

Turning Houses for Living . . . Into Homes for Life Aging-In-Place Design Checklist



Exterior

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

Overall Floor Plan

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

Hallways

- Minimum of 36" side, wider preferred
- Good lighting

Entry

- Accessible path of travel to home
- At least one no-step entry with a cover
- Sensory light at exterior no step focusing on the front door lock
- 36" wide doorway
- Non-slip flooring in entryway
- 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 the door

Thresholds

- Flush preferable
- Exterior maximum of ½" beveled
- Interior maximum of ¼"
- **Interior Doors**
- Minimum of 36" wide interior doorways
- Levered door handle

Windows

- Plenty of windows for natural light
- Lowered windows or taller windows with lower sill height
- Low maintenance and 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, if necessary
- Door heights may need to be 9'-0" to accommodate some raised roof vans
- 5' minimum access isle between 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 back to front to eliminate need to ramp or step
- Ramp to doorway, if needed
- Handrail if steps

Faucets

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

Kitchen and Laundry

Counters

- Wall support and provision for adjustable and/or varied height counters and removable base cabinets
- Upper cabinetry – 3” 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” – 1`5” 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 cooktop with level burners for safety in transferring between the corners, front controls, and downdraft feature to pull heat away from user; light to indicate when surface is hot.

Miscellaneous

- 30” x 48” clear space at appliances or 60” diameter
- Multi-level work area 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
- 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” turning radius or acceptable T-turn space and 36” x 36” or 30” x 48” 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” walls
- Bathtub – lower for easier access
- Fold down seat in shower
- Adjustable/handheld showerheads 6’ hose
- Tub/shower controls offset from center
- Shower stall with built-in antibacterial protection
- Light shower stall
- Toilet 2 ½” higher than standard toilet (17” to 19”) 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 users from pipes
- Slip-resistant flooring in bathroom and shower

Stairways, Lifts and Elevators

Adequate hand rails on both sides of stairway, 1 ¼" in diameter

- Increased visibility of stairs through constant strip on top and bottom stairs, color contrast between threads and risers and use of lighting.
- Multi-story homes may provide either pre-framed shaft (i.e. stacked closets) for future elevator, or stairway width must be a minimum of 4' to allow space for lift
- Residential elevator or lift

Ramps

- Slope no greater than 1" rise for each 12" in length, adequate handrails
- 5' landing provided at entrance
- 2" 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, bathrooms)
- Light switches, thermostats and other environmental controls placed in accessible location no higher than 48" above floor
- Electrical outlets 15" o.c. from floor; may need to be closer than 12' apart
- Clear access space of 30" x 48" 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 (<.50" high pile) density, with firm pad
- Color/texture contrasts 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 x 6 studs spaces 24" 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 systems

Other Ideas and Considerations

- 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 or caregiver