



Balancing Investor & Resident Needs

Through Better Bathroom Design

How affordable housing teams can make bathroom decisions that support residents, reduce operational strain, and protect long-term asset performance.



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you'll be able to:

1

Identify why bathrooms have an outsized operational impact

Even when they represent a small portion of the overall unit.

2

Recognize the hidden costs of bathroom repairs in occupied units

Especially when residents cannot easily be relocated.

3

Evaluate bathroom design through both an ownership & resident lens

Including maintenance, accessibility, dignity, and long-term asset performance.

4

Use practical questions to make stronger specification decisions

Looking beyond first cost to lifecycle cost, adaptability, and future maintenance needs.



Presenters



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Participation is encouraged!

There are poll questions throughout and there will be time reserved at the end to answer questions so drop them into the Q&A as they come up.



The Affordable Housing Bathroom Balancing Act

Affordable housing teams are asked to make every decision work harder.

They have to protect the long-term performance of the property while also supporting the daily needs of the people who live there.



Two Priorities, One Decision

Bathroom decisions in affordable housing have to serve both sides of the equation.

Ownership Priorities

- Protected limited capital
- Control operating expenses
- Preserve asset value
- Meet compliance requirements

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Resident Priorities

- Safe living environments
- Functional & accessible homes
- Reliable maintenance
- Housing stability

The strongest decisions reduce tradeoffs instead of creating new ones.



Section 1

Why Bathrooms Deserve More Strategic Attention

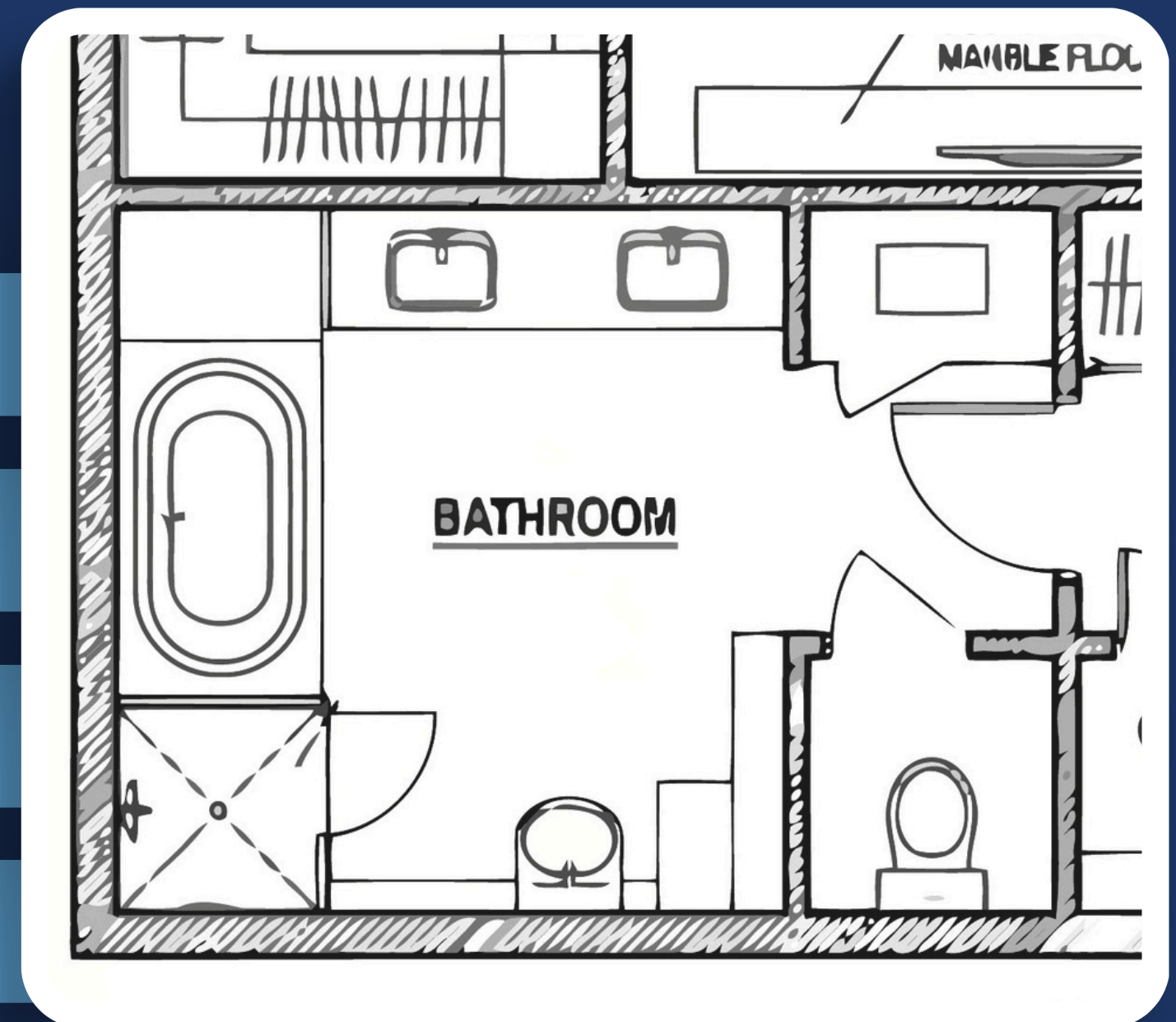
Bathrooms represent a small portion of the unit, but they can have an outsized impact on maintenance workload, resident complaints, and long-term operating costs.

Moisture

Maintenance

Resident Experience

Operating Costs



Section 1

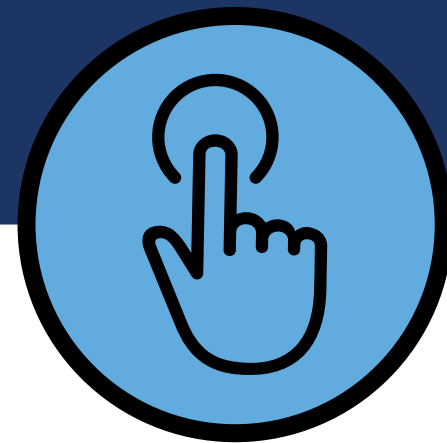
A High-Use Space Under Constant Stress

Affordable housing showers have to perform through years of daily use, cleaning, moisture exposure, and wear.



Moisture Exposure

Daily water, humidity, and cleaning routines



Heavy Use

Multiple touchpoints used every day



Long Occupancy

Fewer natural reset points between residents



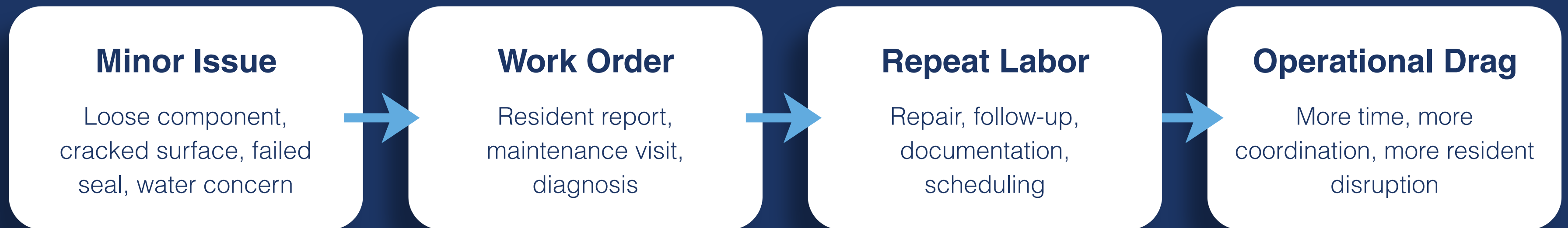
Maintenance Demand

Small issues can quickly become recurring work orders

Section 1

Small Bathroom Issues Become Bigger Problems

Bathroom-related maintenance often starts small, but repeated repairs, moisture concerns, and coordination demands can create a larger operational burden.



Section 1

The Cost Is Bigger Than the Repair

Bathroom performance affects more than the maintenance line item.

It influences labor planning, administrative time, resident satisfaction, and long-term capital decisions.

An iceberg diagram with a dark blue background. The visible tip of the iceberg is light blue and contains the text 'Materials, Parts, Replacements, Labor'. The submerged part of the iceberg is a darker blue and contains a list of hidden costs: 'Maintenance Coordination', 'Repeat Work Orders', 'Resident Complaints', 'Unit Access Challenges', 'Capital Planning Pressure', and 'Impact to Property Value'.

**Materials, Parts,
Replacements, Labor**

Maintenance Coordination

Repeat Work Orders

Resident Complaints

Unit Access Challenges

Capital Planning Pressure

Impact to Property Value



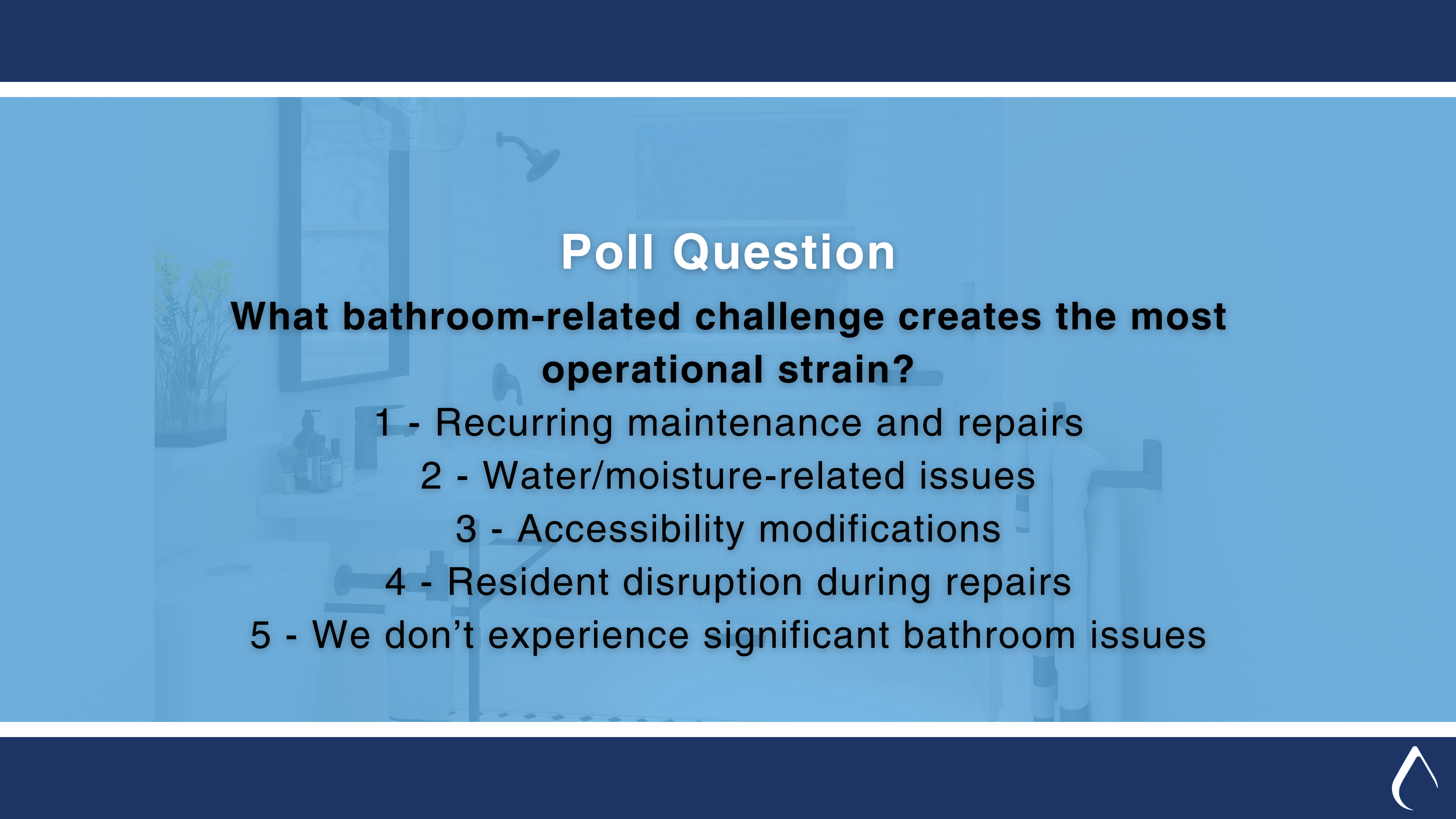
Key Takeaway

The bathroom is often one of the highest-maintenance spaces in an affordable housing unit.

That makes specification decisions more important than many owners realize.

Bathroom design is not just a finish decision. It is an operating decision.





Poll Question

What bathroom-related challenge creates the most operational strain?

- 1 - Recurring maintenance and repairs
- 2 - Water/moisture-related issues
- 3 - Accessibility modifications
- 4 - Resident disruption during repairs
- 5 - We don't experience significant bathroom issues



Section 2

The Hidden Cost of Repairs in Occupied Units

In affordable housing, repairs often happen while residents remain in place.

That changes the cost, coordination, and resident impact of every bathroom decision.

When residents cannot easily be relocated, repair work becomes more complicated.



Section 2

Longer Tenure Means Fewer Reset Points

Long-term occupancy changes how affordable housing teams plan, maintain, and replace bathroom systems.

Fewer Turnover Windows

Less opportunity to renovate while units are empty

Deferred Maintenance Gets Harder

Small issues can become more difficult to address over time

Repairs Happen In Place

Work must be planned around occupied homes



Section 2

A Bathroom Repair Is Rarely Just a Bathroom Repair

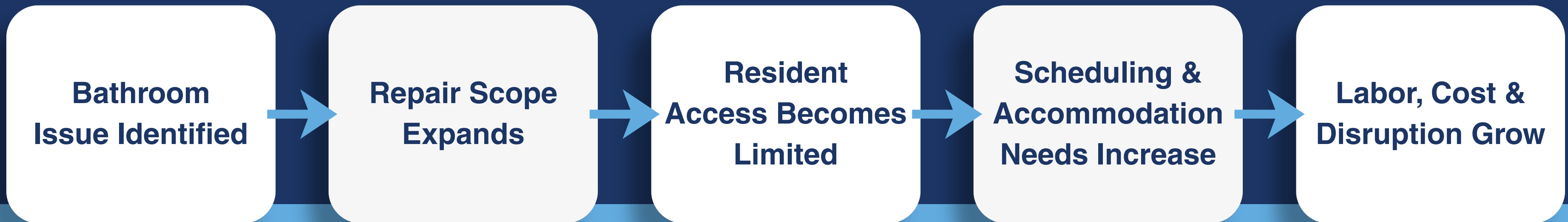
Once a repair happens in an occupied unit, the operational burden grows.

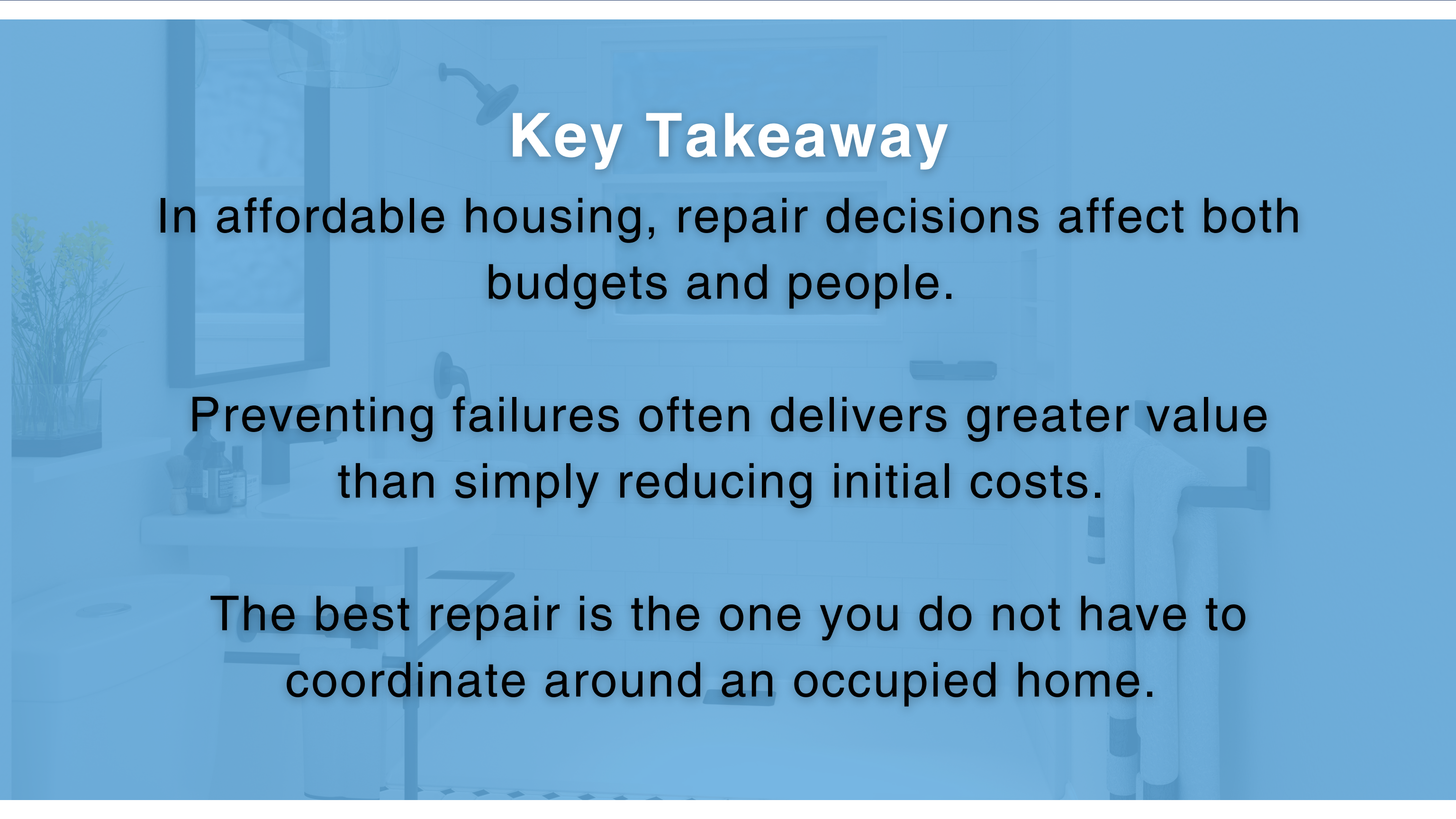


Section 2

How Small Repairs Become Larger Disruptions

A seemingly routine bathroom replacement can trigger a chain of operational costs when residents cannot easily be moved.





Key Takeaway

In affordable housing, repair decisions affect both budgets and people.

Preventing failures often delivers greater value than simply reducing initial costs.

The best repair is the one you do not have to coordinate around an occupied home.

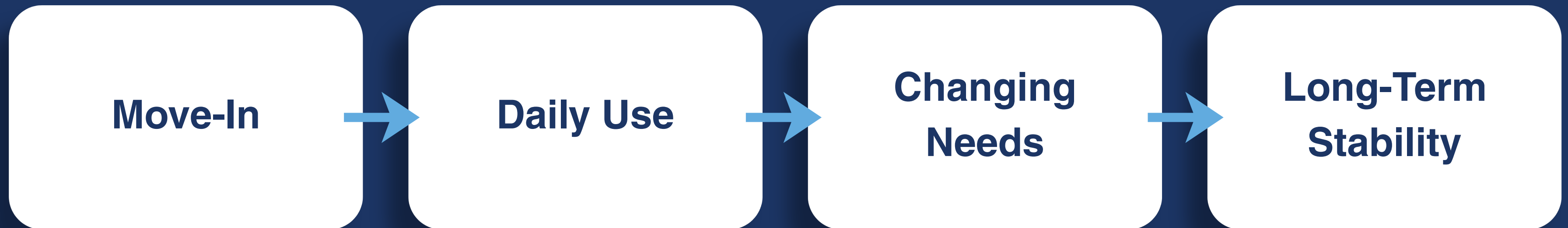


Section 3

Designing for Long-Term Occupancy

Affordable housing providers are serving residents who may remain in their homes for years, including aging residents and people with changing mobility needs.

Bathroom design plays a critical role in whether those homes continue to work for residents over time.



Section 3

Accessibility: A Potential Long-Term Planning Issue

As residents age in place or experience changes in mobility, bathroom design can either support independence or create future barriers.



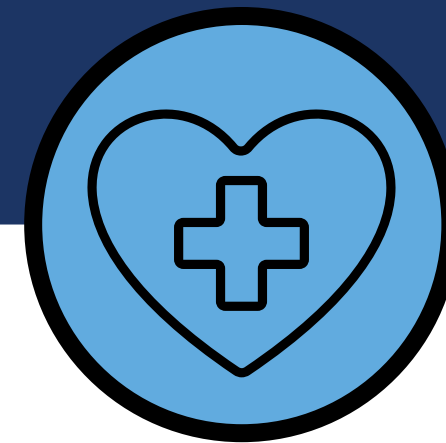
Aging-in-Place

Residents may remain in their homes as mobility needs change.



Accessibility Needs

Bathrooms must support a wider range of users and abilities.



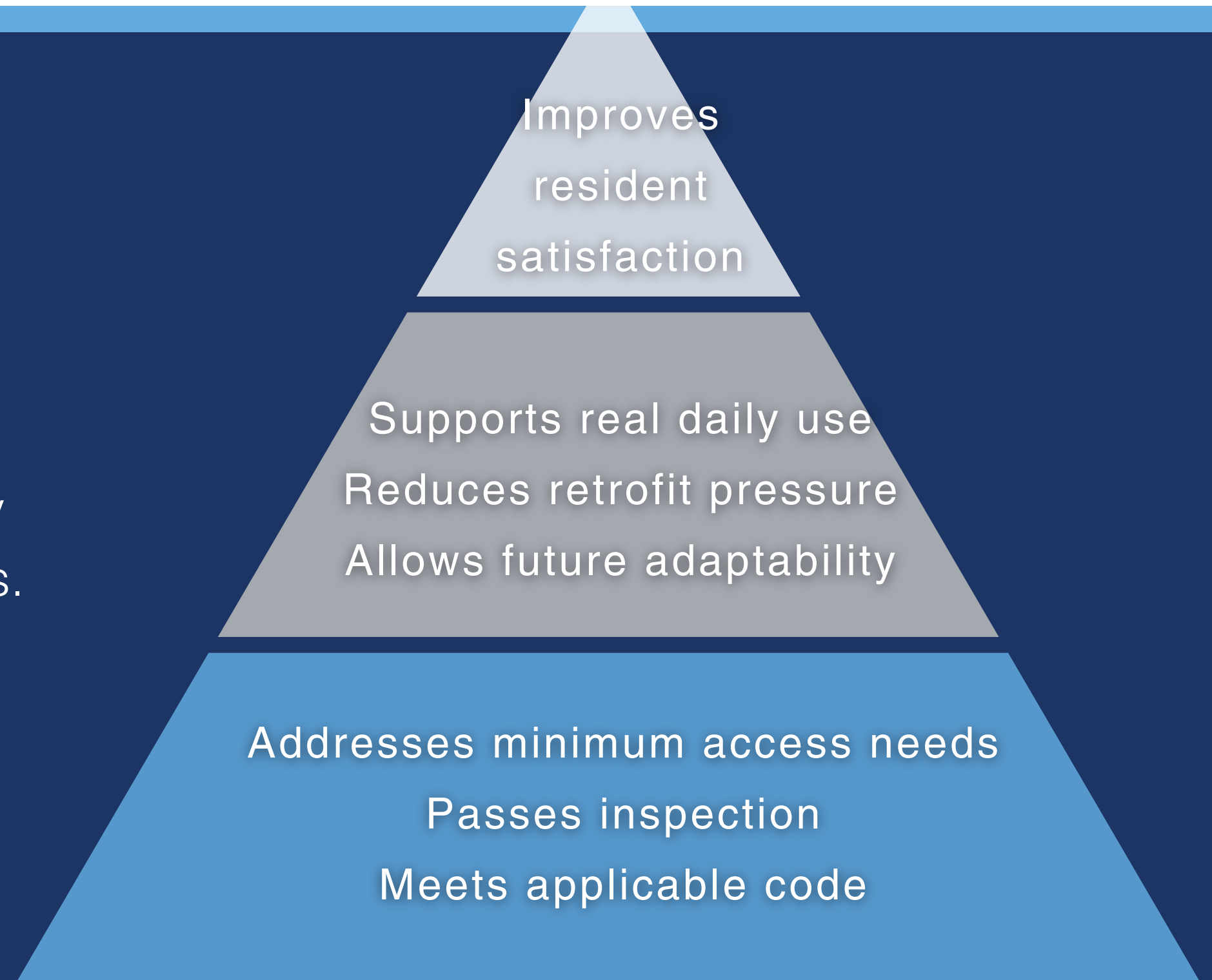
Resident Wellness

Usability, comfort, and independence affect quality of life.

Section 3

Code Compliance Is the Starting Point

Meeting code is essential, but it does not always mean a bathroom is easy to use, easy to maintain, or ready for future resident needs.



Section 3

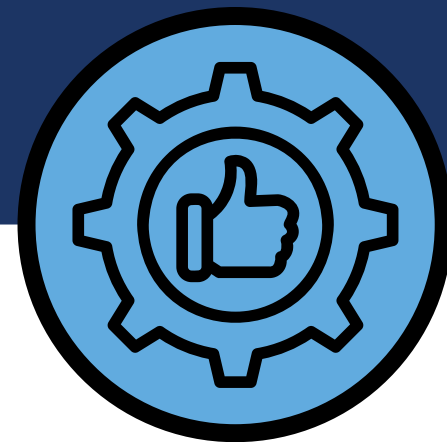
Resident Experience Is Part of Performance

Bathroom design affects privacy, independence, comfort, and dignity, especially for residents with accessibility needs.



Independence

Design that help residents remain in place longer



Ease of Use

Layouts and features that support daily routines



Comfort

Spaces that feel residential, not institutional



Safety

Lower-risk, easier-to-navigate bathing environments



Key Takeaway

Thoughtful bathroom design can help residents remain safely and comfortably in their homes longer.

It can also reduce future retrofit needs and help ownership plan more effectively over time.

Designing for residents is also designing for long-term asset performance.



Section 4

When Cost-Cutting Creates Future Cost

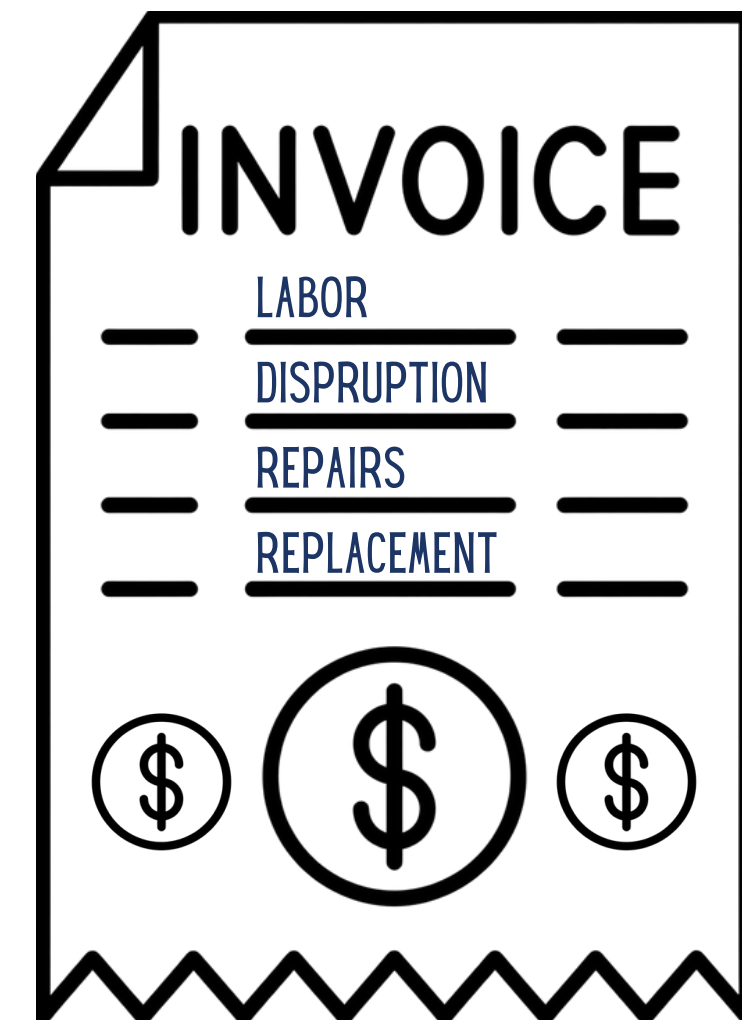
Upfront savings can be appealing, especially when budgets are tight.

But in bathroom specifications, some low-cost choices create higher maintenance, replacement, and disruption costs later.

The cheapest bathroom on bid day may not be the cheapest bathroom over time.



VS

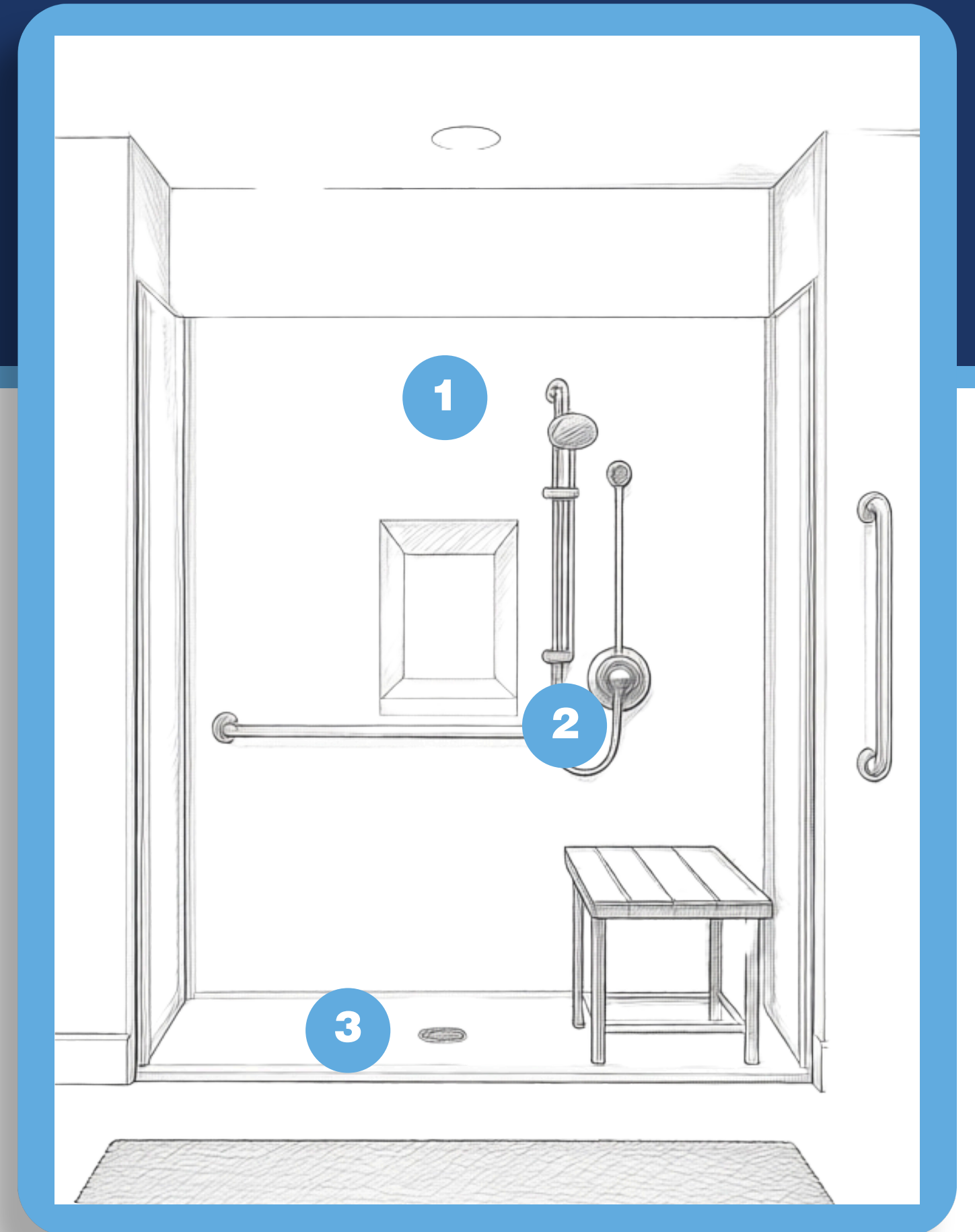


Section 4

The Common Places Cost Gets Cut

Cost-cutting often shows up in the parts of the bathroom that determine how well the space performs over time.

- 1 Wall Systems**
Surface durability, seams, moisture management
- 2 Shower Pans/Bases**
Structural strength, drainage, threshold conditions
- 3 Accessories & Blocking**
Grab bars, seats, future accessory placement
- 4 Installation Method**
Complexity, labor time, field variability
- 5 Repairability**
How easy the system is to service without major disruption

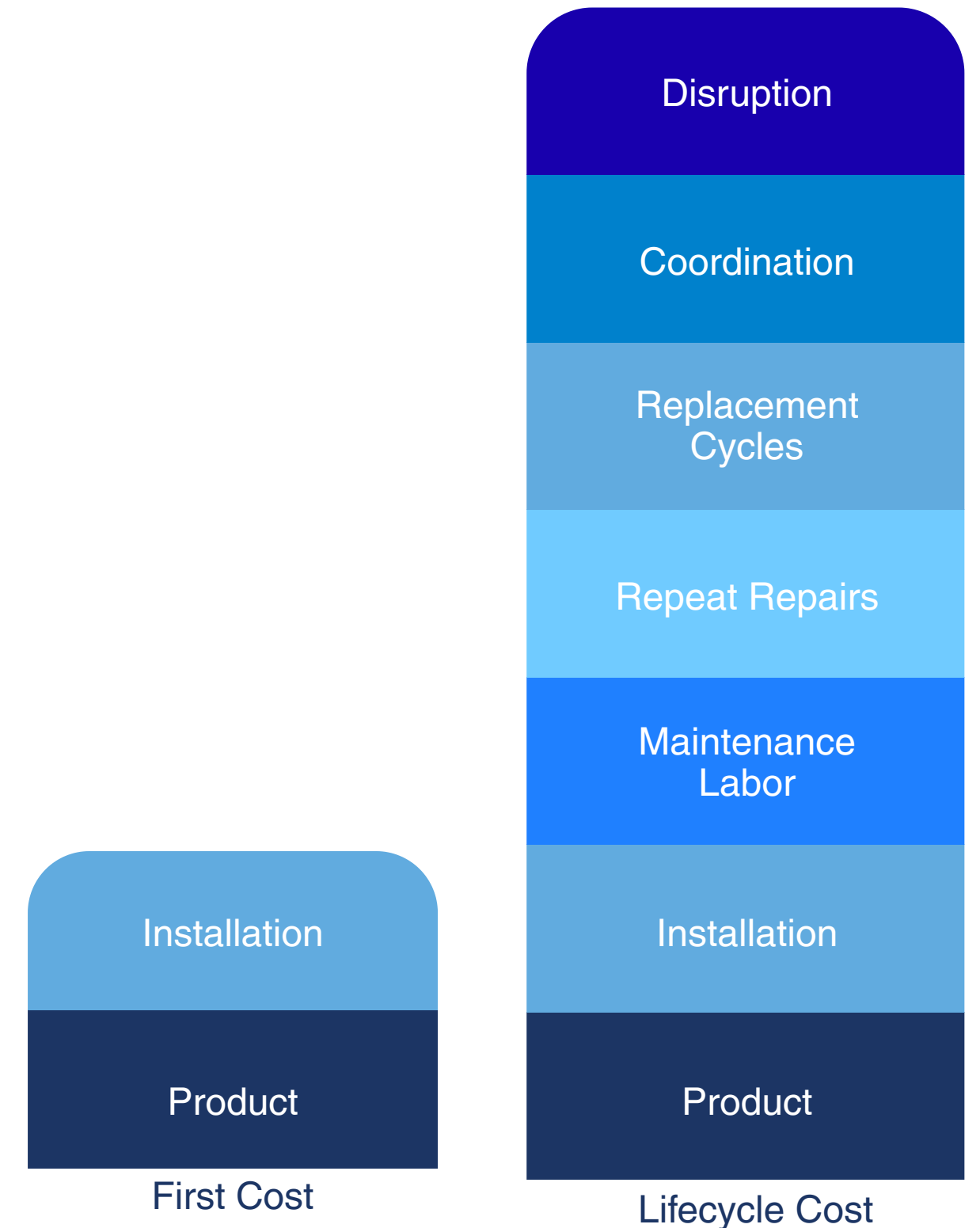


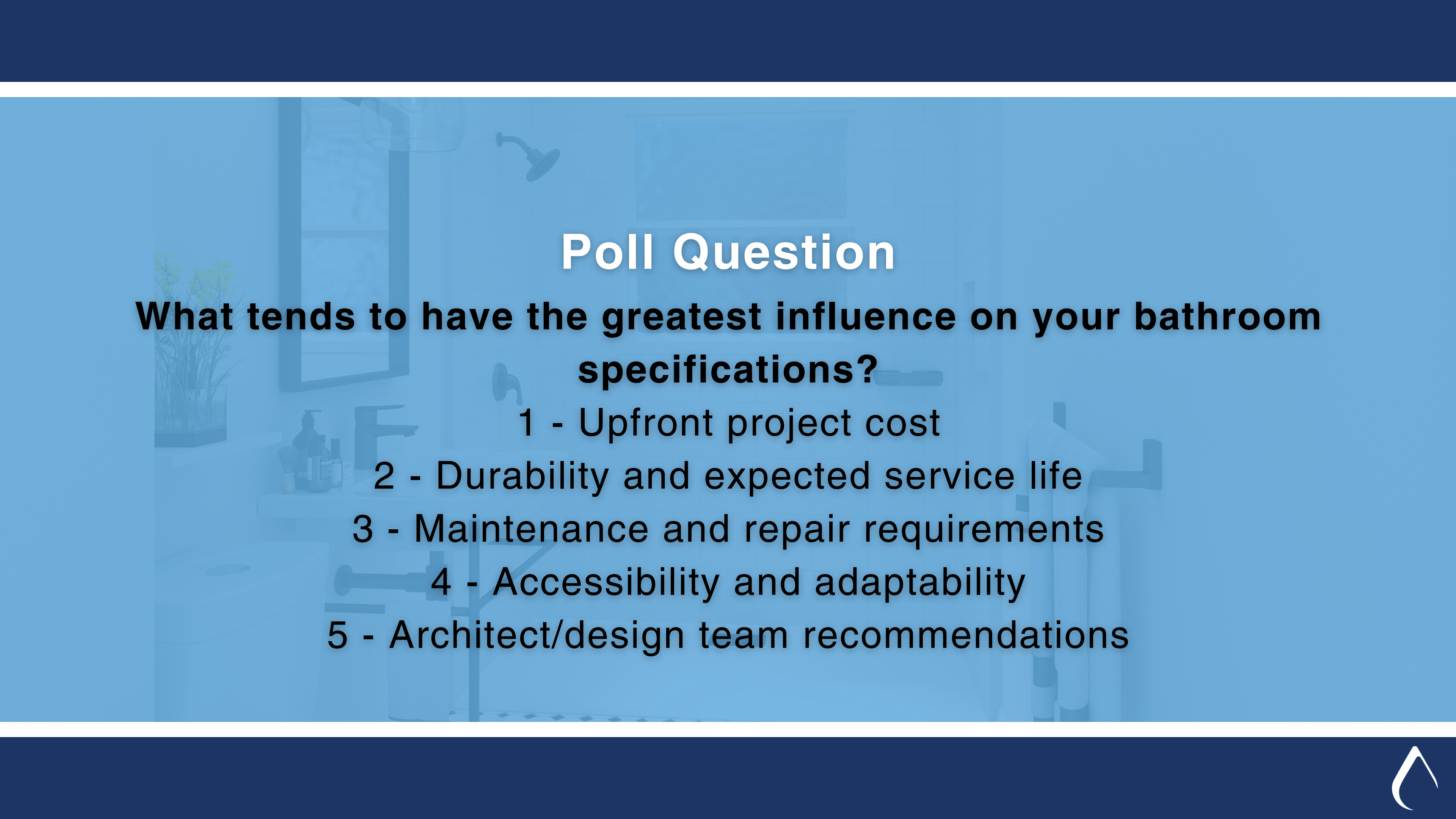
Section 4

First Cost Is Only One Line in the Budget

A lower initial price does not always mean a lower total cost. Lifecycle cost includes installation, maintenance labor, repairs, replacement cycles, resident disruption, and long-term asset

What will this decision cost over 10, 15, or 20 years?





Poll Question

What tends to have the greatest influence on your bathroom specifications?

- 1 - Upfront project cost
- 2 - Durability and expected service life
- 3 - Maintenance and repair requirements
- 4 - Accessibility and adaptability
- 5 - Architect/design team recommendations



Section 4

A Practical Test for Bathroom Cost Decisions

- ✓ **What maintenance will this require?**
- ✓ **How difficult is it to repair?**
- ✓ **Can it support future accessibility needs?**
- ✓ **What happens if water gets behind the wall?**
- ✓ **How disruptive is replacement?**
- ✓ **How long should this realistically perform?**

Before accepting a lower-cost specification, pressure-test what happens after installation.

Poll Question

What best describes your upcoming bathroom project plans?

- 1 - Planning a project now
- 2 - Project expected within the next 12 months
- 3 - Exploring options for future projects
- 4 - Reviewing or updating current specifications
- 5 - No projects currently planned



Key Takeaway

The lowest-cost bathroom solution at installation is often not the lowest-cost solution over the life of the property.

Smart specification decisions should account for maintenance, repairability, replacement cycles, resident disruption, and long-term asset performance.

Value engineering should reduce waste, not transfer cost into the future.

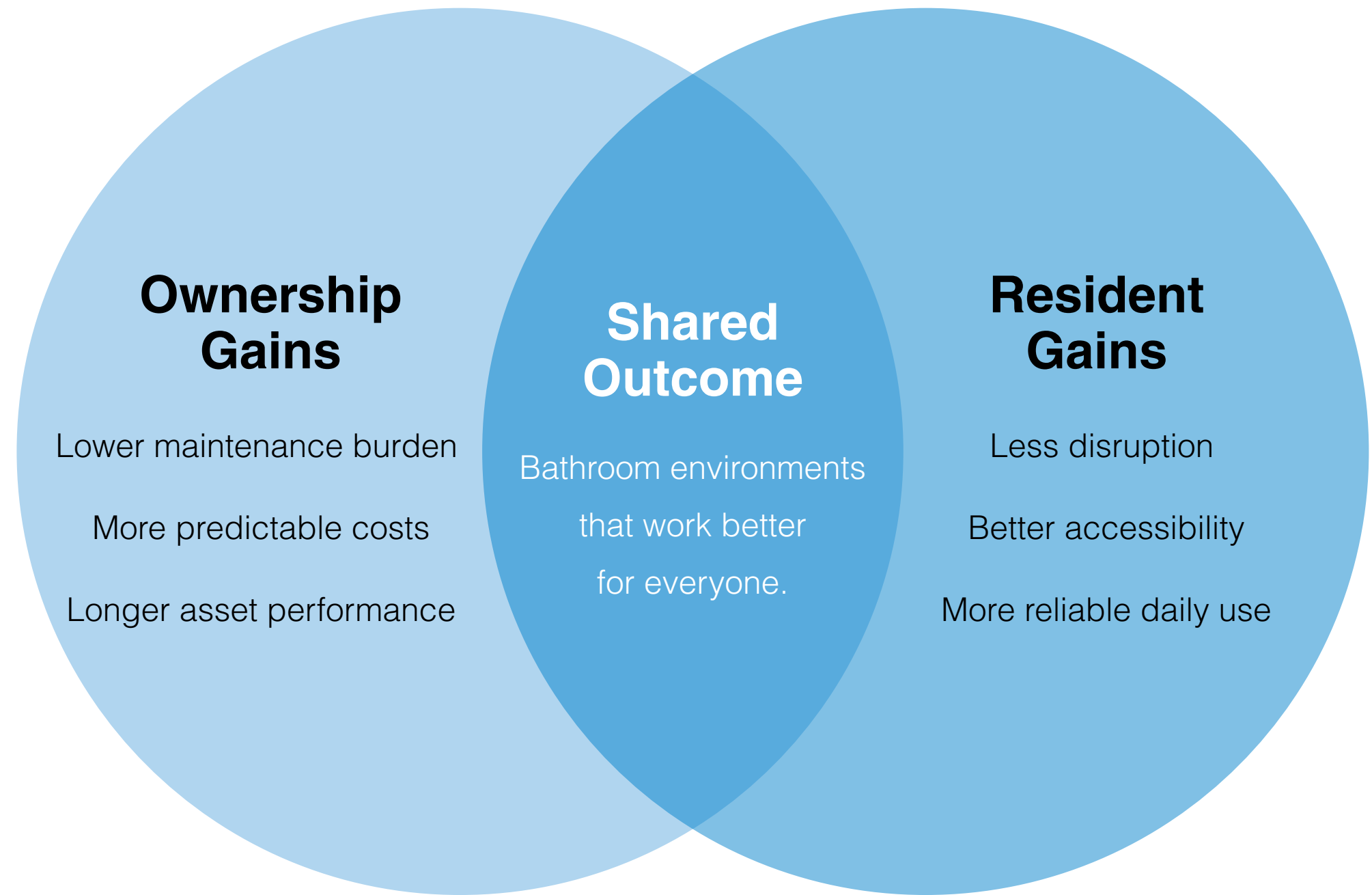


Section 5

Longer Tenure Means Fewer Reset Points

Investor goals and resident needs are not competing priorities.

When bathrooms are durable, accessible, lower-maintenance, and easier to adapt over time, the property is easier to operate and the home is easier to live in.



Section 5

Five Questions to Ask Before You Specify

1

How does it impact resident experience?

Daily use, accessibility, comfort, disruption

2

How much maintenance will it require?

Work orders, cleaning, repairs, staff time

3

Does it support accessibility and adaptability?

Current needs, future needs, retrofit flexibility

4

What is the true lifecycle cost?

Installation, maintenance, repair, replacement, coordination

5

How does it protect long-term asset value?

Durability, property condition, capital planning, service life

Conclusion

Affordable housing teams are being asked to do more with limited resources.

Bathrooms may represent a small part of the overall project, but they can have an outsized impact on maintenance costs, resident satisfaction, accessibility, and long-term asset performance.



**Lower Maintenance
Burden**



**Fewer Resident
Disruptions**



**Better Accessibility
Over Time**



**Stronger Asset
Performance**

Smarter bathroom decisions help protect the property while supporting the people who live there.

What Questions Do You Have?

Scan to explore bath and shower solutions for your upcoming projects



Ready to talk through your next project?
Scan to book time with Mike.

