



AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of
The American Institute of Architects

Top 10 Ways Architects Can Become Age-Friendly

Older adults want and should be able to live actively and independently for as long as possible. Age-friendly design takes into account the physical changes that occur over time, reducing physical and psychological barriers and the potential for injury. It enables older adults to maintain and maximize their physical capabilities and continue to live independently.

1. **All designs should advance numerous social objectives:** liveliness, safety, sustainability, health, pleasure, dignity, equitable use, inclusiveness (e.g. age, gender, race, disabilities, height, pets, etc.).

2. **Design for the scale of a range of individuals and how they experience an environment:** eye level, pace of walking, views, clarity of information, flexibility of use, etc.

3. **Emphasize qualitative aspects of design:** comfortable eye-level stimulation with esthetic variety that is not overwhelming or confusing (contrast in color and shapes, elements with varying textures to respond to sight and touch, ample amount of ambient light, non-glare finishes), control of ambient noise.

4. **Design for minimization of perceived or real physical barriers, and avoid elements that require high levels of strength and dexterity to operate.** All elements for public use should be located in easily accessible barrier-free areas.

5. **Design building forms and public spaces to maintain a uniform level of comfort:** reducing glare and drafts; controlling temperature, sound, and light; providing a feeling of safety.

6. **Design buildings and public spaces that are inviting and accessible to all ages.** Spaces should be designed to include items of interest for a variety of age groups. Provide an adequate amount and variety of seating, and amenities including water fountains, restrooms, and recycling wastebaskets. If steps are necessary, provide dual handrails and provide ramps for wheelchairs, baby carriages, tricycles, etc.

7. **Design new developments that ‘reach out’ to the surrounding community.** New developments should be organized to take advantage of and be supplemental to existing elements in that community, and should respect cultural diversity. Because visibility encourages interaction and enhances safety, exterior gathering spaces in new developments should be visible to the surrounding streets/community.

8. **Design building floor plans that are clearly understood and easily negotiable.** Access to spaces must be clear and intuitive. Avoid complicated circulation patterns and provide wayfinding markers (forms, color, texture, light, sound, landmarks, etc.) with obviously-located adequately-lit directories and wayfinding signs. To accommodate a wide range of abilities, literacy and language skills, use a multiplicity of modes to provide essential information (pictorial, verbal, tactile).

9. Design buildings that accommodate desirable amenities and make use of natural light. Include handrails along corridors, and provide seating in lobbies and near elevators to allow seniors to rest and wait comfortably. Maximize access to views and natural light as it is good for orientation and general well-being. Supplement daylight with consistent light levels that allow seniors to see without difficulty. Prevent glare by providing indirect light and by controlling sunlight.

10. Design all residential spaces to accommodate people with diverse abilities. Design spaces that can be flexibly adapted as the needs of users change. Spaces must be barrier-free and allow for the maneuverability of wheelchairs. Give especially careful attention to fall-prevention and to the selection of materials (colors, textures, maintenance requirements, offgassing), and arrangement of kitchen and bathroom facilities. Provide universally-designed equipment, fixtures, and cabinets. Design for grab bars at tubs, showers and toilets.

AIA New York Chapter
Design for Aging Committee

May 18, 2011