

PLANNING TODAY FOR TOMORROW

A checklist for your home

Purpose: To make it possible for everyone to age in place safely, securely, comfortably

To the front door

- Build bridges and walkways, not ramps. Add landscaping/some curves to create an aesthetic entry.
- Add berming, where possible, so you can walk or drive up to your front door.
- Use slip resistant, firm, smooth ground surfaces on all walkways. A gently sloped sturdy surface will eliminate flooding and puddles, and are easier to walk on. 1/4" to one-foot rise exceeds suggested guidelines, but it is an easier walk if ramping is necessary to meet the front door.
- All steps should be in good condition, of non-slip surfaces, be free of objects that might be in the way, well marked and lit at night.
- Add electric door openers. They come with an automatic latch features, as well as overrides for manual controls.
- Add sensor lighting at doorways, walkways, and garages.
- Use lever hardware for doors.
- Install door chimes and key locks that are lit.
- Install interior monitors at all entries. They are inexpensive, can also work as intercoms.
- If possible, install underground plumbing to defrost snow and ice.

Kitchens

- Install only slip resistant, lo-gloss, firm, well secured flooring.
- Install lever, u-designed or push release hardware on cabinets and doors.
- Place controls for vent and light over stove, and security systems at counter height.
- Place receptacles, switches, telephone, and memo pads/writing implements within easy reach.
- Have good task lighting and non-glare surfaces to work on.
- Select stove top with front or side controls.
- Install rear drain, shallow large sink, with lever hardware that has scald-proof controls.
- Try to have both front and side parallel approach spaces for stove, oven, dishwasher, and refrigerator.
- If redoing your kitchen, install removable or bi-fold doors and toe kicks under sink and stove top.
- Add contrasting color stripe or texture on counter and tabletops.
- Add or include pull out shelving at various heights for additional workspace.
- Add roll out shelves, lazy-susans, shallow closet shelving, and open shelves, glass doors to cabinets for storage identification, using bi-fold doors for closets for easy access.
- Use slip resistant mats at stove, refrigerator and sink to absorb any spilled liquid.
- Use low, slip resistant step stools, when absolutely necessary.

- If memory is not what is used to be - install gas leak alerts, timers, automatic shut offs for stove, water faucets.
- Eliminate, as much as possible, storing daily used items at hard to reach heights. There are various inexpensive reachers that are available that can act as an extensie to your arm, but try to use easily accessed storage space.
- Have a fully charged fire extinguisher easily accessible near stove area.
- If you can't see the contents of a deep pot on the stove, install a tilted back or overhead mirror for its reflection.

Bathrooms

- Install only slip resistant flooring on floors and textured finishes in showers and tubs.
- Good overall lighting at mirrors, bathtubs, showers.
- Lower mirrors and fully secure them to walls properly.
- Use lever controls, with scald-proof temperature features, for all faucets.
- Install a roll-in shower, if possible. Retrofit bathtub with seating, slip resistant flooring, adding grab bars that, properly installed, in positions that will assist in bathing and toileting.
- Select easy to use paper dispenser, hand-held adjustable shower controls.
- Change bathroom doors to swing out, instead of inward. If space doesn't permit this change, install bi-pass doors.
- Add telephone and emergency button in easy reach from showering and toileting area.
- Reinforce all walls to accommodate the installation of future grab bars and handrails.
- Select easy locking mechanism with exterior emergency release on the doors.
- Locate bathrooms in close proximity to bedroom, if possible.
- Use a nightlight. Locate light switches within easy reach of doorway, not behind it.
- Avoid cantilever sinks.
- Try not to use glass products.
- Locate receptacles at a safe distance from water sources. Refer to building codes.
- Put a shelf, storage baskets, near the receptacle for electric razors, hair dryers etc.
- Use slip resistant mats.
- Have easy access to towels.
- Use color contrasts on bathing, toileting, walls and floors to assist in low vision identification.

Some other ideas for the interior of home

- Use remote controls and sensors as much as possible: fireplace, TV, radio, window treatments, door openers, security systems, and lighting.
- Use furniture with rounded corners. Eliminate excess furniture. Allow for good traffic flow.
- Eliminate thresholds.

- If you have stairs, arrange for good day and night lighting along the steps, handrails, and landings. Insure handrails, stair coverings are securely installed and in good condition.
- Reflective tape on stairs, along walls to bathrooms and entry/exiting doors will aid in nighttime use and emergency evacuation.
- Add sufficient task and overall lighting to accommodate any vision limitations.
- All light switches should be installed either before entering a room or immediately when entering the room. The location should be the same for each room.
- Eliminate any glare from lighting, windows or finishes.
- Have flashlights, rechargeable battery operated emergency lighting in bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms, and garages.
- To accommodate loss of hearing and vision limitations, conversation areas are often more comfortable when grouped together in smaller arrangements, and positioned to avoid glares from windows.
- Because arms on sofa and chairs, tabletops and pieces of furniture are often used for stability when walking or transferring, make sure that they are stable, and strong enough to provide support.
- Assure any electrical cords from lighting, appliances and telephones are not on the floor in the path of travel.

Some ideas for the exterior

- If you enjoy gardening, add high and low planters, seating, and easy access to water supplies.
- Add a fountain for sound and meditation, flowerbeds that bring butterflies and delicious scents, and an enclosed walkway, even if it is limited in space, (by adding curves you add to distance and interest).
- Add comfortable armchairs and small tables, in a shaded area, so you can experience the sounds, smells and sights of nature.

Tax Credits equal to 25% of cost of accessible features (sec 58.1-339.7 VA code)

- One no-step entrance into home
- Widening passage doors to 32" clearance.
- Reinforcing bathroom walls and installation of grab bars around toilet, tub and shower.
- Light switches and receptacles for easy access to person using a wheelchair.
- Installation of Universal Design or accessible and/or adaptable features prescribed by the VA Uniform Building Code.
- Limit of \$500. Balance can be carried over.
- There are update now – 3/2017 – research Tax Credits and Exemptions for Accessible housing.

Sources for more information:

- Endependence Center 757 461-8007
- Norfolk Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities 757 513-4880