



# TOP DESIGN STRATEGIES

## OVERVIEW

Aging often involves a multitude of changing needs and priorities.

However, there are human needs and desires that remain constant throughout the life course. Design strategies for aging must not only address basic physiological and safety needs, but attend to higher-level human needs as well.

The universal design approach is being adopted by many forward-thinking designers who aim to support equitable, flexible, and accessible environments for all users.

## Impact of Aging

### Design Strategies

The following strategies have been identified in the current evidence-based design literature as supporting a universal design approach. These are best reviewed at the very beginning of a project to assess the “fit” of each strategy to your unique vision. Design teams should work with owners and user groups to ensure that these goals are integrated into the final design. Note: These considerations are generalizable to multiple building types.

- Prioritize features that are adjustable or adaptable to varying levels of physical ability.
- Determine the most intuitive building layout for safe, easy navigation.
- Locate the most frequently used services/amenities/living areas on the main floor.
- Provide support rails/surfaces where possible.
- Include slip-resistant flooring.
- Facilitate options for personalization of space.
- Explore creative opportunities to support community and psychosocial wellbeing (e.g., options to bring in pets, comfortable space for visitors/family, social activities).
- Provide simple, intuitive controls to adjust temperature, lighting, noise, air flow, and other comfort factors.
- Consider options to coordinate design with local infrastructure and amenities to support walkability (e.g., “green streets,” sufficient public restrooms, accessible sidewalks).
- Integrate technology and infrastructure that facilitate remote health care.
- Consider design that encourages engagement among different generations.
- Discuss commonalities among generational wants and needs.

*The Impact of Aging toolbox is made available through a partnership with*

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These are concepts drawn from the literature reviewed in the Impact of Aging Issue Brief: Piatkowski, M. & Taylor, E. (2016). *Universal Design: Designing for Human Needs (Research brief)*. Concord, CA: The Center for Health Design.