

# FIORI INTERIOR DESIGN



## THE FOREVER HOME CHECKLIST

*Ensuring your home will serve you and your family through the decades*

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# INTRODUCTION

For the past several years, everyone my age (although I feel like a millennial, I'm the last of the Boomer generation) has a parent or someone they know struggling with something. Our bodies are changing, like it or not, and we're finding that the ways we're used to doing things aren't working so well for us anymore.

I live in a multi-generational home. My kids range in age from 11 to 22, and my mother-in-law, who lives with us, is a very young 91. I became a Certified Aging in Place Specialist two years ago. Had I known then what I know now, there are many things that I would have designed differently in my own home.

With that in mind, my next home will be my "forever home". One that serves all ages. Because who doesn't want to live in a home that is beautiful yet also functions well, regardless of age? And why not be smart about it and anticipate these changing needs?

In this checklist, I rely on my specialized training and experience in designing multi-generational homes to outline the areas to address so you can live an easier, better life.

From the exterior of your house to your main living spaces, here are my tips for designing your forever home.



# EXTERIOR

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Loneliness or community starts at the front door.

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## ENTRY

- **Zero-step entry** (great for moms with newborns in strollers and those who are wheelchair bound alike)
- **Flush threshold**, max ½" in height and beveled on both sides
- **Pitched entry**, so rain doesn't seep in
- **Overhang above**
- **36" doorway**, for wheelchairs up to 32" in width

## SAFE LIGHTING

- **Motion sensor outdoor lights**, to automatically turn lights on at dusk and off at dawn
- **Low electrical switches and outlets**, at heights easily reached by all
- **LED lighting**, ideal for longevity, energy savings and safety

## SECURITY

- **Peephole on exterior door / camera system**
- **Intercom system**

## ACCESSIBILITY

- **Lever-style door handles** (great for arthritic hands, and for opening the door with your elbow when your hands are full of groceries)
- **Doggy door and invisible fence**
- **Bench**, for easier entry when hands are full, with storage for upholstered cushions

## MAINTENANCE

- **Low-maintenance / maintenance-free plants** (no roses, sorry!)
- **Composite deck** which, unlike wood, resists fading and scratches and never needs to be painted or stained

# INTERIOR

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An open floor plan with most (if not all) of your main living spaces on one level, including the master bedroom and bathroom, will help you remain in your home with ease.

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## THROUGHOUT THE HOME

- **Adaptable floor plans** for people with special needs
- **36" doorways** inside the home, just like the exterior doorway, for wheelchairs up to 32" in width
- **Low thresholds**, with a maximum of a quarter inch height
- **Short and wide hallways**, also allowing for wheelchairs and/or strollers
- **Lowered windows**, or taller windows with a lower sill height, with easy-to-operate hardware that can be opened for cross-ventilation and fresh air
- **Energy-efficient windows** with low-E glass.
- **LED light bulbs**, check that the bulbs used for fixtures have the proper rating, are of the highest allowed wattage, and do not produce an excessive amount of glare
- **Rocker-style light switches**, as they are easier to use than traditional toggle light switches. Place them by each entrance to halls and rooms, no higher than 48" from the floor.
- **Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors** on each floor, ensuring they can be heard in all bedrooms
- **Telephones in multiple rooms**, including the bedroom and bathroom
- **Touch-control lamps and devices**, that automatically turn on and off at set times
- **Hidden electrical cords** not only look better, but also prevent tripping!
- **Wireless remote-controlled window shades**
- **Bluetooth speakers** in all rooms. Alexa from Amazon is a great option.
- **Generator** in case of loss of electricity
- **Greater energy HVAC system**

## LIGHTING

- **South-facing property**, when possible. Lots of natural light is non negotiable.
- **Layered lighting** from the top down. Consider chandeliers, wall sconces, table lamps, and sensory night lights

## FLOORING

- **Non-slip tile** in the entryway
- **Non-slip, easy-to-care-for surfaces** in all rooms. I recommend a large format-terrazzo-look tile, encaustic tile, or wood-look porcelain tiles. Linoleum is now offered in great patterns and textures, and concrete is a fashion-forward material.
- **Slip resistance testing**
- **Temperature-appropriate flooring**, like hardwood floors

## COLOR

- **Contrasting colors** throughout the home to avoid tripping, especially where there is a transition in height or a step in the floor
- **A different color for each room**, so that they are easily distinguishable from one another
- **Solid colors and flat fields** can help residents make more sense of their space. Patterns can be confusing for older people as their visual perception is off, making patterns feel like 3D. For example, a tile pattern can look like something has been dropped and needs to be picked up.

## STAIRS

- **Non-slip carpeting**
- **Handrails** on both sides, extended beyond the bottom step
- **Contrasting color palettes** that provide cues so those with low vision can differentiate a riser from a tread
- **Light fixture** illuminating the entire staircase, with a light switch at the top and bottom and connected to a backup generator that will kick in during a power outage
- **Sensored lights** in nearby hallways and rooms
- **Power outlet** at the top and bottom of the staircase to be able to install a chairlift in the future
- **An elevator** may not be an option in every home, but is worth considering. Multi-story homes may have a pre-framed shaft in the form of stacked closets.

# KITCHEN

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## CABINETRY

- ❑ **Upper wall cabinets situated 3” below conventional height**
- ❑ **Extension glides** for cabinetry
- ❑ **Pull-out shelves** in counters for far-reaching corners
- ❑ **Glass front cabinets**

## COUNTERTOPS

- ❑ **Counterspace adjacent to or opposite from all appliances**, for placing dishes
- ❑ **Accented strip on edge** to provide visual orientation to the workspace
- ❑ **Avoid high-gloss countertops** that reflect light
- ❑ **Open, under-counter seated work areas**
- ❑ **Two-height counters**

## APPLIANCES

- ❑ **Stove or cooktop** with controls near the front of the device
- ❑ **Use induction cooking**
- ❑ **Wall oven placed at eye-level**
- ❑ **Oven with dials on the front**, for visibility and safety
- ❑ **Microwave** under cabinet
- ❑ **Raised dishwasher** with push button controls or dishwasher drawer
- ❑ **Fridge with double doors and pull-out freezer**

## OTHERS

- ❑ **Install task lighting** for the sink, stove and other work areas
- ❑ **Avoid contrast on flooring**
- ❑ **Lightweight, ABC-rated fire extinguisher** in an easy-to-reach location
- ❑ **Easy-to-grasp D-shaped handles**, rather than knobs, on cabinets and drawers
- ❑ **Level-touch or sensor-style kitchen faucet**, ideally one that’s pressure-balanced, temperature-regulated, and kept at or below 120°F for scald protection
- ❑ **Hands-free soap dispenser**
- ❑ **5’ turning radius**

# BATHROOM

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- ❑ **Comfort-height toilet**
- ❑ **Wall-hung sink** with knee space beneath and a panel to protect the user from the pipes
- ❑ **Electric bidet seat** may improve home value and help you save on care and other medical expenses
- ❑ **Easy-to-user, lever, touch, or sensor faucets** for the sink, bathtub and shower
- ❑ **Toilet paper holder** designed to allow for single-hand changing
- ❑ **Attractive grab bars** (towel bars) in the bathtub, shower, and adjacent to the toilet
- ❑ **Insulate exposed pipes** beneath the sink to protect against touching a hot pipe
- ❑ **Wi-Fi Nest-compatible thermostats** with a full-color touchscreen interface that can be controlled from near or far to retain the desired water temperature
- ❑ **Water heater at or below 120°F** to avoid scalding
- ❑ **Motion night-lights and/or illuminated light switches** in the bathroom and the hallway leading to it
- ❑ **Door that swings out** or a barn door
- ❑ **Contrasting surfaces**, such as the countertop edge being a different color than the cabinets below to help those with diminishing eyesight





# FLOORING AND WALLS

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- Rubber-backed rugs** on the bathroom floor
- Heated floor tiles** that are non-slip and non-glare
- Horizontal, high-contrast, colored tiles**, especially in the shower, at about 60" above the floor can help to maintain balance and spatial orientation
- Blocking behind the wall**

# SHOWER

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- No-threshold shower** with built-in or pull-down benches
- Linear drain**
- Comfort-height water closets** with grab bars
- Hand held, height-adjustable showerheads**
- Non-slip surface**

# LAUNDRY

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- A front-load washer** to reduce bending
- Raise washer and dryer** a minimum of 12 - 15" above the floor
- Laundry shoot**, if your home has a second floor

# LIVING SPACES

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- Clear, wide passageways** between carefully-arranged furniture
- Bed placement for easy access to bathroom**
- Secure large area rugs to the floor** with double-sided tape or non-slip mats
- Avoid reflective surfaces**

# LIGHTING

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- **Use natural light to the fullest** by opening curtains, blinds and shades during daylight hours
- **Wireless remote-controlled window shades**
- **Window treatment panels that are easy to open and close** and offer blackout lining
- **Layered lighting from the top down.** Consider chandeliers, wall sconces, table lamps, and sensory night lights

# FURNITURE

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- **Lightweight tables**
- **Furniture casters** on pieces for easy movement
- **Chairs and sofas with arms that easy to rise from,** cushions that are firm enough not to sink into yet are still comfortable
- **Nanotex and Crypton fabrics are stain, odor and wrinkle resistant.**  
They outperform conventional fabric treatments, providing long-lasting protection and extend the life of the fabric. These treatments repel liquids and help retain the fabric's natural softness, while allowing the fabric to breathe naturally

# STORAGE

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- **Adjustable rods and shelves in closets**
- **In-closet lighting**
- **Drawers** provide easier access than black-hole cabinets
- **Cabinet technology that improves access to upper cabinets,** a great help when reaching up high or down low becomes difficult

# GARAGE

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- **5' access aisle between cars, minimum**
- **9' roof** to accommodate some raised-roof vans
- **Ramp to doorway**, or at least the room to accommodate one. If code requires the floor to be several inches below the home's entrance to house for fume protection, you can slope the entire floor from front to back to eliminate the need for a ramp or step

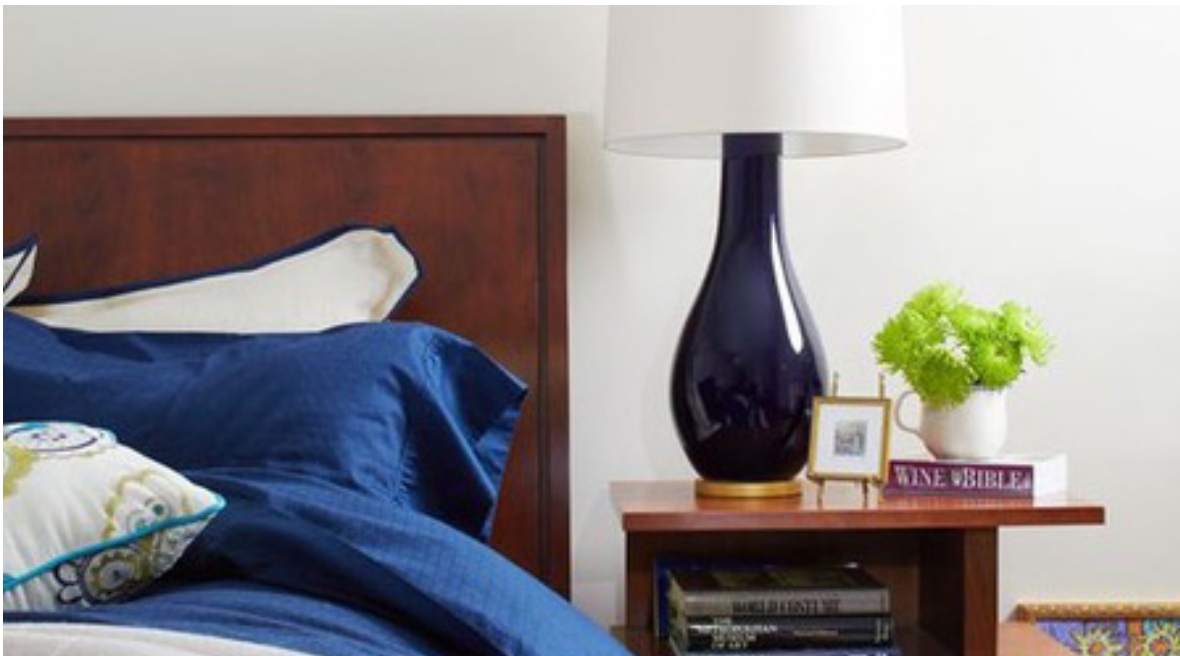
# CARETAKER APARTMENT/SPACE

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When designing your forever home, I highly recommend allowing for a flex room that can be used for various purposes as your family changes.

For example, it can be used as a nursery or playroom when your kids are young, as a home office later, and eventually used for aging parents if combined with a full bath. It also offers an easy space for a caretaker to move in, if needed.

Flex room should also include or plan for a full size bathroom for guests.



# READY TO DESIGN YOUR FOREVER HOME?

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Implementing all the elements on this checklist may seem daunting, but with the right help it doesn't have to be. As a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS), I am proud to help multi-generational families, empty nesters and more design their forever home.

My mission is to transform your home into an uplifting place – one where everyone, regardless of age, functions at their highest level.

**Get in touch for a free consultation, whereby my team and I will help you discover the changes that need to be made to make your home livable for life.**

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