



It's no surprise that aging in place design has become a hot topic as of late. The aging population in North America is on the rise, with seniors in Canada projected to increase from 4.5 million to 9.8 million between 2005 and 2036, and seniors in the U.S. projected to reach 98 million by 2060.

It is important for home designers to have the knowledge and expertise required to design accessible, comfortable and safe spaces so that seniors can live independently and with dignity in their own homes. It takes special training to accommodate individuals with specific needs, and this post is meant to help guide home designers in the right direction.

We've prepared an aging in place design checklist to make sure you cover all the most important design rules when pitching your ideas to a potential client. You need to make your client feel at ease and that the layouts and designs you're proposing are meant to help them live in their homes for as long as possible.

The Ultimate Aging in Place Design Checklist

General Design

Before going into the aging in place design checklist for each specific room, here's a list of the overall rules you should follow when designing a space for accessibility and safety. These rules apply to any room, including the general layout of the house.

- Open floor plan with few obstructions
- New lighting systems
- Larger windows
- [Specific colors \(https://www.sherwin-williams.com/architects-specifiers-designers/inspiration/styles-and-techniques/SW-ART-STIR-COLOR-AGING-EYE\)](https://www.sherwin-williams.com/architects-specifiers-designers/inspiration/styles-and-techniques/SW-ART-STIR-COLOR-AGING-EYE) (proper contrasting to aid with depth perception)
- No-step entries
- Wider doorways (min. 36 inches)
- No throw rugs (tripping hazard)
- Ramp installation
- Lever-style door handles

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Bathroom Design

It is extremely important to customize a bathroom for someone who is aging or has disabilities because bathrooms are prone to causing accidents. Due to their ceramic flooring and slippery surfaces, bathrooms are the cause of roughly 235,000 nonfatal injuries (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6022a1.htm>) in the U.S. alone per year.

- Adjusting toilet height or installing a seat extender
- Grab bars near toilet and in bath/shower
- Shower seat
- Anti-slip coating in tub/shower
- Slip-resistant floor treatment
- Walk-in shower/tub
- Handheld showerhead

Kitchen Design

When re-designing a kitchen for the elderly, you want to ensure ease of use and fluidity. You should not install cabinets that your client cannot reach, and you need to make sure all appliances are properly positioned so that your client doesn't have to move around too much.

- Adjusting height of sink
- Shallow sink
- Hands-free faucet
- Pull-out pantry
- Storage inside refrigerator door
- Front-mounted controls on cooktop
- D-shaped cabinet pulls
- Under-cabinet lighting
- Round edges for countertops
- Sink close to stove
- Large drawers
- Microwave at counter height

Bedroom & Closet Design

Getting in and out of bed and getting dressed can be a hassle for anyone who has a disability or for elderly people with back or hip problems. Home designers should consider all these factors when designing a bedroom for aging in place.

- Bedroom on main level
- Low-profile bed (20-23" from top of mattress to the floor)
- Nightstands placed at same height as bed
- Bed rail
- Phone beside bed
- Adequate clearance around bed
- Pull-down closet rods
- Lighting in closet

Laundry Room Design

This aging in place design checklist wouldn't be complete without tips for designing a laundry room. Doing laundry for the mobility-impaired is difficult as it is, so you should design the room as best you can to ensure an easy and smooth process.

- Laundry room near bedroom
- Front load washer and dryer
- Washer & dryer raised 12-15 inches above floor
- Easy to read controls
- Lower upper cabinets
- Pull-down shelving
- Laundry chute if multi-level house

Miscellaneous Tips

- Easy-to-maintain plants/shrubbery
- Longer lasting LED lights
- Clear pathway between bedroom and bathroom
- Chair lift on stairs

For more information on aging in place, visit the [Living in Place Institute](http://livinginplace.institute/index.php) (<http://livinginplace.institute/index.php>) website.