



Housing Criteria for a Livable and Friendly Newton for Everyone©

These criteria are intended to be used a guide for developers in the design of housing for older people, city officials to guide decisions on age-friendly housing developments, and individuals to assess their housing requirements.

The Newton Council on Aging (NCOA) and the Newton Department of Senior Services (NDSS) work to create and sustain Newton as an Age-friendly/Livable Community. Essential to this vision is adequate and appropriate housing for people of all ages; age-friendly homes are suitable and desirable for all members of the community. We believe that housing built to accommodate changing health and safety needs for a growing older population is essential for enhancing Newton's future as a diverse community. In general, we support the creation of a diversity of housing that accommodates a wide range of household incomes within the city. Specifically, we advocate for housing with the following characteristics:

General

- Environmentally friendly, energy efficient, and low maintenance

Community Environment Pedestrian-friendly access to:

- Food shopping and pharmacies
- Public transportation
- Social gathering places
- Open green spaces

Overall Home Environment

- Living space, bedroom, bath, kitchen and laundry on one floor
- Level flooring throughout the house
- Slip-resistant walkways and entryways
- Handrails on both sides of all stairways
- Lever style handles on doors and faucets
- Electrical outlets 18 inches off the floor
- Easy-touch, rocker-style light switches 42 inches off the floor
- Anti-scald feature on faucets
- Generous electrical outlets to accommodate future technology or medical-equipment needs, particularly in the bedroom, den and kitchen
- Bright, non-glare lighting, with good task lighting over sink, stove and work areas.
- Common spaces in multi-unit buildings for residents to socialize

Entryways and Exits

- At least one no-step pathway into the dwelling
- Covered entrance to protect from inclement weather
- Bright lighting inside and outside entries
- Space near entrance to place packages
- Easy-open door locks
- Zero-threshold doorway
- High-visibility house numbers
- Lighted, easily reachable doorbell

Kitchen

- Easy-glide, self-close drawers
- Accessible garbage-disposal switch
- Multi-height, rounded-edge countertops
- Counter space next to sink & appliances
- Easy-access storage, such as pull-out pantry or adjustable-height shelving
- Front-mounted appliance controls that are highly visible or touch operated
- Extra electrical outlets for small appliances; outlets under countertops

Stairways and Halls

- No open or see-through risers on stairs
- Calm, not disorienting, carpet pattern
- Chair rail with 1" ledge along hallways
- Rocker style light switches at top and bottom of stairs
- Stair treads that accommodate firm placement of the foot
- Contrasting color at front edges of steps, for visual orientation, or non-slip adhesive strips

Laundry

- Non-slip flooring
- Front-loading washer/dryer, stacked or on raised platform, front controls
- Laundry sink and countertop no more than 34 inches above floor with knee space below for seated users

Bathrooms

- Non-skid floor
- Walk-in shower
- Countertops with rounded edges
- Built-in bench or seating in shower
- Easy-glide drawers that close automatically
- Maneuvering space that accommodates a 60-inch turning radius
- Hand-held, adjustable-height showerhead with easily operable controls
- Grab bars or wall-blocking for future installation in tub, shower and near toilet

Bedrooms

- Multi-level shelving and clothes rod in closet
- Quality wire mesh shelving for visibility
- Avoid bi-fold or accordion closet doors

Additional Recommendations

- Adaptable space that enables reconfiguration without unnecessary disruption/expense
- Base cabinets with removable shelves to accommodate seated users
- Color-contrast front edges on counter tops
- Drawer-style dishwasher or raised platform to reduce bending
- D-shaped or pull-style cabinet/drawer handles
- Toilet center 18 inches from any side wall, tub, or cabinet
- Comfort height toilet
- 36-inch-wide doors (or for interior doors, pocket doors)
- Ample and level maneuvering room (5 feet by 5 feet) in entryway
- Emergency/Security system (esp. bathroom)