



Pocket Guide to

AGING-IN-PLACE HOME DESIGN

**A 12-STEP FRAMEWORK FOR
PLANNING WHAT MATTERS MOST**





WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE

Every home should support the people who live in it. Yet most homes are designed for how life looks today, not for how it evolves over time.

My perspective on aging-in-place began early in my career, designing assisted living facilities where safety, dignity, and independence are essential for individuals unable to remain in their own homes.

That experience shaped how I see the role of design and revealed how the right decisions quietly support daily life.

Those lessons became personal when I watched my own dad struggle in a home that had not been designed to support him after a debilitating stroke.

I saw firsthand how small design decisions could either make everyday living easier or create unnecessary challenges.

That combination of professional experience and personal insight is at the heart of this guide.

Whether you are designing for yourself, a client, or someone you love, this guide offers a clear, practical framework for aging-in-place design.

From creating safe and accessible pathways to planning flexible spaces that adapt if the unthinkable happens, you will learn how thoughtfully designed homes can support one's ability to live comfortably now and well into the future.

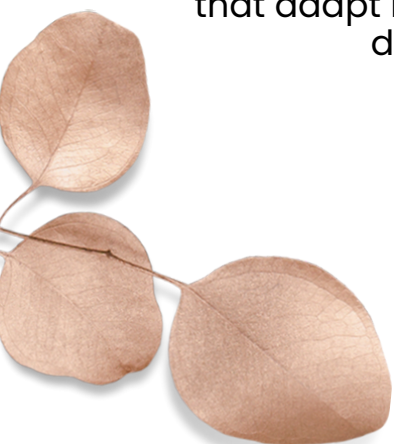


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WHAT AGING-IN-PLACE MEANS?

THE BASICS

1

AGING-IN-PLACE IS A HOME DESIGNED TO SUPPORT EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

Aging-in-place design focuses on creating homes that adapt as needs change.

2

THE DESIGN IS GROUNDED IN DAILY LIFE

Successful design is informed by routines, habits, and comfort before finishes and fixtures.

3

LAYOUT SETS THE FRAMEWORK

Clear paths, main-level living, and easy movement establish long-term usability.

4

SMALL DETAILS MATTER

Everyday touchpoints quietly support comfort, safety, and independence.

5

INDEPENDENCE IS CENTRAL

Aging-in-place design preserves freedom by balancing independence, movement, and future support.

6

PLANNING EARLY REDUCES STRESS LATER

Thoughtful design decisions help prevent costly changes in the future.

7

CONNECTION IS PART OF WELLNESS

Well-designed homes support connection to people, nature, and the cycles of everyday life.

8

FLEXIBILITY EXTENDS LONGEVITY

Staying in a familiar home supports continuity as needs change over time without the need for relocation.

9

EVERYONE BENEFITS

Aging-in-place reflects universal, human-centered design that supports people of all ages, abilities, and life stages.

10

BEAUTY AND FUNCTION BELONG TOGETHER

Thoughtful design integrates features seamlessly, so a home remains supportive without feeling clinical.



AGING-IN-PLACE FRAMEWORK

1/2



01. SITE AND LOCATION

1. At least one entry designed as a true zero step entry.
2. Exterior walkways have gentle slopes (target 1:20 where possible).
3. Driveway slope is safe and walkable.
4. Covered entry provides weather protection.
5. Exterior finishes and walkways are slip resistant.
6. Clear landing at entries with 60 inch minimum preferred.
7. Outdoor lighting zones planned for safe visibility.
8. Space reserved for future ramp at entry or inside garage.
9. Close to emergency services.
10. Family and support network are nearby.
11. Convenient access to pharmacies, groceries, and medical offices.
12. Neighborhood has safe lighting and sidewalks.

03. PRIMARY BEDROOM SUITE

1. 36 inch clear minimum around bed.
2. 60 inch turning space available.
3. Clear path from bed to bathroom.
4. Outlets planned for adjustable bed, lighting, and equipment.
5. Switches within easy reach at 36 to 44 inches high.
6. Layered lighting for day and night use.
7. Future caregiver space considered if needed.

04. KITCHEN

1. Aisles dimensioned at 48 inches minimum
2. Pull out drawers specified instead of deep base cabinets
3. Pantry storage planned with reachable shelves or pull outs
4. Counter heights adjusted if different heights are needed
5. Microwave placed at counter height or in drawer
6. Induction cooktop considered to reduce burn risk
7. Oven placed at accessible height
8. Refrigerator style supports easy access
9. Clear working path between sink, stove, and refrigerator
10. Under cabinet lighting planned for task visibility
11. Flooring specified with slip resistant finish

06. FIXTURES & HARDWARE

1. Lever handles specified throughout.
2. Rocker or smart switches included.
3. Switch height set between 36 and 44 inches above finished floor.
4. Outlets raised to 22 to 24 inches above finished floor.
5. Smart outlets used at lamps and hard to reach locations.
6. Cabinet hardware chosen for easy grip.
7. Soft close hardware on drawers and doors.
8. Motion activated lights in halls, closets, garage, and bathrooms.
9. Night lighting paths shown on plans.
10. Grab bar blocking detailed on framing drawings.

02. LAYOUT AND CIRCULATION

1. All primary daily activities can occur on the main level.
2. Primary bedroom and main bathroom located on main floor.
3. Doorways framed at 36 inches for a 32 inch clear minimum.
4. Hallways dimensioned at 42 to 48 inches preferred.
5. Turning radius of 60-66 inches provided in bathrooms, bedrooms, kitchens, and halls.
6. Floor transitions are flush or beveled to 1 quarter inch maximum.
7. Circulation paths between rooms are direct and intuitive.
8. Pocket or sliding doors used in tight areas to improve clearances.
9. No pinch points created by corners, cabinetry, fixtures, or door swings.
10. Furniture layouts allow at least 36 inch clear paths.
11. Stacked closets or vertical chases planned for future elevator.

05. BATHROOMS

1. Zero threshold shower at least 36 x 60 inches (48 x 60 preferred).
2. Continuous slope into shower shown on plans.
3. Built in bench location and dimensions noted.
4. Handheld showerhead on adjustable slide bar (30 to 60 inch height range).
5. Non slip tile specified for entire bathroom.
6. Toilet height between 17 and 19 inches.
7. Toilet area provides 36 inch minimum clear width.
8. Space beside toilet for side assistance.
9. Blocking in walls for future grab bars in shower and at toilet.
10. Vanity height planned for comfortable reach.
11. Storage accessible without bending or climbing.
12. Bright, even lighting at vanity and throughout bathroom.
13. Night lighting for safe movement.

07. OUTDOOR LIVING

1. At least one step-free outdoor access point
2. Flush or beveled thresholds at exterior doors
3. Covered porch or patio accessible from main living area
4. Slip resistant outdoor surfaces
5. Adequate lighting for nighttime use
6. Seating areas with room for mobility aids
7. Smooth transition between interior and exterior flooring
8. Outdoor space usable without navigating stairs

AGING-IN-PLACE FRAMEWORK

2/2



08. LIGHTING

1. Ambient lighting levels increased for aging eyes
2. Consistent color temperature throughout the home
3. Layered lighting included in all high use spaces
4. Task lighting at kitchen counters, bathroom vanities, and work zones
5. Motion lighting in hallways and nighttime circulation paths
6. Under cabinet lighting included in kitchen
7. Glare minimized by avoiding glossy surfaces and harsh fixtures
8. Exterior lighting supports safe entry and walkway visibility
9. Natural light considered in room placement and window design

09. ELECTRICAL

1. Additional outlets installed above code minimum for accessibility
2. Strategic placement of outlets to reduce bending and reaching
3. Outlets inside cabinets where helpful (toothbrush, razor, appliances)
4. Electrical panel located at accessible height
5. Backup power planned for key circuits such as HVAC, fridge, and medical devices
6. Pathway lighting placed on sensors or smart automation
7. Charging stations for mobility equipment included
8. Prewire for potential future equipment needs

10. SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY

1. Voice controlled lighting planned in key rooms
2. Smart thermostat installed
3. Motorized shade wiring included or prewired
4. Video doorbell location shown on plan
5. Camera locations documented for safety areas
6. Router and WiFi extender zones planned for strong coverage
7. Smart outlets designated
8. Smart smoke and CO detectors included
9. Leak sensors planned for laundry, water heater, and bathrooms
10. Smart appliance options evaluated
11. Central smart home hub location coordinated

11. MATERIAL MAINTENANCE

1. Exterior cladding selected for durability and minimal repainting or sealing over time. Examples include fiber cement, masonry, metal, or high-quality engineered siding.
2. Roofing materials chosen for longevity and reduced ongoing maintenance. Examples include metal roofing or architectural shingles with extended warranties.
3. Covered entries, porches, or patios provided to protect doors, windows, and exterior finishes from weather exposure.
4. Hardscape surfaces prioritized at entries, patios, and primary walkways to reduce ongoing landscape maintenance.
5. Concrete, stone, or pavers used in high-use areas instead of grass.
6. Exterior walkways and patios designed with simple geometry to limit cleaning, repair, and maintenance needs.
7. Long-life LED lighting specified for interior and exterior fixtures to reduce bulb replacement.
8. Lighting fixtures selected and located so they can be accessed safely without ladders whenever possible.
9. The layout avoids placing fixtures, finishes, or mechanical elements in hard-to-reach locations. This includes very high ceilings, deep corners, or tight service clearances.
10. HVAC returns placed where filters can be changed without ladders, moving furniture, or entering tight spaces, and not located in high-dust or high-traffic areas.
11. Interior and exterior materials selected to age gracefully without frequent refinishing or replacement. Examples include matte finishes, textured flooring, and finishes that hide wear.
12. Landscaping strategies prioritize native, low-water, or low-maintenance plantings.
13. Leaf guards for gutters.

12. FUTURE PROOFING

1. At least one main level room can flex into a bedroom
2. Space reserved for future elevator or lift
3. Garage layout allows room for a future ramp
4. Bathroom and kitchen layouts adaptable to future needs
5. Reinforced framing where future lifts or supports may be needed
6. Extra circuits reserved for medical devices or equipment
7. Clearances allow for walkers, wheelchairs, stairlift chair or caregiver support
8. Flexible furniture layouts possible in all major rooms
9. Shower and bathroom designed with long term adaptability in mind
10. Washer/Dryer hookups in primary closet



SITE & LOCATION

PROXIMITY TO EMERGENCY SERVICES

Consider the distance to:

- Hospitals
- Urgent care clinics
- Fire departments
- Paramedic stations

Shorter response times increase safety and peace of mind.

ACCESS TO FAMILY AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Evaluate how easily:

- Family can visit,
- Friends can stop by,
- Caregivers can reach you,
- Social connections can remain intact.

Isolation is one of the biggest risks as mobility changes.

SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND SLOPES

Look for:

- Flat or mildly sloped driveways
- Level access to at least one entrance
- Parking close to the entry
- Minimal elevation changes between outdoor and indoor spaces

Steep driveways, hills, or steps leading to the front door can create long term challenges.

DRIVEWAY AND ROAD ACCESS

Consider how easy it will be to:

- Pull in and out safely
- Navigate in poor weather
- Walk from the driveway to the door
- Add a carport or garage later if mobility needs increase

A long, steep, or narrow drive can become difficult over time.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE FACTORS

Think about how the climate affects:

- Slip resistance
- Icy entries
- Heat exposure
- Flood risk
- Rain protected paths

Covered entries and smooth exterior surfaces help maintain safety year round.

NEIGHBORHOOD WALKABILITY AND CONNECTION

Look for:

- Sidewalks
- Street lighting
- Safe pedestrian crossings
- Access to parks, community centers, or shops

Connection fosters wellbeing at every age.

ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Consider:

- Public transit availability
- Rideshare service coverage
- Community transportation options
- Proximity to main roads without being isolated

Reliable transportation supports independence.

SITE ORIENTATION AND NATURAL LIGHT

A site with optimal orientation supports:

- Bright morning light
- Reduced glare
- Well lit indoor and outdoor paths
- Comfortable spaces throughout the day

Good natural light improves visibility and reduces fall risk.

SPACE FOR FUTURE ADAPTIONS

Determine if the site can accommodate long term needs such as:

- A ramp
- An additional parking space for caregivers
- A future accessory dwelling unit for a family member or caregivers
- Room for expansion of the primary suite on the main level

CONNECTION TO OUTDOOR LIVING

Plan for:

- Exterior spaces that expand living areas
- Orientation that supports daily use
- Hardscapes that allow for safe, step-free transitions
- Layouts that connect outdoor areas to main living spaces
- Surfaces that are smooth, slip resistant, and/or covered

LAYOUT & CIRCULATION

Aging in place design begins with circulation. Clear pathways reduce fall risks, prevent unnecessary strain, and create a home that adapts to changing mobility needs. This step influences room size, door placement, hallway width, furniture layout, and the overall flow of the home. Great circulation does not just support aging, it makes the home easier to live in at every age.

1. START WITH DOORWAY WIDTHS

Doorways are often the first point of restriction in a home. Planning generous openings early prevents expensive modifications later.

ANSI A117.1 guidance:

- Minimum clear width for accessible doorways: 32 inches clear (This requires a 36 inch framed door in most cases.)
- For easier navigation with walkers, scooters, and wheelchairs, 34 to 36 inches clear is preferred, especially in primary pathways.

Consider:

- The primary suite
- Main bathroom
- Kitchen entry points
- Laundry room
- Entry from garage
- Any area where doors create bottlenecks

Wide doorways also allow caregivers to assist without crowding the space.

2. PLAN HALLWAYS FOR COMFORT AND FUTURE MOBILITY

Hallways shape the backbone of circulation. When they are too narrow, the entire home becomes difficult to navigate.

ANSI A117.1 guidance:

- Minimum hallway width: 42 inches
- More comfortable width for aging in place: 48 to 54 inches.

Wider hallways allow:

- Wheelchair or walker passage
- Side by side walking with a caregiver
- Space for turning into rooms without awkward angles
- Clear visibility ahead to reduce tripping hazards.

Even if mobility aids are not needed now, wider hallways protect future independence.

3. ENSURE ADEQUATE TURNING SPACE

Mobility devices need space to turn safely. This applies in open areas as well as within rooms.

ANSI A117.1 guidance:

Circular turning space: 60 - 66 inch diameter
T shaped turning space: 36 inches deep in each direction

Key areas to consider:

- Primary bathroom
- Kitchen work zones
- Bedroom near the bed
- Hallways that end at a wall
- Laundry rooms
- Mudrooms

Turning space is easiest and most cost effective to plan during initial design rather than retrofitting later.





4. CREATE SMOOTH AND CONTINUOUS PATHWAYS

Changes in flooring level, irregular transitions, and abrupt shifts in material can become tripping hazards as mobility changes.

Ensure:

- Flooring transitions are as smooth as possible
- No raised thresholds at interior doors
- Slip resistant materials in kitchens, bathrooms, and entries
- Consistent flooring materials to create visual clarity and improve balance

ANSI A117.1 guidance:

- Level changes up to one quarter inch are allowed without treatment
- Level changes between one quarter and one half inch require a beveled transition
- Anything over one half inch is considered a step and should be avoided in aging in place design

Smooth floors keep movement predictable and safe.

5. SIMPLIFY THE OVERALL FLOW OF THE HOME

The most accessible homes have circulation that feels intuitive and natural. You should be able to move from one area to the next without unnecessary turns, narrow choke points, or awkward angles.

Use these principles:

- Create direct connections between high use spaces such as kitchen, living, and primary suite
- Reduce long narrow corridors
- Avoid tight corner turns near door swings
- Provide generous space around furniture
- Keep pathways clear and wide enough for mobility aids

When the design makes movement easy, daily routines feel calmer, safer, and more enjoyable.

6. PRIORITIZE HIGH TRAFFIC ZONES FIRST

Some areas need special attention because they support essential daily activities.

Focus on:

- Entry from the garage & main door
- Path from bedroom to bathroom
- Route from garage to kitchen
- Flow from living spaces to outdoor areas

Accidents often happen along these paths. Improving circulation here immediately increases safety and comfort.



7. CONSIDER BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

Even if the homeowner has no mobility limitations today, a well designed circulation layout protects their future independence. When changes happen due to aging, injury, or temporary needs, the home will still support daily life without stress.

Ask:

- Can a wheelchair or walker move easily through the layout?
- Is there room for someone to assist without feeling crowded?
- Are there any pinch points that could become difficult later?
- Are the paths visually clear and free of obstacles?

Planning circulation with long term thinking reduces the need for disruptive renovations later.



KITCHENS

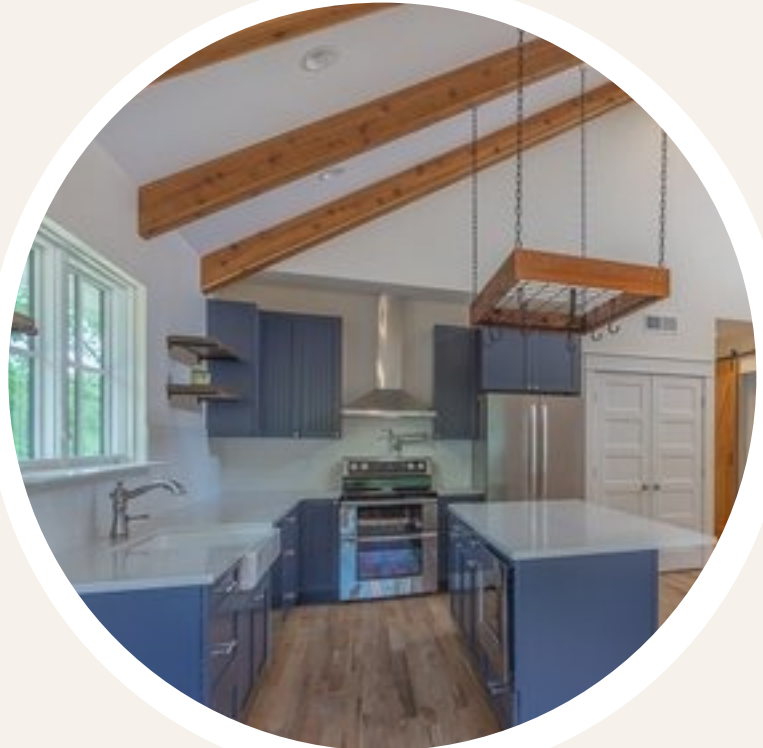
Kitchens are the heart of the home, and they should remain a place where cooking, gathering, and moving around feel enjoyable and safe. These design principles help reduce strain while maintaining a beautiful, functional space.

CLEAR CIRCULATION PATHS

Aisles to be at least 42-48 inches wide.

This allows for safer movement and makes room for mobility aids when needed.

It also keeps cooking and entertaining areas comfortable.



LEVERS OR TOUCH FREE FAUCETS

These are easier on hands, wrists, and shoulders.

They simplify daily tasks and reduce strain from twisting actions.

PULL OUT STORAGE

Replace deep base cabinets with pull out drawers or pull out shelves.

This eliminates the need to bend or reach into dark corners and makes every item easier to access.



COUNTER HEIGHTS THAT WORK

Some homeowners benefit from a section of counter that is slightly lower or can accommodate seated prep.

This flexibility supports comfort for years to come.

APPLIANCE PLACEMENT THAT REDUCES STRAIN

Place appliances at heights that minimize lifting and awkward movements.

Helpful examples:

- Install the microwave in base cabinet or at counter height
- Keep the oven at a comfortable reach height
- Elevate the dishwasher & use a rotating lower dish rack to reduce bending and twisting
- Choose side by side refrigerator doors for easier access

GOOD TASK LIGHTING

Bright, focused lighting at the counters helps reduce eye strain and improves safety during meal prep.

Under cabinet lighting is an essential feature in an aging-in-place kitchen.

SLIP RESISTANT FLOORING

Choose materials that reduce the risk of slipping when floors are wet.

Avoid glossy or pattern floors that can create glare and increase hazards.

BATHROOMS

Bathrooms should feel calm, supportive, and easy to navigate. Small improvements in layout and function make a tremendous impact on safety and long term usability.

ZERO THRESHOLD SHOWERS

A zero threshold or roll in shower removes the tripping hazard entirely.

It also supports temporary or long term mobility needs without calling attention to itself.

Aim for:

- A clear opening of at least 36 inches
- A minimum 60 inch turning circle if space allows
- Slip resistant tile inside and outside the shower

GRAB BARS AND BLOCKING

Even if the homeowner does not need grab bars today, the walls should be prepared for them.

Install blocking in key locations around the toilet, shower, and tub.

This makes future installation simple and cost effective.

SPACE TO MOVE

Bathrooms should allow comfortable movement with or without mobility aids.

Plan for:

- A 60 inch turning circle whenever possible
- Enough space beside the toilet for assistance
- Wide entries into the bathroom and shower

BUILT IN SEATING

A built in bench provides comfort for anyone who needs to sit while showering.

It also gives caregivers a safer way to assist if needed.

Pair it with a handheld shower head for added flexibility.

COMFORT HEIGHT TOILETS

Toilets that sit at 17 to 19 inches height reduce the effort needed to sit and stand.

This small change makes a big difference for knees, hips, and overall stability.

EASY TO REACH STORAGE

Place everyday items within comfortable reach.

Avoid high shelves or deep cabinets that require bending, climbing, or stretching.

Pull out drawers are a safer, more accessible choice.



FIXTURES & HARDWARE

The small touchpoints in a home make a bigger difference than most people realize. These are the items we interact with dozens of times each day. When they are thoughtfully chosen, they reduce strain, prevent accidents, and make daily living feel effortless. This section helps you select fixtures, hardware, and controls that support long term comfort without sacrificing style.

1. LEVER STYLE DOOR HANDLES

Lever handles are much easier to operate than round knobs.

They work better for:

- Limited hand strength
- Arthritis
- Carrying groceries or laundry
- Anyone who needs to open doors with an elbow or forearm

Choose a style that blends into your overall design. Today's options can look modern, classic, or minimal.

2. ROCKER LIGHT SWITCHES

Rocker switches are easier to use because they only require a gentle press.

- They are also easier to find in the dark and simplify operation for people with limited dexterity.

Place switches at a height that feels comfortable for all ages.

- This typically means between 36 and 44 inches above the floor.

3. EASY GRIP CABINET HARDWARE

Cabinet hardware should feel comfortable in the hand and easy to grasp.

Good choices include:

- Wide pulls
- U shaped handles
- Bar pulls

Avoid small knobs, hardware that requires a tight grip, or handles with open ends that get caught on clothing.

4. SOFT CLOSE HINGES AND DRAWERS

Soft close mechanisms prevent slamming and reduce the force needed to operate doors and drawers.

- This protects fingers and makes movement quieter and smoother throughout the home.

5. MOTION ACTIVATED LIGHTING

Motion sensors are incredibly helpful in:

- Hallways
- Closets
- Bathrooms
- Garages
- Pantries

They light the space automatically and remove the need to find a switch in the dark.

- This single feature significantly reduces fall risks during nighttime movement.





6. SMART OUTLETS AND PLUG CONTROLS

Smart outlets allow people to control lamps and small appliances through a phone or voice command.

This is especially helpful for:

- Hard to reach outlets
- Lamps placed behind furniture
- People who want lights on before entering a room
- Anyone who prefers fewer physical switches to operate

Smart outlets can be added during construction or as upgrades later.

7. TOUCH FREE AND SINGLE LEVER FAUCETS

Kitchen and bathroom faucets should be easy to operate with limited hand strength.

Touch free or single lever faucets work well because they:

- Reduce twisting motions
- Allow one handed operation
- Improve hygiene when cooking or cleaning

This is a small choice that makes daily routines much simpler.

8. HANDHELD SHOWERHEADS

A handheld showerhead is one of the most versatile and supportive features in an aging-in-place bathroom.

It helps with:

- Seated bathing
- Rinsing safely
- Bathing children or pets
- Cleaning the shower itself

Pair this with an adjustable slide bar so each person can set the height that works for them.

9. NON SLIP FLOORING FINISHES

Flooring matters more than people expect. A safe finish lowers the risk of slips, especially in bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms.

Look for:

- Matte tile finishes
- Textured surfaces
- Flooring that maintains friction when wet

Choose style and texture together. You can still have a beautiful floor that supports safety.



10. CLEAR AND CONSISTENT CONTROLS THROUGHOUT THE HOME

Keeping fixtures and controls consistent makes the home more intuitive to navigate.

Choose:

- The same light switch style throughout
- Matching hardware finishes where possible
- Controls placed at similar heights in each room

This makes the home easier to learn, easier to remember, and easier to use as needs change.



LIGHTING

*Lighting should feel bright, even, and predictable throughout the home.
As vision changes, the right lighting design becomes essential.*

1. BRIGHTER AMBIENT LIGHTING

Older eyes need more overall light to see clearly.

Increase general lighting levels through ceiling fixtures, recessed lighting, or large surface-mounted lights.

Choose warm to neutral color temperatures that support clarity without harsh glare.

2. LAYERED LIGHTING IN EVERY SPACE

Use a combination of ambient, task, and accent lighting.

Layered lighting reduces shadows and gives the homeowner more control over brightness in key areas like the kitchen, bathrooms, hallways, and closets.

3. TASK LIGHTING WHERE IT'S NEEDED MOST

Task lighting is essential for activities that require focus.

Add it at:

- Kitchen counters
- Bathroom vanities
- Laundry areas
- Reading nooks
- Workspaces

Under cabinet lighting in the kitchen is especially important for preventing shadows on prep surfaces.

4. NIGHT LIGHTING FOR SAFE NAVIGATION

Soft, low-level lighting that activates automatically can prevent falls at night.

Use night lighting in:

- Hallways
- Bathrooms
- Bedroom pathways
- Stair landings
- Kitchen entry points

Motion activated or low voltage LED strip lights work well for this.

5. REDUCE GLARE AND HARSH CONTRASTS

Avoid glossy flooring, shiny countertops, and overly bright bulbs that create glare.

Aim for even lighting levels throughout the space so the eyes do not have to constantly adjust.



ELECTRICAL

Electrical decisions have a huge impact on daily comfort and safety. Small adjustments in outlet height, switch placement, and control options help the home remain supportive for years.

1. RAISE OUTLET HEIGHTS FOR EASIER REACH

Standard outlets sit around 16 inches above the floor.

For aging in place design, plan outlets at 22 to 24 inches above the floor.

This makes plugging and unplugging items much easier for anyone with back, knee, or mobility concerns.

Use raised outlets in:

- Bedrooms
- Living areas
- Kitchens
- Hallways
- Offices
- Anywhere lamps or small appliances will be used

2. LOWER SWITCH HEIGHTS FOR COMFORT

Lowering switch heights slightly can support ease of use for people with limited shoulder mobility or those who use mobility aids.

A comfortable range is 36 to 44 inches from the floor.

- The goal is a switch location that feels natural and intuitive to reach.

3. ADD MORE OUTLETS THAN YOU THINK YOU NEED

Extra outlets prevent unsafe extension cords and reduce the need to reach behind furniture.

- Think about future needs such as adjustable beds, medical devices, powered recliners, mobility equipment, and additional lighting.

4. INCLUDE OUTLETS IN UNEXPECTED BUT HELPFUL PLACES

Helpful locations include:

- At kitchen islands
- Inside pantry shelves
- In bathroom cabinets for electric toothbrushes or razors
- Along stair railings
- Near exterior doors for charging devices or night lights
- Next to the toilet for bidets, night lights, or air fresheners

Thoughtful placement keeps spaces clean and functional.

5. PLAN FOR BACKUP POWER IF POSSIBLE

Consider a generator or backup battery for essential circuits such as:

- Refrigeration
- HVAC
- Medical equipment
- Freezers
- Security systems
- Smart home hubs



SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY

Smart home technology is one of the easiest ways to support aging in place without major renovations. You do not have to automate everything. Start with what makes daily life easier.

1. VOICE CONTROLLED LIGHTING

Smart bulbs and smart switches allow homeowners to turn lights on and off without getting up, reaching, or navigating a dark room.

- Voice control through a phone or smart speaker adds convenience and safety.

2. MOTORIZED SHADES

Motorized window treatments are especially helpful for hard to reach windows or large openings.

- They improve thermal comfort, privacy, and security with very little effort.

3. SMART THERMOSTATS

Smart thermostats learn routines and adjust automatically.

- They also make it easy to see and control temperature without small dials or confusing panels.

4. SMART OUTLETS AND PLUG CONTROLLERS

Smart outlets make lamps and small appliances easy to operate by voice or phone.

They also eliminate the need to bend or kneel to reach traditional outlet locations.

5. VIDEO DOORBELLS AND EXTERIOR CAMERAS

These features increase safety, support visibility, and provide peace of mind.

They help homeowners see who is at the door without rushing or physically straining.

6. SMART KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Modern appliances offer features that support aging in place such as:

- Ovens that shut off automatically
- Refrigerators with better lighting
- Induction cooktops that reduce burn risks
- Apps that notify you if something is left on

These features create safer, more supportive cooking environments.

7. HOME MONITORING AND SAFETY SYSTEMS

Options include:

- Water leak detectors
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors with voice alerts
- Fall detection sensors
- Automated door locks

These features support both safety and peace of mind for aging homeowners and their families.



FUTURE PROOFING

Aging in place design is not about predicting the future. It is about preparing the home so that, no matter what life brings, it continues to support comfortable and confident living in the place that matters most. Flexibility gives a home longevity. Future-proofing creates options. Together, they allow a home to adapt as life changes, rather than requiring its occupants to adapt to the space.

This section walks you through the simple but powerful ways to design spaces that evolve gracefully over time.

1. CREATE SPACES THAT CAN CHANGE PURPOSE

Life does not move in a straight line. Needs shift. Families grow. Circumstances change. The rooms in your home should be able to adjust without major renovations.

Consider spaces that can easily become:

- A future main level bedroom
- A caregiver suite
- A quiet place for recovery after surgery
- A hobby or work space if driving becomes difficult
- A guest room that can double as a wellness space

Think in terms of possibilities, not limitations.

2. PLAN FOR A MAIN LEVEL BEDROOM

One of the most valuable future proofing strategies is simply having the option to live entirely on the main floor. Even if you do not use it as the primary suite today, you will be grateful to have it later.

Good candidates for future bedrooms include:

- A home office
- A playroom
- A flex space near a bathroom
- A dining room that can be enclosed if needed

This single design decision can extend how long an individual can comfortably remain in their home.

3. PLAN BATHROOMS WITH ADAPTABILITY IN MIND

Bathrooms are often the hardest rooms to remodel and the first rooms to become difficult to navigate. Designing the layout with future needs in mind protects your comfort for years to come.

Consider adding:

- A larger shower footprint even if you install a standard pan now
- Blocking in the walls for future grab bars
- Space beside the toilet for mobility assistance
- Doorways wide enough for walkers or wheelchairs

These adjustments do not impact everyday use, but they make future transitions much smoother.



4. LEAVE ROOM FOR MOBILITY AIDS BEFORE THEY'RE NEEDED

Mobility needs can change quickly. Designing with extra clearance and simplified pathways gives you freedom long term.

Create room for:

- Walkers
- Wheelchairs
- Crutches and canes
- Stairlift chair
- A caregiver assisting at the bedside or in the bathroom

This does not require more square footage. It simply requires thoughtful planning.

5. CHOOSE FURNITURE LAYOUTS THAT CAN EVOLVE

Furniture can be a bigger obstacle than walls. Plan spaces that allow multiple layout options so you are not locked into one arrangement.

Tips:

- Leave space for wider pathways
- Use fewer large, bulky pieces
- Anchor seating around accessible conversation zones
- Keep travel paths open and intuitive

Flexible layouts keep the home comfortable, safe, and easy to reconfigure.

6. RESERVE SPACE FOR A FUTURE ELEVATOR OR LIFT

This is one of the most impactful future proofing strategies for homes with two or more stories. Even if you never plan to install an elevator, designing a location for it protects your long term independence.

Most homeowners use this space as:

- Closets stacked vertically
- A small office
- A pantry on one level and storage on another

If the time comes, the structural planning is already there.

7. PREPARE FOR ENTRY ADAPTATIONS

Even if you do not need a ramp today, plan for one.

This might be as simple as:

- A wider landing
- A gently graded walkway
- Space beside steps for a future ramp
- A spot in the garage where a ramp can fit

These design decisions cost almost nothing when planned in advance.

8. SUPPORT AGING EYES WITH BETTER VISIBILITY

As vision changes, high contrast, clarity, and quality lighting become essential. This is where flexibility in lighting design becomes powerful.

Add:

- The option for brighter lamps
- Dimmers where appropriate
- Supplemental task lighting
- Fixtures that minimize glare

Good lighting makes every room safer to navigate.



9. TECHNOLOGY THAT CAN BE ADDED OVER TIME

Smart home features are not all-or-nothing. You can start small and introduce new layers as your needs evolve.

Plan wiring layouts that support:

- Automated blinds
- Smart lighting
- Safety sensors
- Cameras
- Connected appliances
- Voice control systems

Even basic wiring decisions open the door to future support.

10. THINK ABOUT WHAT'S NEEDED TEN YEARS FROM NOW

The best future proofing is not about anticipating illness. It is about creating a home that remains supportive, comforting, and joyful no matter what life brings.

Ask yourself:

- How do they want to move through their home as they age?
- What routines do they hope to keep?
- What will help them feel independent?
- What makes their home feel like a sanctuary?

Designing with these answers in mind creates a flexible, resilient home that grows with you.

NOTES:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

TRANSLATING IDEAS TO PLANS

Once the goals for what a home needs are defined, the next step is translating those ideas onto paper. This is where vision becomes something a builder can clearly understand and execute. Well-prepared drawings protect design intent, reduce mistakes, and help ensure the home is built as planned.

Whether the work begins with a sketch, an updated existing plan, or collaboration with an architect or designer, these steps provide a clear way to document decisions so they remain easy to reference and easy to communicate throughout the process.

1. START WITH THE FLOOR PLAN

Begin with a floor plan design. Do not worry about perfection. The goal is to start capturing decisions in one place.

Include notes for:

- Doorway widths & hallway clearances
- Locations of key rooms on the main level
- How natural light land around the home
- Entry sequences and whether they have steps
- Major circulation paths

This creates the foundation for everything that follows.

2. SHOW ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS CLEARLY

Dimension all the main circulation paths on your plan.

These routes should be direct, open, and easy to travel.

Minimum dimensions are as follows:

- Space between furnishings and circulation routes is 36 inches
- Preferred 42 to 48 inch pathways where possible
- Turning clearances of 60 inches where needed (bathrooms, porches, etc.)
- Paths from bedroom to bathroom
- Routes from garage to kitchen

Dimensioning circulation paths ensures the clear widths required for safe, comfortable movement are documented and preserved.

3. IDENTIFY DOOR AND HALLWAY DIMENSIONS

Document door sizes & openings.

On the plan:

- Provide 32 inch clear minimum width for all openings
- 36-inch wide doors for main spaces or those used on a daily basis
- Hall widths of 48 inches where possible

Clear labeling reinforces the design intent behind these dimensions.

NOTES:

4. NOTE BATHROOM AND KITCHEN REQUIREMENTS

Bathrooms and kitchens require the most specific documentation.

For bathrooms, show:

- Zero threshold shower dimensions
- Bench location
- Handheld shower head placement
- Space beside the toilet
- Blocking in shower and toilet walls

For kitchens, show:

- Appliance placements
- Counter heights if varied
- Pull out storage areas
- Minimum aisle widths of 48 inches
- Task lighting locations

5. ADD LIGHTING AND ELECTRICAL NOTES

Lighting and electrical details should be shown directly on their own plan to avoid guesswork.

Document:

- Switch locations at 36 to 44 inches
- Raised outlets at 22 to 24 inches
- Night lighting paths
- Under cabinet lighting
- Motion activated fixtures
- Smart outlets and smart switches
- Circuits that need backup power

This turns your lighting and electrical ideas into a clear action plan.

6. MARK SMART HOME LOCATIONS

Smart features function best when placed intentionally.

On your plan, identify:

- Wifi hubs
- Router location
- Smart home panel or control center
- Camera locations
- Video doorbell wiring
- Motorized shade wiring
- Charging stations

7. LABEL FUTURE PROOFING ELEMENTS

Future proofing works best when the notes are visible on the plans.

Add callouts for:

- Stacked closets for a future elevator
- Space for a ramp in the garage
- Extra blocking in walls
- Reinforced flooring for future equipment
- Extra outlets for adjustable beds or mobility devices

NOTES:



8. ADD NOTES FOR SLOPES, LEVELS, AND ENTRIES

Entries and level changes must be clear.

Document:

- Locations for no-step entries
- Minimum slope for exterior walkway (1:20)
- Garage entry transitions & future ramp location, if desired
- Any areas requiring gentle grading (i.e. path to mailbox)

Clear notes here greatly reduce the chance of unwanted steps appearing in the finished home.

9. USE SIMPLE SYMBOLS AND A CONSISTENT LEGEND

A clear legend helps everyone understand the drawings.

Include symbols for:

- Lighting fixtures
- Switch types
- Electrical outlets
- Grab bar locations or blocking for future installation
- Night lights
- Smart devices
- Turning radii & clearances

Consistency keeps communication smooth between homeowner, architect, and builder.

10. REVIEW THE PLAN AS IF YOU ARE WALKING THROUGH THE HOME

Once everything is documented, walk yourself through the plan step by step.

Ask yourself:

- Does the home feel easy to navigate
- Are circulation paths clear
- Are all high-use rooms accessible
- Is lighting placed where it matters most
- Will these decisions continue to support long-term living
- Are any areas still tight or confusing

This final review helps you catch anything that may have been missed and ensures the home truly supports aging in place.

NOTES:

[illegible]

AGING-IN-PLACE SAMPLE PLAN #1

This floor plan was designed for a mother who uses a wheelchair and spends her days caring for young children, managing a household, and enjoying time outdoors with her family.

After years of adapting to spaces that were not built for her needs, this home was designed to support everyday tasks like cooking, doing dishes, moving easily between rooms, and keeping up with toddlers. Accessibility was considered from the beginning so the home works with her body and her routines, not against them.

Built as a forever home, the layout reflects a life that changes day to day while staying rooted in family, independence, and a strong connection to nature.



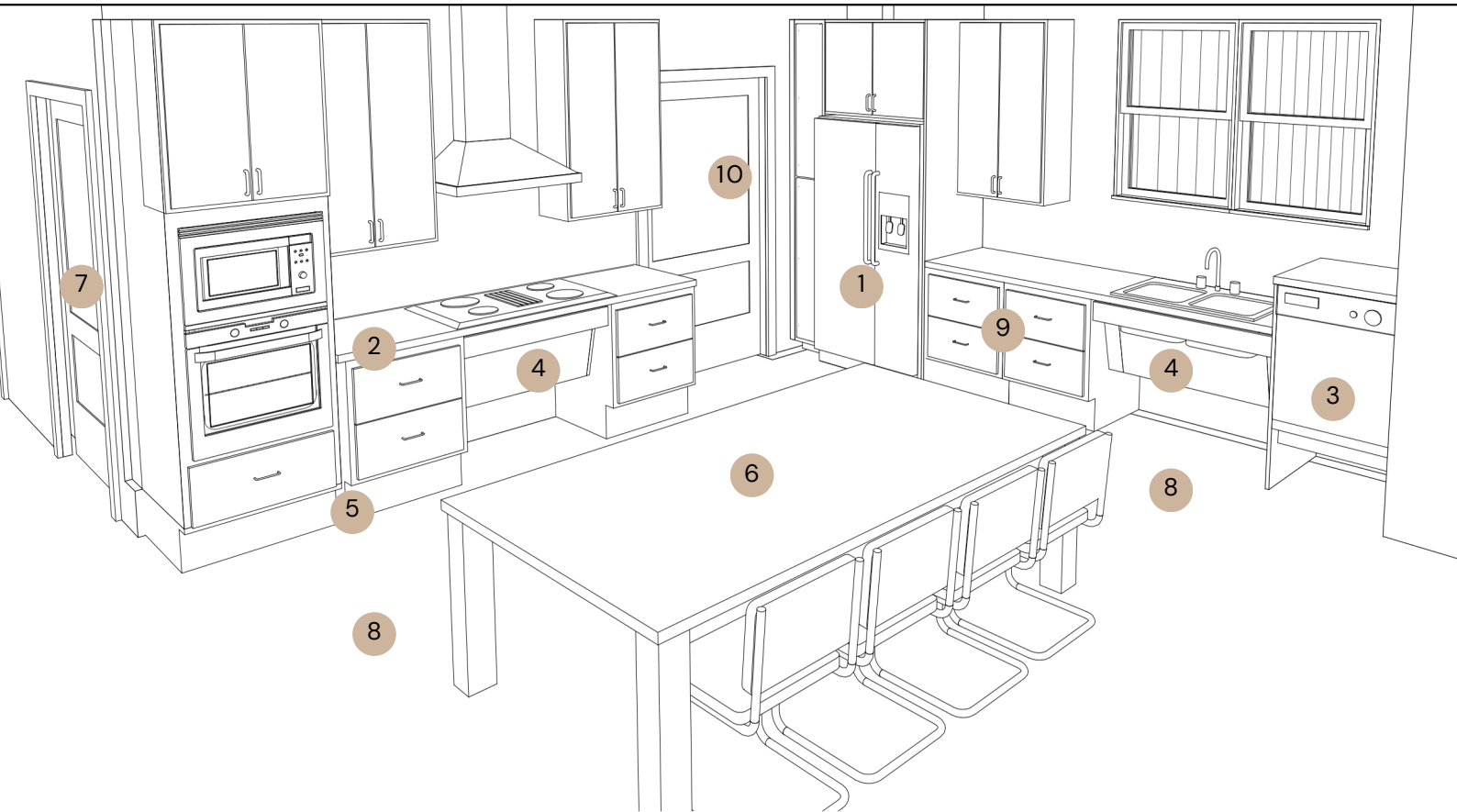
- 1 Step-free entrances allow for arrival/departure without assistance.
- 2 Circulation paths flow easily connecting daily spaces in a continuous loop.
- 3 2x6 walls are used at all pocket doors to allow for blocking in the walls.
- 4 Turning space is provided at natural pause points... corners, doorways, and room entries allow for reorientation without backing up.
- 5 Door openings are 3'-6" for comfortable passage & door swings support approach and exit.
- 6 The kitchen provides forward and parallel access for performing tasks independently.
- 7 The bathroom layout provides clearances at fixtures with space for grab bars for support.
- 8 No threshold shower with bench and grab bars.
- 9 Bedroom clearances allow for movement around the bed.
- 10 Outdoor access is provided with full access to the home's perimeter.

AGING-IN-PLACE SAMPLE PLAN #1

This kitchen is part of the wheelchair accessible home shown in the previous plan and was designed for a homeowner who uses a wheelchair and manages daily life for her family from this space.

Accessibility was considered from the beginning so cooking, cleaning, and gathering could happen with ease and independence. Clear circulation, seated work areas, and reachable storage allow the kitchen to function as a true center of the home rather than a barrier.

This example shows how early planning decisions support dignity, connection, and long term livability without calling attention to accessibility itself.



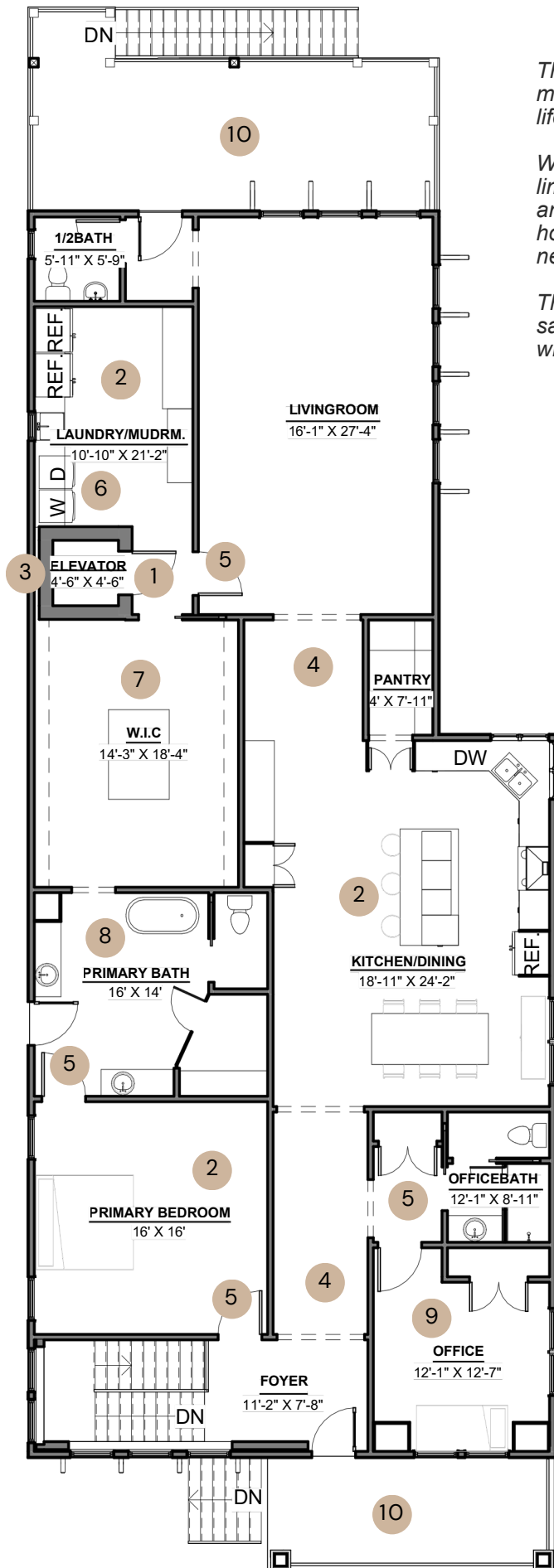
- 1 Side-by-side refrigerator allows for easy access.
- 2 Cooktop, oven, and microwave are positioned within comfortable reach.
- 3 The dishwasher is elevated to reduce bending and strain.
- 4 Knee space is integrated at key work areas (sink and cooktop).
- 5 Cabinet toe-kick is increased to 9-inches to accommodate a wheelchair footrest.
- 6 Island seating is integrated for shared meals or additional work surface
- 7 Pantry storage is located nearby and remains accessible.
- 8 Circulation provides adequate clearance on all sides of the island.
- 9 Drawer base cabinets prioritize accessible storage.
- 10 Garage access is located adjacent to the kitchen to simplify grocery unloading.

AGING-IN-PLACE SAMPLE PLAN #2

This floor plan was designed for homeowners who are currently mobile but wanted their home to remain comfortable and usable as life changes over time.

With elderly parents in mind, and the possibility of future mobility limitations, the layout prioritizes clear circulation, adaptable spaces, and step-free transitions. Key rooms connect easily, allowing the home to support both everyday living now and increased care needs later.

This plan illustrates how designing ahead creates flexibility without sacrificing how the home feels today, allowing the space to evolve without the need for relocation.



- 1 Vertical circulation is integrated into daily living areas. The elevator is centrally located near primary circulation, not tucked away, supporting intuitive long-term use.
- 2 Primary living functions are fully contained on one level. Kitchen, living, laundry, primary suite, and office allow daily routines without stair dependence.
- 3 Garage access is separated but fully connected. The lower-level garage remains accessible via elevator, reducing reliance on exterior stairs over time.
- 4 Circulation routes are long, straight, and uninterrupted. Primary paths avoid tight turns and dead ends, supporting ease of movement and future mobility aids.
- 5 Consistent wide doorways support adaptability, 36-inch doors throughout allow flexibility without signaling specialized design.
- 6 Laundry is placed along the main circulation path. Daily tasks are integrated into normal movement rather than requiring detours or level changes.
- 7 Primary closet location minimizes task fatigue. Adjacency to both bedroom and laundry reduces repeated travel during dressing and household routines.
- 8 Bathrooms are sized for change without relocation. Clearances allow future support features or fixture adjustments without reconfiguring walls.
- 9 The office functions as a flexible-use room. Its location and nearby bath allow it to adapt into a guest room or caregiver space if needed.
- 10 Outdoor connections are preserved as part of everyday life. Multiple access points allow time outside without navigating service areas or secondary routes.

yay!

Congratulations on reaching
the end of this Pocket Guide...

Let's Stay Connected!



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