



Juneau Commission on Aging

Building Age Friendly Housing in Juneau

What if all homes in Juneau could be suitable for anyone regardless of a person's age or physical ability?

What if a person who wants to live within their community regardless of his or her age or physical ability, could do just that?

These are questions being asked by governing agencies and individuals who are working towards moving Juneau to be a well-designed, age-friendly community that allows elders to continue to spend their retirement years and money in Juneau. Your support is necessary to make this goal a reality.

The fact is that nearly 30% of the Juneau population is over 55. Aging in place is a personal objective of most Juneau Elders as indicated by the 2020 Senior Survey. Unfortunately, their homes generally built in the 70's and 80's, did not take into consideration an owner's probable future limitations. Going forward, we hope you see the importance of building new residences of all types that integrate age-friendly features into the design, regardless of the age of the targeted buyer today.

These universal design features are not onerous. They already are recommendations made by the Fair Housing Act Design and Construction Requirements, International Building Code, and the AARP Home Fit Guide and other entities.

Could you voluntarily adopt these choices as construction best practices in all new housing construction as well as consider building smaller houses specifically for those Juneau residents who want and still can live independently?

Basically, we are just asking that all new housing and remodels be user-friendly for everybody, regardless of their age.

When designing/constructing new residences ...

1. Elevators in multi-family buildings of 3 floors or more
2. Apartment & condo units that are single story within a multi-story building
3. Zero step entrances/ramps into the building and zero step thresholds
4. Homes have an accessible living space including master bedroom/bath + laundry on one floor
5. Master bath with a walk-in shower, a built-in bench seat and grab-bars
6. Master bath large enough and laid out to handle wheelchair maneuverability and additional person
7. Doorways (interior/exterior) that are at least 36" wide or made that wide by installing swing-away or swing-clear hinges to make use of entire doorway opening
8. Pocket doors where practical in small spaces
9. Phone jacks in the master bedroom and kitchen
10. Electrical outlets (above 18") and light switches and thermostats (below 48")

When choosing features, select options ...

Entrances and Exits

- Exterior lightening at all entrances with sensors
- Doors have lever-style handles

Kitchen

- Cabinetry is easy to access with pull-out cabinetry
- Suitable lighting over sink, stove, and other work area
- Easy to grasp D-shaped pulls and handles

Steps and Stairways

- Stairway lights can be turned off and on at both the top and bottom of the stairs
- Non-slip surface on steps
- Handrails on both sides of stairs

Living Room and Bedroom

- Light switches are rocker-style and installed between 36" and 44" from the floor
- Easy access to electrical and phone outlet
- Closets have interior lights and adjustable rods and shelves
- Room for the bed to place in a location that allows for easy access to the bathroom

Master Bathroom

- Raised or high-profile "comfort" toilet
- Easy to use lever handles for sink, bathtub, and shower faucets
- Walls reinforced with blocking so grab bars can be installed in the bathtub, shower and adjacent to the toilet if not initially installed
- Shower has a no-step entry and seating
- The shower features a hand-held or adjustable showerhead

There is a new variety of creative housing options to consider

It is recognized that Juneau does have land availability issues that impacts the type of housing that can profitably be constructed. Today, however, there are evolving housing types that could diversify options for Elders beyond what is currently available, the house/condo/apartment complexes. Consider the possibilities.

- Tiny Homes
- Village Model
- Cottage Communities
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Multigenerational Living Concept

Links for additional information

- 2020 Juneau Senior Survey <https://juneau.org/clerk/boards-committees/jcoa>
- Fair Housing Act Design Manual: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/destech/fairhousing.html>
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): <https://www.ada.gov/>
- AARP HomeFit Guide: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide.html>
- National Association of Home Builders Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS): <https://www.nahb.org/Education%20and%20Events/Education/Designations/Certified%20Aging-in-Place%20Specialist%20CAPS>
- Example of Tiny House Cottage Community: <https://tinyhousetalk.com/tiny-cottage-community-in-bend-oregon/>
- Example of the Multigenerational Living Concept: <https://seniorhousingnews.com/2021/05/05/bill-thomas-colleagues-unveil-kallimos-communities-multigenerational-living-concept/>
- Universal Design: <http://universaldesign.com/what-is-ud/>
- AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>

Ask this question *“What kind of housing do you imagine needing and wanting for yourself as you move towards Elderhood?”* Whether your preference is an age friendly house/condo/apartment or one of the newer housing models based on smaller size and larger community, there will be plenty of grateful people that will want to live in what you build.

Contact: City Clerk’s Office city.clerk@juneau.gov 907-586-5278