



Single-Family Reconstruction/New Construction Aging-In-Place Design Standards



The Aging-In-Place Design Standards below contains features for the reconstruction or new construction project. It also provides a quick reference for various aging-in-place issues. Because this list is not comprehensive, it's best to also consult with a Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist. To find one in your area, go to nahb.org/capsdirectory.

Exterior

- Low-maintenance exterior (vinyl, brick)
- Low-maintenance shrubs and plants
- Deck, patio, or balcony surfaces are no more than a half 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



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- Flush preferable
- Exterior maximum of a half inch beveled
- Interior maximum of a quarter 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 nine feet to accommodate some raised roof vans
- Five-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 three inches lower than conventional height



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- 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 12-15 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 push-button 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



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- 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 two and half inches higher than standard toilet (17-19 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, one and a quarter 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 (i.e., stacked closets) for future elevator, or stairway width must be minimum of four feet to allow space for lift
- Residential elevator or lift

Ramps

- Slope no greater than one inch rise for each 12-inches in length, adequate handrails
- Five-foot landing provided at entrance
- Two-inch curbs for safety

Storage

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



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Electrical, Lighting, Safety, and Security

- Light switches by each entrance to halls and rooms
- Light receptacles with at least two 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 a half 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 two by six studs spaced 24-inches on center
- Air-barrier installation and sealing of duct work with mastic



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- 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