

Technical Specifications



Ideally, all seven Home for Life™ Essentials will be included on the main floor, eliminating the need to climb stairs to reach a bedroom, bathroom, or laundry area. If this is not possible, then please see the note below regarding stairs.

1. The Entrance

A Home for Life™ will have one or both of the following options to enter the home:

- At least one zero-step entrance
- Provisions for the installation of a ramp or vertical platform lift in an attached garage
- It is recommended that BOTH options be integrated into the home's design.

A zero-step entrance will:

- Have a minimum 5' x 5' level exterior landing that is covered to divert water and snow
- Have a minimum 5' x 5' foyer inside the home
- Have a door with a minimum clearance of 34" when open. A 36" hinged (slab) door generally provides the clearance required.
- Have a minimum 24" clear space at the latch side of the door on the pull side and 12" of clear space on the latch side of the door on the push side
- Have a maximum ½" beveled threshold
- Be connected to a parking area by a walkway with a slope no greater than 1:20

Zero-step entries are NOT prohibited by municipalities as some may believe. However, they do require special attention to drainage and guarding against moisture penetration. In our northern climate, homeowners who use a mobility device such as a wheelchair or scooter may prefer to enter their home via a ramp or vertical lift installed in an attached garage rather than going outdoors to reach the front door, however, this is inconvenient for visitors.

Future installation of a platform lift requires:

- A double-car garage
- Space for a 5' x 5' level landing to be constructed in front of the door leading into the home
- An additional 5' x 5' level space beside, or in front of, the landing to install the lift
- A 12 amp dedicated circuit installed near the door
- A door leading into the house that is a minimum of 34" wide when open. A 36" hinged (slab) door generally provides the clearance required.
- A minimum 24" clear space at the latch side of the door on the pull side and 12" of clear space on the latch side of the door on the push side
- A maximum ½" beveled threshold in the doorway leading into the house

Future installation of a ramp inside a garage requires:

- A double-car garage
- Enough length to create a ramp with a slope that does not exceed 1:12
- Space for a 5' x 5' level landing to be constructed in front of the door leading into the home
- A door leading into the house that is a minimum of 34" wide when open. A 36" hinged (slab) door generally provides the clearance required.
- A minimum 24" clear space at the latch side of the door on the pull side and 12" of clear space on the latch side of the door on the push side
- A maximum ½" beveled threshold in the doorway leading into the house
- Ramp design must meet the requirements outlined in the Alberta Building Code.

A Home for Life™ does NOT allow for the provision for a ramp to be added to the front of a home. They are not aesthetically appealing, are costly to construct, are difficult to maintain, and decrease resale value of a home.

They can also be an invitation to criminals who prey on the elderly and disabled.

Zero-step entries can be created by lowering the foundation, raising the ground to the front door, or doing a combination of both. An entrance is required where the floor level is no more than 30" above grade. Where this cannot be achieved, the preferred alternative is to create a sloping walk to a side door or back deck, combined with a vertical lift or ramp located in an attached garage.

Another method involves making the garage floor level with the inside door and making adjustments to properly vent vehicle exhaust.

Resources

Journal of Light Construction, September 2009,

<http://www.jlconline.com/aging-in-place/building-zero-step-entries.aspx>

Residential Rehabilitation, Remodeling and Universal Design (North Carolina State University College of Design), pp. 6-9 http://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/pubs_p/docs/residential_remodelinl.pdf

2. The Kitchen

- A minimum 60" diameter turning circle in the work area (in front of, or adjacent to, the sink, fridge, cooktop and oven)
- Waste pipe under the sink brought through the wall at 12" – 14" to the centre of the pipe from floor level. This enables the homeowner to lower the sink without having to reroute plumbing.

Optional:

- At least one section of lowered countertop with no cabinetry (or removable cabinetry) below. Lowered sections of countertop will be:
 - between 30" and 32" high
 - a minimum of 30" wide
 - a minimum of 19" deep
- Removable cabinetry beneath the sink OR retractable cabinet doors with no toe kick
- All counters mounted between 32" and 34" from the floor
- Upper cabinetry hung no higher than 16" from the surface of the countertop, except where the Alberta Building Code states that they must be higher (e.g. around cooktops)
- Height adjustable kitchen cabinets. Various options are available on the market.
- A rear draining sink
- Electrical switches located in the side of cabinetry rather than at the back
- A counter cooktop with front or side controls
- A wall-mounted, side-opening oven with a heat-proof slide-out work surface beneath
- Flooring that runs under counters (to maintain a finished look if they are ever removed)

3. The Bathroom

At least one full (3-piece) bathroom that can be reached without climbing stairs* which contains:

- A 60" turning circle(s) in front of, or adjacent to, the toilet, sink and shower
- A minimum 34" of clear space between the edge of the toilet bowl and the nearest wall OR the option to easily expand the bathroom without relocating plumbing
- Waste pipe under the sink brought in at 12" – 14" to the centre of the pipe from the floor. This enables the homeowner to lower the sink without having to reroute the plumbing.
- A minimum 60" x 60" shower area with no threshold
- ¾" plywood sheeting installed around the toilet and shower according to the illustration below. Plywood sheeting provides the greatest amount of flexibility for positioning grab bars, should they be needed.
- Minimum ¾" plywood is required to support the weight of the average user.

Optional:

- A turning circle that will not impede the user's ability to close the door. A pocket door or outward swinging door may be required in smaller rooms. The turning circle may extend into the shower area but is not ideal.
- Removable cabinetry beneath the sink OR retractable cabinet doors with no toe kick
- Flooring run under the sink to maintain a finished look should cabinets need to be removed
- Toilet located next to a full-length wall

4. The Bedroom

- At least one minimum 11' x 14' bedroom that can be accessed without climbing stairs* and has a minimum 60" turning circle on one side of the bed. The turning circle will be connected to the doorway via a minimum 42" wide path of travel.

* accessible by chair lift or elevator if required

Optional:

- A turning circle that will not impede the user's ability to close the door. A pocket door or outward swinging door may be required in smaller rooms.
- A minimum 60" turning circle in front of dressers and cabinets
- An opening, or option for an opening, to a three-piece bathroom (meeting the requirements in Feature #8). This enables the homeowner to install a ceiling mounted track lift between the bed and the bathing area if/when required.

5. The Laundry Room

A Home for Life™ will have one or more of the following options:

- A laundry area that can be reached without climbing stairs* which contains a minimum 60" turning circle in front of, or adjacent to the laundry appliances
- An area that can be reached without climbing stairs* where the plumbing and electrical has been roughed in for easy conversion to a laundry area that will provide a minimum 60" turning circle in front of, or adjacent to the laundry appliances

* accessible by chair lift or elevator if required

6. Hallways

- A minimum 42" wide clear path of travel throughout the interior of the home. This includes hallways as well as the space available to pass between immovable objects, such as kitchen islands and cabinetry.
- Maximum ¼" beveled thresholds or transition pieces

7. Doors

The following applies to interior doors.

- A minimum 34" clear opening when the door is open on ALL interior doors in the home. A 36" hinged (slab) door generally provides the clearance required.
- A maximum ¼" beveled threshold on all interior doorways

Optional:

- A clear space of at least 24" at the latch side of the door on the pull side and 12" on the push side of all interior doors

8. Steps and Stairs

A Home for Life™ will have one or more of the following three options for vertical circulation:

- No steps or stairs
- The following areas of the home – entrance, kitchen, living area, full (3-piece) bathroom, bedroom and laundry area* – are all located on the same level
- No more than one flight of straight-run stairs connecting the areas of the home mentioned in (a. i.), which
 - are a minimum of 40" wide
 - contain no curves or winders
 - have flush nosing (to reduce the risk of trips and falls)
 - have a full-length wall along at least one side of the entire stairwell and 10' of clear space at the bottom of the stairs. These features are required to accommodate an inclined platform lift (designed to carry someone in a wheelchair). A load-bearing wall is ideal, but not necessary. Newer models of platform lifts mount to the stairs.
- 5' x 5' stacking closets or pantries built for future conversion to an elevator.

Some newer styles of vertical lifts/elevators do not require a separate machine room or pit. It is strongly recommended to work with an elevator or lift company in designing stacking closets.

*All rooms or areas mentioned in this list should meet Home for Life™ requirements.

A Note About Stairs

If you cannot include the accessible three piece bathroom, bedroom, or laundry area on the main floor, you can locate them on another floor, provided you follow these guidelines for stairs. To simplify the process for installing a future chair-lift:

- Stairs should be 40 inches wide and straight-run (no turns or landings).
- A five-foot by five-foot "landing space" at the top and bottom of the stairs is preferable so that the user can transfer into and out of the chair safely.
- Electrical outlets at the top and bottom of the stairs may be required.
- Reinforce the walls with plywood along the full length of the stairs.
- There should be plenty of lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- An alternative to these modifications is to construct 5-foot by 5-foot stacking closets that can be converted to an elevator shaft if required.