

Aging-In-Place Design Checklists

Are you a builder or remodeling contractor with older adult clients? Are you a consumer seeking to modify an existing home for aging in place or build a new home to meet your needs over the long term? If so, check out our Aging-In-Place Design Checklists. They contain features you may want to consider for your next new construction or renovation project.

Exterior

- Low-maintenance exterior (vinyl, brick)
- Low-maintenance shrubs and plants
- Deck, patio or balcony surfaces are no more than ½ inch below interior floor level if made of wood

Overall Floor Plan

- Main living on a single story, including full bath
- No steps between rooms/areas on the same level
- 5-foot by 5-foot clear/turn space in living area, kitchen, a bedroom and a bathroom

Hallways

- Minimum of 36 inches wide, wider preferred
- Well lit

Entry

- Accessible path of travel to the home
- At least one no-step entry with a cover
- Sensor light at exterior no-step entry focusing on the front-door lock
- There needs to be 32 inches of clear width, which requires a 36-inch door
- Non-slip flooring in foyer
- Entry door sidelight or high/low peep hole viewer; sidelight should provide both privacy and safety.
- Doorbell in accessible location
- Surface to place packages on when opening door

Thresholds

- Flush preferable
- Exterior maximum of ½ inch beveled
- Interior maximum of ¼ inch

Interior Doors

- There needs to be 32 inches of clear width, which requires a 36-inch door
- Levered door hardware

Windows

- Plenty of windows for natural light
- Lowered windows or taller windows with lower sill height
- Low maintenance exterior and interior finishes
- Easy to operate hardware

Garage or Carport

- Covered carports and boarding spaces
- Wider than average carports to accommodate lifts on vans
- Door heights may need to be 9 feet to accommodate some raised roof vans
- 5-foot minimum access aisle between accessible van and car in garage
- If code requires floor to be several inches below entrance to house for fume protection, can slope entire floor from front to back to eliminate need for ramp or step
- Ramp to doorway if needed
- Handrail if steps

Faucets

- Lever handles or pedal-controlled
- Thermostatic or anti-scald controls
- Pressure balanced faucets

Kitchen and Laundry

Counters

- Wall support and provision for adjustable and/or varied height counters and removable base cabinets
- Upper wall cabinetry - 3 inches lower than conventional height
- Accented stripes on edge of countertops to provide visual orientation to the workspace
- Counter space for dish landing adjacent to or opposite all appliances
- Base cabinet with roll out trays and lazy susans

- Pull-down shelving
- Glass-front cabinet doors
- Open shelving for easy access to frequently used items

Appliances

- Easy to read controls
- Washing machine and dryer raised 12 to 15 inches above floor
- Front loading laundry machines
- Microwave oven at counter height or in wall
- Side-by-side refrigerator/freezer
- Side-swing or wall oven
- Raised dishwasher with pushbutton controls
- Electric cook top with level burners for safety in transferring between the burners, front controls and downdraft feature to pull heat away from user; light to indicate when surface is hot

Miscellaneous

- 30-inch by 48-inch clear space at appliances or 60-inch diameter clear space for turns
- Multi-level work areas to accommodate cooks of different heights
- Open under-counter seated work areas
- Placement of task lighting in appropriate work areas
- Loop handles for easy grip and pull
- Pull-out spray faucet; levered handles
- In multi-story homes, laundry chute or laundry facilities in master bedroom

Bathroom

- Wall support and provision for adjustable and/or varied height counters and removable base cabinets
- Contrasting color edge border at countertops
- At least one wheelchair maneuverable bath on main level with 60-inch turning radius or acceptable T-turn space and 36-inch by 36-inch or 30-inch by 48-inch clear space
- Bracing in walls around tub, shower, shower seat and toilet for installation of grab bars to support 250 - 300 pounds
- If stand-up shower is used in main bath, it is curbless and minimum of 36 inches wide
- Bathtub - lower for easier access
- Fold down seat in the shower
- Adjustable/ handheld showerheads, 6-foot hose
- Tub/Shower controls offset from center
- Shower stall with built-in antibacterial protection
- Light in shower stall
- Toilet 2 inches higher than standard toilet (17 to 19 inches) or height-adjustable
- Design of the toilet paper holder allows rolls to be changed with one hand
- Wall-hung sink with knee space and panel to protect user from pipes
- Slip-resistant flooring in bathroom and shower

Stairways, Lifts and Elevators

- Adequate hand rails on both sides of stairway, 1 ¼-inch diameter
- Increased visibility of stairs through contrast strip on top and bottom stairs, color contrast between treads and risers on stairs and use of lighting
- Multi-story homes may provide either pre-framed shaft (ie. stacked closets) for future elevator, or stairway width must be minimum of 4 feet to allow space for lift
- Residential elevator or lift

Ramps

- Slope no greater than 1 inch rise for each 12 inches in length, adequate handrails
- 5-foot landing provided at entrance
- 2-inch curbs for safety

Storage

- Adjustable closet rods and shelves
- Lighting in closets
- Easy open doors that do not obstruct access

Electrical, Lighting, Safety and Security

- Light switches by each entrance to halls and rooms

Light receptacles with at least 2 bulbs in vital places (exits, bathroom)

Light switches, thermostats and other environmental controls placed in accessible locations no higher than 48 inches from floor

Electrical outlets 15 inches on center from floor; may need to be closer than 12 feet apart

Clear access space of 30 inches by 48 inches in front of switches and controls

Rocker or touch light switches

Audible and visual strobe light system to indicate when the doorbell, telephone or smoke or CO2 detectors have been activated

High-tech security/intercom system that can be monitored, with the heating, air conditioning and lighting, from any TV in the house

Easy-to-see and read thermostats

Pre-programmed thermostats

Flashing porch light or 911 switch

Direct wired to police, fire, and EMS (as option)

Home wired for security

Home wired for computers

Flooring

Smooth, non-glare, slip-resistant surfaces, interior and exterior

If carpeted, use low (less than ½ inch high pile) density, with firm pad

Color/texture contrast to indicate change in surface levels

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning

HVAC should be designed so filters are easily accessible

Energy efficient units

Windows that can be opened for cross ventilation, fresh air

Energy Efficient Features

In-line framing with 2 by 6 studs spaced 24-inch on center

Air-barrier installation and sealing of duct work with mastic

Reduced-size air conditioning units with gas furnaces

Mechanical fresh air ventilation, installation of air returns in all bedrooms and use of carbon monoxide detectors

Installation of energy efficient windows with Low-E glass

Reduced Maintenance/Convenience Features

Easy to clean surfaces

Central vacuum

Built-in pet feeding system

Built-in recycling system

Video phones

Intercom system

Other Ideas

Separate apartment for rental income or future caregiver

Flex room that can be used as a nursery or playroom when the children are young and as a home office later; if combined with a full bath, room could also be used for an aging parent/aging in place