was for this mom not to be able to share in the same joy that he was he was having with his own son. So he really made a commitment to to, think about the way he designs his buildings to be more inclusive.

00;10;22;17 - 00;10;57;00

Ron Wickman

And, and that was the word that he used more often than not was, was this idea of being inclusive, which is which is really the mother, the mother term. When we talk about issues around, like I often say, accessibility. And I guess just having said that, I want to make sure I say this, in my presentation, I started by saying, if you ask me if my presentation is about inclusive design, universal design, accessible design, barrier free design visibility, I'm going to say yes.

00;10;57;02 - 00;10;59;02

Ron Wickman

So I just wanted.

00;10;59;04 - 00;11;01;23

Ron Wickman

I just wanted to get that out there that.

00;11;01;25 - 00;11;02;11

Ron Wickman

Don't.

00;11;02;12 - 00;11;20;00

Ron Wickman

Don't come at me for not using, you know, the right term or the wrong term. I'm it's it's it all means the same to me. We're all in this to to make the world better for, you know, as many people as we

can. Right. So we're trying to be an inclusive system is still in my mind, the other word.

00;11;20;00 - 00;11;50;15

Ron Wickman

But accessibility is what I personally really focus on. And that is people with disabilities. So, never far from my thoughts are, are people of color and, and, and other, other minority groups. but at the heart of my work and thoughts is, is, is people with disabilities are people with disabilities. And that, you know, that has everything to do with the fact that I grew up around that in that world with my dad being in a wheelchair.

00;11;50;15 - 00;11;52;07

Ron Wickman

So, so and.

00;11;52;07 - 00;11;53;06

Ron Wickman

Then.

00;11;53;08 - 00;12;06;01

Ron Wickman

That's my work too. So every single day of my life, I'm talking to somebody, at least one person that has a disability, that a day doesn't go by, that that doesn't happen for me. So it's just it's just always there for me.

00;12;06;08 - 00;12;45;03

Karen Brown

For those who may have listened to our last podcast that we did together with Robert Lipka toward the end of the podcast, we did touch on semantics and universal design versus accessibility was something that we did talk about. And I, if I remember correctly and correct me if I'm wrong, the term, universal design is something that is preferred because using and in Europe, perhaps because the term accessibility makes some people feel other, whereas universal design starts from the very beginning that it is for everyone.

00;12;45;06 - 00;12;55;17

Karen Brown

It was it was a really interesting conversation that I believe Robert initiated. If I'm not mistaken. Yeah, and certainly got me thinking it.

00;12;55;19 - 00;13;22;11

Ron Wickman

It's true, you know, and it's it's something that's not lost on me ever, when I'm talking to people and, I know, for myself in, in, there are some, you know, I become aware of some conferences happening around the world now, and, and, I've submitted, proposals, for those conferences and, and, you know, one of the problems is you're only allowed to, say something in 300 words or less.

00;13;22;18 - 00;13;27;05

Ron Wickman

Like what? You're what you want to talk about. So, so.

00;13;27;07 - 00;13;53;13

Ron Wickman

I, I don't always get selected to do a presentation. but I do sometimes, so I can't say I'm a terrible writer. but I think there's an art to even writing a proposal, to make it sound compelling. Right. And so there was one just recently, a conference coming up in Norway. where I, usually I just hear we haven't selected or we have selected your your presentation.

00;13;53;15 - 00;14;04;12

Ron Wickman

This one actually gave, the thoughts of three jury members. so three people obviously looked at my presentation and what.

00;14;04;12 - 00;14;05;14

Ron Wickman

Really what.

00;14;05;14 - 00;14;08;13

Ron Wickman

Really struck me. and I didn't know what to.

00;14;08;13 - 00;14;09;01

Ron Wickman

Think about it.

00;14;09;01 - 00;14;29;18

Ron Wickman

I guess I'm still scratching my head a little bit. One was this is very compelling. it we should make room for this presentation. One said, this is nonsense. He doesn't know what he's talking about. this is a hard no. And the other was, It's pretty good. We should make room for him. If we can.

00;14;29;18 - 00;14;54;15

Ron Wickman

So it it ended up being. No. but it was it was. Wow. Like, three different people looked at what I said, but all three did. Did say that I use the word accessibility when I should have been using the term universal. So, you know, I can't in 300 words. I can't sort of sum up my presentation and explain my thoughts around the terminology.

00;14;54;15 - 00;15;10;03

Ron Wickman

Right. and then the words that I'm using, to me it just means the same thing. So clearly, I wasn't able to, like, sort of gain the, the attention of, of these. The. Well, one jury member thought it was pretty good. I guess.

00;15;10;03 - 00;15;12;03

Ron Wickman

So. So it's it's a.

00;15;12;03 - 00;15;35;27

Ron Wickman

Really sort of funny thing, right? Where you, you know, you have the, the experience. but but you only have this short time to kind of, say what you, what you want to say. So that's, you know, presentations are, are very much like that. And, and people have,

you know, they're, they're limited in how much time they want to like, listen to somebody talk about a subject too.

00;15;35;29 - 00;16;02;02

Ron Wickman

So the the art of presenting a topic is also something that I'm aware of. And, again, this architect that presented in both Banff and, and Vancouver, did a very good job with his presentation. It was very, very compelling. some videos, very good images. So it was it was like top notch, I think, and very, very well done.

00;16;02;05 - 00;16;31;04

Ron Wickman

The, the other, the other two that I wanted to mention were, an interior designer, I think she was from, from the Quebec area, and she talked about working in health care and, and how she used to be, I guess, what you'd call a sort of, forgive me if I offend anybody, but a typical interior designer that focused on, you know, colors and materials and so on without, you know, without a lot of thought about the end user.

00;16;31;07 - 00;17;01;12

Ron Wickman

And then she had moments in her life where I think her personal family reasons, she realized that her choices can make a difference, especially for people who might be experiencing dementia, Alzheimer's. And, so she suddenly had a very different, tone and said, you know, this is we really have to pay attention to who's actually using these facilities and how to, you know, make, make them as comfortable as possible.

00;17;01;12 - 00;17;16;17

Ron Wickman

So just picking pretty colors is not really the way to do it. Right? I mean, that's part of it, but it's it's not at the heart of it. And she that was the message she was trying to bring to the audience, which I thought was really was, was really good as well.

00;17;16;19 - 00;17;23;02

Karen Brown

And how did the audience respond to her? Did they start thinking a little bit more?

00;17;23;02 - 00;17;25;18

Ron Wickman

I think so, I yeah.

00;17;25;18 - 00;17;44;27

Ron Wickman

I think so. It's really hard to say. They're, you know, for the most part there there isn't a lot of time for discussion. I think they're, I think for a lot of architects, they do they do want to know more, detail. They want to know, like, how do we how do we do this? How do we actually make it happen?

00;17;45;00 - 00;17;56;02

Ron Wickman

the message was very clear and consistent from all of us that presented about accessibility. Was that, like I always say, the code, the building code is the bare minimum,

00;17;56;04 - 00;17;58;26

Karen Brown

Yes. The minimum that anybody has to do to not.

00;17;58;28 - 00;18;00;16

Ron Wickman

Get just,

00;18;00;18 - 00;18;05;25

Ron Wickman

The, the other I, I liked what the other architect said. He said that the building code is the worst.

00;18;05;27 - 00;18;07;15

Ron Wickman

So he said, if you.

00;18;07;22 - 00;18;36;16

Ron Wickman

If you do anything less than the building code, you're negligent as an architect and you're going to get sued. So, you're not really you're not really doing that. Great. If you're meeting code, it means you're just doing your job. Right. And so, you know, again, I think all of us, we're trying to encourage our audiences to to think about the subject, you know, much like you would think about, the use of materials, the use of natural daylight, the use of space, the idea of sustainability.

00;18;36;16 - 00;18;57;23

Ron Wickman

You want to achieve something that's at a higher level than just the bare minimum. you don't really. Yeah. You don't really want to design a box with windows. You want to design something that, lifts our spirits and makes us feel, it makes us one, or it makes us have a beautiful experience. Really? So we we.

00;18;57;23 - 00;19;19;06

Ron Wickman

It's not just something that we just see and go. Yeah, okay. I guess that's okay. It keeps the rain off me. But, other than that, it's, you know, it's just a box with windows, like, we all strive to do something more, in the accessible design world, I think we're trying to just allow more people into our world.

00;19;19;06 - 00;19;21;08

Ron Wickman

Right, that we're designing for. So that's all.

00;19;21;08 - 00;19;26;20

Karen Brown

It's really more purposeful thinking about how the space is going to be perceived and used.

00;19;26;22 - 00;19;47;21

Ron Wickman

Yeah, yeah. And, a couple things I wanted to say to, the, the audiences for the accessibility talks. We're, we're somewhat limited, like, we certainly weren't keynote speakers. So, you know, maybe 50, 70 people in the audience for us.

00;19;47;24 - 00;19;50;22

Karen Brown

The good news is that there were four presentations, not just one from Ron, right?

00;19;50;22 - 00;19;53;03

Ron Wickman

That's right. I don't run. Right. Yeah.

00;19;53;05 - 00;19;55;11

Karen Brown

I think that's glass half fill, baby, glass half full.

00;19;55;11 - 00;19;57;26

Ron Wickman

So that that definitely the glass.

00;19;57;28 - 00;20;03;23

Ron Wickman

The glass is half full. Yeah, yeah. You're right, you're right. So make sure that my messaging doesn't come off as being negative.

00;20;03;23 - 00;20;05;25

Ron Wickman

But I, I did have to say.

00;20;05;25 - 00;20;07;13

Ron Wickman

That, you know, the imbalance of.

00;20;07;13 - 00;20;08;22

Ron Wickman

Final.

00;20;08;25 - 00;20;32;27

Ron Wickman

Talk inbound was by an architect who has done some, a very big work in, in China. And elsewhere in the world, you know, stadiums

and so on. But the the last thing that she showed us was the new, George Lucas Museum and, which is being built in, in Los Angeles.

00;20;32;29 - 00;20;33;23

Ron Wickman

And it's just.

00;20;33;23 - 00;20;45;29

Ron Wickman

You just realize that that's a completely different world that, some architects work in, right? Like, I, I don't know what the budget is in the billions of dollars for this building, but, you know, it's.

00;20;45;29 - 00;20;47;07

Ron Wickman

Just it's just weird.

00;20;47;13 - 00;21;15;01

Ron Wickman

That's sort of what we get from our keynote speakers. And bam, for these, like, architects that are doing things that only a handful of architects are doing around the world, and they're just so very, very big and significant. Right? So they might say we I think for the most part, it's such a tricky building to do in a way that, beyond making, it me code, I'm not sure what they, they, if they did do more than that, they didn't talk about it.

00;21;15;01 - 00;21;35;04

Ron Wickman

Right. Because there was just the all these other things to talk about. So I, I always find that interesting. and I'm not saying I can't say one is better or worse than the other. I'm just saying, you know, that's not where my focus is, like, I, I'm, I'm happy that there are other architects and firms that that do this kind of work.

00;21;35;12 - 00;21;59;22

Ron Wickman

It's just not really sort of in my wheelhouse myself. Right. but it is generally what our field tends to gravitate towards is this kind of, the bigger, loftier, and that's like all arts, I think is, is kind of like

that. Right. you see the same in music and, and, and, and the movie industry and all the rest.

00;21;59;24 - 00;22;03;12

Ron Wickman

So, so there's a lot of power, there's a lot of power and all of that. Yeah.

00;22;03;14 - 00;22;11;24

Karen Brown

Yeah. You want to be bigger and do more and have the kudos for doing that. Have that on your resumé. Yeah. And then be invited to Banff, which is a very pretty hoity toity

00;22;11;26 - 00;22;12;13

Ron Wickman

Chichi

00;22;12;14 - 00;22;14;22

Karen Brown

Place to have a conference.

00;22;14;24 - 00;22;15;18

Ron Wickman

Yeah.

00;22;15;20 - 00;22;36;23

Ron Wickman

Yeah, exactly. And you know, having been a part of that, I a lot of architects, you know, they, they came from, from Europe that my first, the first one I ever helped organize was, in fact, really, it was just I was the Bam committee and, and then staff at the time, helped me.

00;22;36;26 - 00;22;38;13

Ron Wickman

That there was no, there was no.

00;22;38;13 - 00;22;42;09

Ron Wickman

Real committee. It was just me and I, and I, you know, I was pretty fresh out of.

00;22;42;09 - 00;22;43;09

Ron Wickman
School.

00;22;43;12 - 00;23;11;25

Ron Wickman

just become registered. And I'm just a big fan of, of, Scandinavian architecture. So I, you know, I just said, wouldn't it be great if we had an architect from Finland and Sweden and Denmark or Norway? You know, we had three speakers, so I had four, basically four countries to choose from. And and I said, but is it kind of like, is it gonna be okay that like, I feel like I'm a bit of a dictator here?

00;23;11;26 - 00;23;14;11

Ron Wickman

And the staff just said, well.

00;23;14;14 - 00;23;18;27

Ron Wickman

Yeah, you're organizing it. So you decide. It's like, okay. And, you know, it.

00;23;18;27 - 00;23;43;01

Ron Wickman

Was really it was really good. And in fact, in a, in a in a funny roundabout way, what ended up happening is, very unplanned. I didn't know this until it all came together, but all three architects, it was a Finnish architect, a Danish architect and a Norwegian architect. They had all done work together on a experimental housing.

00;23;43;03 - 00;24;11;29

Ron Wickman

project area in Sweden. And so this area, they they hired a Swedish architect, a Norwegian architect, Danish and Finnish architect to each design, a building. So four buildings designed in this one location, all representing their countries. And so the three

architects met in Sweden when they each designed their buildings. And then they met again in Banff, each to do their own lecture on the work that they do.

00;24;11;29 - 00;24;13;22

Ron Wickman

So that was really.

00;24;13;25 - 00;24;14;02

Ron Wickman

Quite.

00;24;14;02 - 00;24;40;06

Ron Wickman

Nice. Okay. It was, it was, it was nice how that all worked out. And and I was just in Denmark last year, the World Congress of Architecture and, and, still stay in touch with the architect who's since retired from, from Denmark. And so, you know, after all these years, we still stay in touch and, and so that, you know, that part of it is really, personal.

00;24;40;09 - 00;25;01;10

Ron Wickman

it's sort of agenda item for me is just to be able to, to work and talk to and stay in touch with these, these architects that have done some pretty amazing, amazing stuff. I wanted to mention the last talk that I went to in, in, Vancouver at the Rock festival because it couldn't be more opposite of the last one.

00;25;01;10 - 00;25;30;23

Ron Wickman

I saw in Banff. And it was, a group. It was a panel group of five. There were five people and they they, talked about work being done in a First Nations community in, in BC that have that had just been, Lindon, just been ravaged by fire and, the whole presentation was only showed one image, which was a sort of 19.

00;25;30;26 - 00;25;51;10

Ron Wickman

Late 60s, early 70s by level house that is very common. all over, well over my part of the world, anyway, I'm sure all of Canada. But at the time there were like essentially five CMHC houses that would get built in our First Nations communities. And this was one of them. And it was like literally the biggest one.

00;25;51;10 - 00;25;53;09

Ron Wickman

This bi-level.

00;25;53;12 - 00;25;55;13

Karen Brown

You mean five designs, not. five houses.

00;25;55;18 - 00;25;56;17

Ron Wickman

Five designs, five.

00;25;56;17 - 00;25;56;25

Karen Brown

Designs.

00;25;57;01 - 00;25;57;20

Ron Wickman

Okay, five.

00;25;57;20 - 00;26;27;12

Ron Wickman

Designs. So you could get one of those five, right. in your community. And that's all you ever got in those days. and I'm not speaking as, you know, with, with amazing authority on all of this, but this was like through the presentation, but that that house, which, you know, amounted to about overall, maybe 1600 square feet over the two levels, often would house 17 or 18 people, in the family.

00;26;27;14 - 00;26;56;12

Ron Wickman

And it was built with minimal insulation and, and all the rest. So, you know, just sort of talking about how these, these very foreign

homes were being built in First Nation communities and it's just got to stop. Right? We got to build things that are well, now they got to build things that are more fireproof, more sustainable, but also more part of the culture of the First Nations, community.

00;26;56;12 - 00;27;06;22

Ron Wickman

And they're different all over Canada. So there is no one, size fits all, across Canada for anything, any kind of housing.

00;27;06;24 - 00;27;17;11

Karen Brown

If I'm not mistaken, you've been involved with First Nations communities building some accessibility features or houses, community areas.

00;27;17;11 - 00;27;18;20

Ron Wickman

Yes, yes. Yeah.

00;27;18;20 - 00;27;48;29

Ron Wickman

So I've started. Yeah. In the last 5 or 6 years now, I've been doing some of that with, with, some communities here in Alberta and, you know, really trying to promote that idea and trying to build, build homes that are, energy efficient, more sustainable, more of the more of the culture, engage the, engage the the people that live in the community as to what they're looking for.

00;27;49;01 - 00;28;25;09

Ron Wickman

And, in a previous podcast, we, we had a discussion with, John Jenco, who just happens to be the builder in that in the one community. So between the two of us, we end up, getting involved in a in, in a lot of this work together. And, you know, we're able to be on the same page in terms of providing and building this kind of designing and building this kind of housing that we, we think would be more appropriate to, to the circumstance, you know, on great access, wet room bathrooms.

00;28;25;12 - 00;28;51;29

Ron Wickman

they are actually a little bit bigger than, than the norm because we understand and we've been told that there's going to be an extended family living in these homes. So we're designing them for that child that's the eight, 6 or 8 and that adult, that's 88, you know, that kind of thing. And and so, what a concept.

00;28;52;01 - 00;28;54;16

Ron Wickman

Yeah. Yeah. So, so being able.

00;28;54;16 - 00;29;21;19

Ron Wickman

To, to kind of use, use what we're doing, and, and thinking about and, and actually making real, real, real houses out of, out of that, out of these thoughts is, is what I find really exciting for for me is as the architect. Right. So they're not they're not the new museum for George Lucas, but they're, they're, they're very much part of what we need to have done for, for people.

00;29;21;19 - 00;29;55;06

Ron Wickman

Right. So I think the, the real thing that the real idea that came out for me was from these two conferences was for me to really focus on what I've been doing all along, which is, which is a kind of people orientated design. So it, in my early career, I didn't just do work for people with disabilities, I did whatever came my way because I, I, I needed money, I needed to make a living, and pay bills and so on.

00;29;55;08 - 00;30;18;14

Ron Wickman

And I just didn't have enough of a reputation to just, you know, focus on just accessibility type projects. So I always felt like I, I was a good listener. So when my clients said, I want this or that, we didn't fight, like sometimes as the architect and designer, I could, I could, I could see that if we did it my way, it would look a lot better.

00;30;18;16 - 00;30;53;29

Ron Wickman

but I, I typically didn't push for that, because I knew that, you know, the client wanted something else. So, it's a bit of a. You know, I'm not saying I did something ugly because the client wanted it. It's just, you know, I listened to what they wanted, and we tried to find a, you know, an appropriate solution that would, at the end of the day, benefit them the most, as opposed to just me being able to drive by it and go, yeah, I sure designed a nice house there or send other potential clients to see kind of what my style is, because I've never really felt I've had a style,

00;30;54;02 - 00;31;26;16

Ron Wickman

I just design what I think my clients really want. And so we spend a lot of time together and we talk about things. And so that whole methodology of me working that way, has always been, part of my work with, with people who have disabilities. Now the stakes are higher when you're talking about somebody that you know is missing a leg and uses a wheelchair, the whole idea of how you use a shower, is quite different than just being in a wheelchair.

00;31;26;18 - 00;31;46;17

Ron Wickman

the dynamics are different, right? And and trying to really understand how that all works is something that I dig really deep into with my clients, and we talk it through. And, you know, fortunately, I, I, a lot of my work is done with the workers compensation boards here in Alberta. And, the work allows me to do that.

00;31;46;17 - 00;32;10;28

Ron Wickman

Right? So I, I mean, I do get paid to do that. and but it's, it's tremendously rewarding. I guess I could make more money if I just didn't do that and just, you know, did the work kind of at a minimum. But I, you know, I, I always feel like I go that extra mile because I for myself, I want to learn and get better at my craft because that's going to make me better for future projects.

00;32;11;00 - 00;32;36;12

Ron Wickman

So I, I really I really was struck by this presentation and in Vancouver and it really energized me because it was so different than so many of the other presentations, which, for the most part had big, high, lofty goals. This other one also had like big lofty goals, but from a more humble standpoint, like just give us a house that makes sense, right.

00;32;36;14 - 00;32;59;22

Ron Wickman

Like and and that's fireproof and, and like some very simple things that, you know, again and when we're in schools of architecture, I think we're often discouraged from, from being, you know, practical and then thinking along those lines because, you know, we want to be the next Frank Gehry or, you know, Norman Foster or, you know, whoever's who's ever kind of the flavor of the day sort of speak.

00;32;59;22 - 00;33;29;29

Ron Wickman

Right. so, so, you know, I remember having those thoughts when I was in school and when I first got out of school. Wouldn't it be nice to be super, super famous and all that? But as, as my work has, has, progressed, I find real satisfaction in, in solving, these critical, or finding critical, solutions for, for people that can really benefit from my experience.

00;33;30;01 - 00;33;32;29

Ron Wickman

and, you know, very, you know, very specific way.

00;33;33;02 - 00;33;58;16

Karen Brown

When you're designing for people who don't currently have disabilities or who are middle aged and really aren't thinking 20 years out, do you ever sneak in universal components that they don't actually recognize as accessible design or universal design, but you know will benefit them down the road? Do you ever do that?

00;33;58;19 - 00;34;00;10

Ron Wickman

Yes.

00;34;00;12 - 00;34;01;25

Karen Brown

I knew it. I knew.

00;34;01;27 - 00;34;04;13

Ron Wickman

I do. I, I well, let's put it this.

00;34;04;13 - 00;34;33;20

Ron Wickman

Way I always I always try to eliminate steps at the, at the front door. so they like the main entrance door. I'll do everything I can to eliminate the steps. but here's an interesting thing that is, we're talking about at least a little bit is, what we need to do is often do a sidewalk that's just not straight from the public sidewalk to the front door.

00;34;33;23 - 00;34;59;11

Ron Wickman

because if we do that, the sidewalks is going to be too steep if you don't have steps. So normally, you know, we just follow the, the, the slope of the land to our front steps. And then those steps get us to the front door. so what I, what I try to do is I say, you know, wouldn't it be nice to do a nice front yard landscaping plan where we have a bit of a meandering sidewalk pathway that takes you through nature before you get to your house?

00;34;59;11 - 00;35;05;03

Ron Wickman

So making it, you know, again, sound like a very special type of way of getting into the house.

00;35;05;07 - 00;35;06;11

Ron Wickman

Very clever.

00;35;06;14 - 00;35;17;19

Ron Wickman

But, often it does. The resistance is often. Well, isn't that just more concrete? and more expense. So try to say, well, no, I don't think so.

00;35;17;21 - 00;35;19;03

Ron Wickman

Often.

00;35;19;05 - 00;35;43;22

Ron Wickman

If the contractors in the room, they go, yeah, it is. but even if you buy into that, then you start getting a situation where often the sidewalk, after a while, the sidewalk starts getting higher than the land. and then you're into a situation where you have, like, a bit of a drop off, maybe, you know, maybe not much more than a foot, but still.

00;35;43;22 - 00;36;05;24

Ron Wickman

That's significant, right? That's it becomes like a tripping hazard. Or if you know, a wheelchair, you you can fall off that edge. And I always say we'll just feather the land up to, like, just feather. Just landscape up to the, up to the sidewalk. And, it's much more challenging to convince, the homeowner and even the builder to do that.

00;36;05;24 - 00;36;26;21

Ron Wickman

They just just not what they're used to seeing or doing. And so it's really important then that I can get to do some of these projects and then say, well, here, let me show you an image of, you know, or let me take you to a house that we've done this exact thing and it works. Right, right. And so, that's one for sure.

00;36;26;24 - 00;36;52;26

Ron Wickman

the second one that, you know, again, if I could, if I could just convince our new home builders to do one thing consistently, in

changing the way that they design their and build their houses would be to turn the bathrooms into wet rooms. So I, I, I also make a very strong, argument to do the wet room bathroom, and that usually doesn't get me into too much trouble.

00:36:52;29 - 00:36:59;28

Ron Wickman

most people like the idea of it. They need to be convinced that it's waterproof and water won't get into the rest of the house.

00:36:59;28 - 00:37:10;19

Karen Brown

And so for listeners who maybe don't know, haven't heard some of our previous podcasts, can you give the Coles notes version of what a Wet Room is?

00:37:10;21 - 00:37:37;12

Ron Wickman

Yeah. Sorry. the wet room. The wet room is essentially turning your bathroom into, a waterproofed room. So the entire floor of the bathroom would be, tiled and waterproofed underneath the tile. And same with the walls. so essentially from the door to the drain in the in the shower area, there would be no, no curbs.

00:37:37;14 - 00:38:03;04

Ron Wickman

So everything just slopes to the drain. So if you were to, walk into the bathroom and stand in the shower, you would shower just like, I guess any other bathroom except, you know, you might not have, like, this fiberglass shower unit that you stand in. It's just part of the the bathroom. but if you were to, we'll in, need to transfer from your wheelchair or even shower from your wheelchair.

00:38:03;06 - 00:38:21;00

Ron Wickman

There is no curb that would impede your ability to be able to do that. So it it it's a yeah. And it's, you know again just being in it myself being in in Denmark last year that's the only way they do it. Like the wet room is just the way they do things there. They they don't.

00;38;21;00 - 00;38;24;24

Ron Wickman

You wouldn't understand why you would want to curb it.

00;38;24;27 - 00;38;46;11

Karen Brown

It's the way. It's the way to take 50 year old houses, 50 year old two storey houses for people who want to live on one floor. Maybe they've got some semblance of a bathroom. Whether it's a 2 or 3 piece on the main floor, it is a way to take that bathroom and make it entirely functional for somebody to use and live on one floor of that house.

00;38;46;14 - 00;38;58;10

Karen Brown

It's a great idea and very, you say, very common in Europe, very common in Asia. It's a common in a lot of places. North Americans are just very strange about our bathrooms.

00;38;58;17 - 00;38;59;16

Ron Wickman

It's just it's just.

00;38;59;16 - 00;39;18;23

Ron Wickman

The history of how we, you know, we've always built with wood, and we've just never quite had the, the waterproofing systems that like, really protected our floors. Right? Our wood floors from, from that. But we do now for sure. Like, and it's been, you know, it's been a bit of a journey and it's taken some time.

00;39;18;23 - 00;39;37;05

Ron Wickman

But the systems are, are really, really great. Like, it's pretty much impossible to, to like cut a hole in them or anything like that. So, you'd have to work really hard to, to, to make them fail. So it is, it is something that, certainly will.

00;39;37;06 - 00;39;38;17

Ron Wickman
Will.

00;39;38;19 - 00;39;52;23

Ron Wickman

just be part of my design. I tend not to talk about it that much. And then it when, if, if, if it comes up, and I usually don't let it go to the, you know, to the finish state when then they go, well, what is this.

00;39;52;26 - 00;39;54;19

Ron Wickman

So right at some point.

00;39;54;19 - 00;40;11;25

Ron Wickman

I sort of spill it on them. But you know, I often I'll leave it till we get the, the budget in. Right. So if the House comes in at a budget that they're happy with, then I can say, oh yeah, by the way, you know, we have these, these things that can, allow you to live in this forever home too.

00;40;11;25 - 00;40;24;20

Ron Wickman

Right? So it's, just so you know, and it hasn't affected your budget or your esthetics or anything like that. So, usually by that time, then they're, they're more than happy to, to keep going. Right.

00;40;24;22 - 00;40;25;29

Karen Brown

Right.

00;40;26;02 - 00;40;37;07

Ron Wickman

things like three foot wide doors, lever door handles, lower light switches. Those are really easy. Those, like, you don't even have to convince homeowners to do that anymore. Right?

00;40;37;10 - 00;40;37;24

Ron Wickman

Have to do a lot.

00;40;37;24 - 00;40;39;29

Karen Brown

You just have to convince the trades to do it. Yeah.

00;40;40;00 - 00;41;01;24

Ron Wickman

And a lot of the trade like that three foot wide doors are really easy now because, the, the demand is there. People want wider doors for moving furniture and, and all the rest so that that's that's pretty simple. The, the two toughest ones that would have the biggest impact on the industry is, are the no step entrances and the and the wet room bathroom.

00;41;01;24 - 00;41;10;12

Ron Wickman

So those two are the are the ones that really, would be a game changer. in in the industry for sure.

00;41;10;14 - 00;41;19;10

Karen Brown

They may be the ones that are hardest to convince people of, but they're the ones that absolutely make the most difference in the lives of the homeowners.

00;41;19;12 - 00;41;19;20

Ron Wickman

Yeah.

00;41;19;24 - 00;41;24;22

Ron Wickman

For sure. Sure. Well, I I'm sorry. I just wanted I wanted to.

00;41;24;23 - 00;41;28;10

Ron Wickman

Because I just think this is, like, so fascinating.

00;41;28;12 - 00;41;30;06

Ron Wickman

And just tells you a lot about.

00;41;30;10 - 00;41;45;24

Ron Wickman

People. my mom. So my, my mom still lives in the house that she's lived in since 1967. My dad passed away in 2004. the house is entirely wheelchair accessible. It's got a ramp in the.

00;41;45;24 - 00;41;47;00

Ron Wickman

Back.

00;41;47;02 - 00;42;07;16

Ron Wickman

That gets you from the garage to the detached garage to the back entrance of the house. the bathroom has a big, wet room, shower area. the the sink is open underneath. there's a second sink that was part of the original bathroom that is not open underneath.

00;42;07;18 - 00;42;08;21

Ron Wickman

So she can.

00;42;08;23 - 00;42;29;16

Ron Wickman

She had a bad year last year. She. She broke her wrist, and then she fell on her stairs, going down to the basement and fractured her. Her spine. So she's still on the mend. And and then on top of all of that, her basement flooded last year, too. So old House has no weaving tile. had actually no insulation in the walls in the basement.

00;42;29;16 - 00;42;55;27

Ron Wickman

So we redid all of the basement where we have weeping tile and a sump pump now. And so the landscape got completely chewed up. And, we have to redo that this year. And so the, the one thing that I'm doing right now is getting the contractor, which is, John Cup Schenkel, he's, he's, got his guys working on a new sidewalk at the front, which does a bit of a zigzag.

00;42;55;29 - 00;43;16;29

Ron Wickman

So it, it it goes from the public sidewalk and it, it, goes one way and then turns at an angle and comes to a landing at the top of the, the, sir, bottom of the front door threshold. So there used to be a deck with, with, three steps to the to the door. we took the deck off.

00;43;17;05 - 00;43;36;12

Ron Wickman

My mom didn't want it. another deck anymore, so she said, just do a sidewalk. And and now she's going to have this big, like, big landing, and then this, this sidewalk, which will lead, sort of away from the house to the side and then back towards the center of the house and then down to the public sidewalk.

00;43;36;12 - 00;43;53;27

Ron Wickman

So it it's not just the straight run of, of sidewalk to the door, because that sidewalk would just end up being way too steep for anybody to negotiate. And she keeps, every day I go over there, she's staring at this and she's going, well, that just looks so dumb.

00;43;54;00 - 00;44;01;24

Ron Wickman

Like, well, mom, you've like it. You lived with a guy in a wheelchair. Like, if anybody should understand this.

00;44;01;26 - 00;44;02;24

Ron Wickman

You should, right?

00;44;02;25 - 00;44;03;18

Ron Wickman

She goes, but.

00;44;03;18 - 00;44;05;24

Ron Wickman

I'm not, I'm not. I didn't break my back.

00;44;05;27 - 00;44;17;14

Ron Wickman

I just heard it just like. Are you are you trying to say I'm old? And I'm like, yes, mom, you're old, you're 82. Can't you're not moving as fast anymore. Like, just think about it. You can just you'll be able to go.

00;44;17;14 - 00;44;33;25

Ron Wickman

Out in your walker or, you know, if you need to use a wheelchair, which is likely. What's going to happen. but not only that, you know, friends and family in wheelchairs can come and visit and, and so I the last thing I thought I would have to do in my life is convince my mom to do that entrance.

00;44;33;27 - 00;44;37;12

Ron Wickman

And, and here I am trying to do that.

00;44;37;17 - 00;44;43;13

Ron Wickman

So even even people that are converted, I guess you can say aren't always converted.

00;44;43;16 - 00;44;46;23

Karen Brown

That's because we all want to think we're 20 years old and and invincible.

00;44;46;23 - 00;44;49;11

Ron Wickman

Guess I guess, but it just it just was wow.

00;44;49;11 - 00;44;51;22

Ron Wickman

That really kind of threw me for.

00;44;51;24 - 00;44;55;23

Ron Wickman

A bit of a loop. So, so I yeah, I.

00;44;55;23 - 00;45;09;24

Ron Wickman

Guess the long and short of it is the, the two conferences were fantastic. in some respects, the the highlight for me in Vancouver was, going to one of the Edmonton Vancouver games.

00;45;09;27 - 00;45;12;11

Ron Wickman

And the Stanley Cup playoffs. so.

00;45;12;11 - 00;45;38;08

Ron Wickman

I managed to get hit, snag a ticket for that, and go to the game, which was a lot of fun. But, it was very, very, positive to be, in a crowd and talk about, being able to talk about accessibility, to a lot of people that really listen to the, you know, the presentations that were there and, and, I think a lot of people left, thinking, yeah, this this is really this is really important.

00;45;38;08 - 00;46;06;02

Ron Wickman

And for whatever personal reason, they have, maybe, maybe, like many of us, they their reasoning is because they put people first in the way they think and design, and it's very important to them. Maybe they they, they think of it as a way to, bring business into, into their, their firm, which is, which is fine, too.

00;46;06;04 - 00;46;25;16

Ron Wickman

because it's all part of it. Right? I think there's lots of room for more architects to be experts in this area. So I think a lot of people did go home and and we're thinking, you know, this, we should maybe take this recounts and certification program, we should do everything we can to learn more about it and get better at it.

00;46;25;16 - 00;46;49;06

Ron Wickman

Right? Just like they would with energy efficiency and sustainability. always trying to get better at their craft and and

being able to just add this as another part of their design process. I think really for, for, for the first time that I can think of in my working career, there was a real theme there, that, you know, for, for more accessibility.

00:46:49:06 - 00:46:52:23

Ron Wickman

So that was really, really significant.

00:46:52:25 - 00:47:12:20

Karen Brown

That is fantastic news, you know, to hear that even though your mother may not be thinking in terms of her own accessibility needs in the future, much less in the present, that there were four presentations and not just one from Ron Wickman, and that people are thinking about this. That is incredibly positive.

00:47:12:22 - 00:47:15:18

Ron Wickman

Yeah, I agree, I agree, I agree.

00:47:15:20 - 00:47:22:06

Karen Brown

It's a great note to end the podcast. Do you have any. Yeah. Final words.

00:47:22:08 - 00:47:24:16

Ron Wickman

no, not really. I mean, I feel.

00:47:24:16 - 00:47:26:12

Ron Wickman

Like anything I say might get us another.

00:47:26:12 - 00:47:26:27

Ron Wickman

Hour.

00:47:26:29 - 00:47:44:14

Karen Brown

No no no no, we're not going to do that, but I will I will say this, this is national accessibility Week when we are recording this and, your shirt says ramp it up. The t shirt that you're wearing. Yeah. Ramp it up, which is fantastic. I'll just give you camera one. Can you lean back a little bit?

00:47:44;16 - 00:47:44;26

Ron Wickman

Sure.

00:47:44;26 - 00:47:47;24

Karen Brown

Ramp it up. There we go.

00:47:47;27 - 00:48:28;25

Ron Wickman

Yeah. So my my daughter in law, who's, an artist, she, she always comes up with clever, gifts to give me. So this was a few years ago, and in fact, this this. I was wearing this shirt when I went to the the Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg. And for anybody that has experienced that building or knows anything about it, you'll know that you you basically can start at the ground level and work your way up a series of ramps that, go I don't I think it's maybe 6 or 7 stories, and you can get all you can get to all the levels with, with ramps instead of stairs.

00:48:28;25 - 00:48:45;22

Ron Wickman

I mean, there's stairs there to, and then there's an elevator. So you could you could also take the elevator all the way to the top and then just, make your way down, with the ramps and, and so I thought, wow, this is definitely if I can wear it in one building, this would be the.

00:48:45;22 - 00:48:48;14

Ron Wickman

Right one to wear. And,

00:48:48;17 - 00:48:56;19

Ron Wickman

And one of the, one of the people staff members there saw, saw me and said, that's a great shirt.

00:48:56;21 - 00:48:58;23

Ron Wickman

And I said, yeah, so what do you know about this building?

00:48:58;23 - 00:49:28;03

Ron Wickman

And then she introduced me to the person who was instrumental in working with the architect and making sure that it had a high level of accessibility. So kind of got me into to learn a bit more about the building, itself. So, you know, again, that was probably probably a little less, an agenda item for the architect, but definitely something that came from the staff and the client base saying, like, we, you know, this is a human rights museum, so we better we better take this seriously.

00:49:28;03 - 00:49:46;26

Ron Wickman

Right? So it was it was, it was well executed. I saw it, I thought it was a pretty good building, as a piece of architecture and a piece of accessible architecture. It just, you know, again, I don't think you have to separate those two. It's just it was just a just a nice building to, to experience.

00:49:46;28 - 00:50:03;29

Karen Brown

We'll put a link to that building in our show notes. But, that's a great place to close the podcast on. So I will thank you once again for joining me, Ron. And to those of you who are joining us for this podcast, I will invite you to join us again for our next episode of Real Life Renos.

00:50:03;29 - 00:50:15;09

Karen Brown

The Podcast.