



Housing Accessibility Checklist:

Home improvement guide for aging in place

FOR RESIDENTS



It's important for Detroit residents to be able to stay in their homes as they grow older. If you need to adjust your home to make this possible, here is a list of:

- Quick and easy upgrades you can make to keep your home comfortable and safe to use as your needs change
- Renovations that require more long-term planning

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This information was compiled by Detroit Disability Power for an initiative supported by the City of Detroit. The following list is made up of suggested repairs. Your own home modifications should be based on your needs and consultations with licensed contractors, your health care provider, etc.

Entryway

LOW-COST, DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) MODIFICATIONS

Lighting

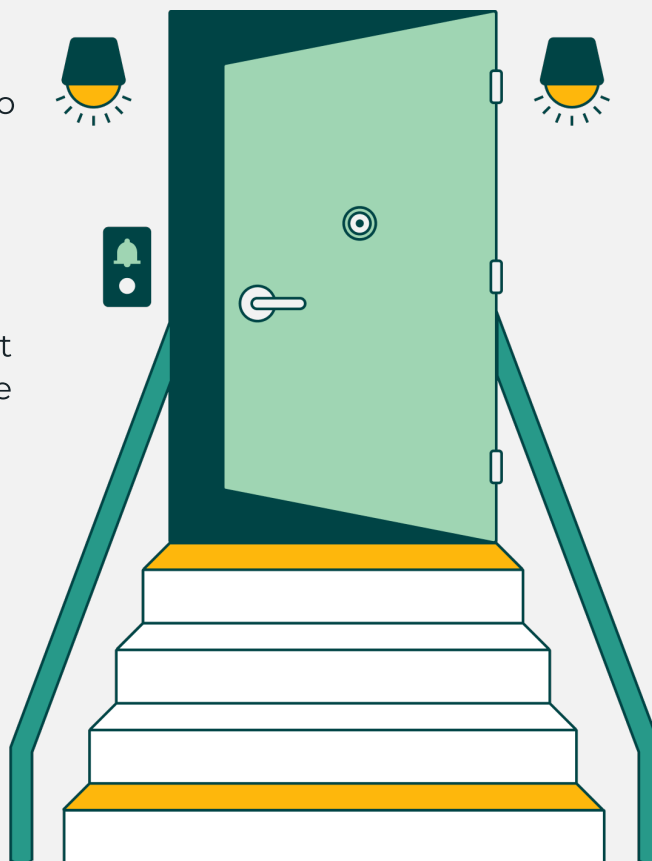
Install better lighting to improve visibility of steps and doorways.

Doorbell Camera

Install a camera to alert you when visitors arrive and improve home security.

Door Hardware

Install lever door handles for easier grip. Consider an electronic door opener for easier access.



Peephole

Install a peephole at a comfortable height. We suggest 43 inches from the ground.

Door Swing

Ensure that the front door swings inward to give you enough space to get in and out of your home.

Steps & Stairs

Paint top and bottom steps a different color to easily see when you've reached them.

CONSTRUCTION-REQUIRED MODIFICATIONS

No-Step Entry

Ensure at least one entrance is step-free and flat with the surrounding ground to help use any mobility equipment and avoid trips and falls.

Ramp Installation

Install ramps with a safe incline. For every 1 inch of height of the ramp, you need 12 inches of length (1:12). Longer ramps may be needed for bigger inclines.

Entry & Security Door

Use a 36-inch wide door. If needed, remove or adjust the security door swing to allow for more space when using your main door.

Uniform Steps

Ensure each step is the same size. Ideally, steps are no more than 7 inches tall and the part where your foot lands is no more than 11 inches deep.



Porch Rails

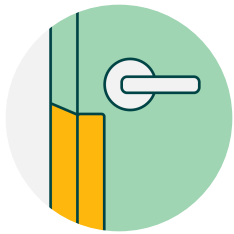
Install porch rails 34-38 inches above the ground to prevent falls from your porch.

Handrails

Install handrails 34-36 inches above ground surrounding steps. If possible, extend the rails 1-foot at each end to give you more support as you start and finish using the steps.

Doors, Hallways & Closets

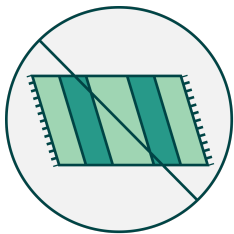
LOW-COST, DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) MODIFICATIONS



Corner Guards and Door Handles

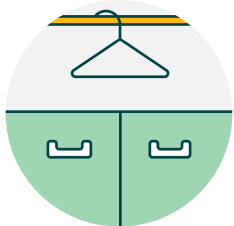
Install strips on the walls and door edges to protect them from damage caused by mobility equipment like wheelchairs.

Install lever door handles.



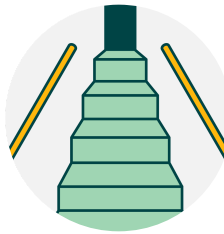
Rugs and Runners

Remove rugs, especially in hallways and bathrooms, to reduce tripping hazards. If necessary, use rubber-backed, secure rugs that contrast with the floor.



Closets

Install lower rods and pull out drawers to make storage easier to reach.



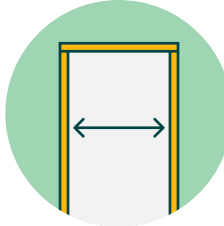
Handrails

Install and secure continuous handrails on both sides of any indoor steps. Paint handrails a contrasting color from the wall to help you see them clearly.



Furniture

Reduce extra furniture and create at least 5-foot wide paths between furniture pieces to help you move around safely, especially with mobility equipment.



Door Hinges

If doors are less than 34 inches wide, install swing-clear hinges to gain an extra 2 inches of space if needed.

CONSTRUCTION-REQUIRED MODIFICATIONS

Stairlift

Add a stairlift if the home lacks a bedroom and full bathroom on the first floor.

Hallway & Door Width

Widen hallways to at least 3 feet and interior doorways to 34 inches wide. Ensure there is a clear 5x5-foot space (enough for a wheelchair to fully turn) at corners and in each room.

Barn Doors

Install barn doors that slide on tracks against outside walls in tight rooms like bathrooms to save space.

Flooring

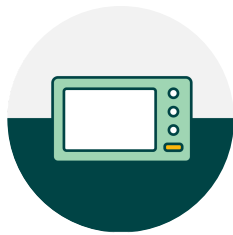
Replace carpets with smooth surfaces like hardwood or sheet vinyl. Use slip-resistant tile in wet areas and ensure floors are level, especially between rooms.

Kitchen



Cabinets

Keep frequently used items in cabinets and shelves you can easily reach to avoid straining and bending.



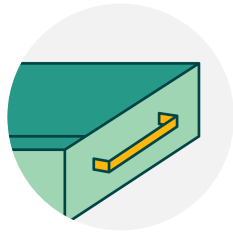
Countertops

Store items used often like medications and microwaves on countertops for easy access.



Sinks

Use lever handles for faucets for easier grip.



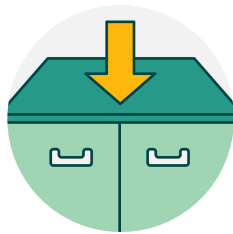
Drawers

Replace cabinet pulls with U-shaped or D-shaped handles for an easier grip.



Pull-out Shelves

Install sliding or pull-out shelves in cabinets to better reach your items. Examples include a Lazy Susan, roller drawers, and pull-down shelves.



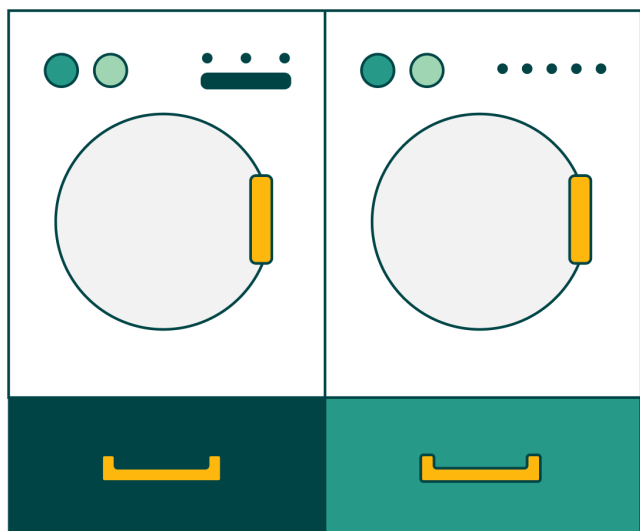
Lowered Cabinets & Countertops

Lower cabinets and counter tops to equipment or seat height, about 28-34 inches above the ground. Consider customizing a sink or work station with room for a seat or wheelchair to fit underneath.

CONSTRUCTION-REQUIRED

Laundry

CONSTRUCTION-REQUIRED



Location

Machines should be moved to the floor in the house where bedrooms are located and most of the clothing is stored.

Appliances

Front-loading washers and dryers with large, easy-to-reach controls, optional pedestals, and smart features are the most accessible, offering convenient use from both seated and standing positions.

Bathroom

LOW-COST, DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) MODIFICATIONS

Mirrors

Install mirrors no more than 40 inches from the ground. Consider full-length mirrors.

Sinks and Shower Handles

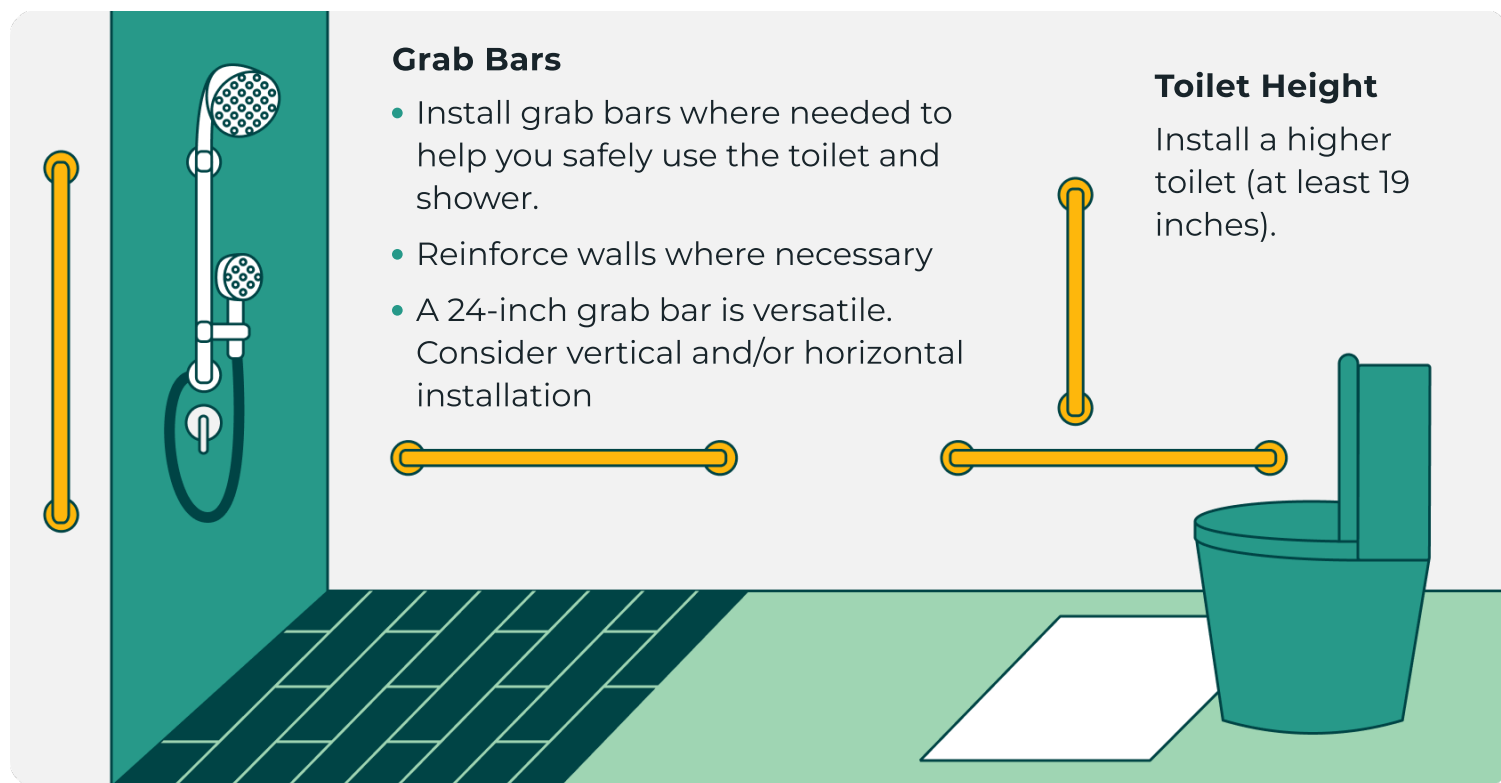
Use lever handles for faucets and showers for easier grip.

Drawers

Replace cabinet pulls with U or D-shaped handles for easier grip.

Grip Mats

Use non-slip mats inside and outside the shower/tub, and near the toilet and sink to prevent falls.



CONSTRUCTION-REQUIRED MODIFICATIONS

Clear Floor Space

Ensure a floor area of at least 5-foot wide so you can turn around easily using any mobility equipment.

Toilet Side Clearance

Provide enough space (60 inches) on either side of the toilet to safely transfer from any mobility equipment.

No-Step Shower

Install a no-step shower; you'll need to create a larger space if you use mobility equipment, at least 3x4 feet.

Transfer Tub

Use bathtub conversion kits to lower the step-in height.

Vanity and Sink Clearance

Install a roll-under sink-vanity that is 28-34 inches tall with 27 inches of clear knee-space underneath.

Lighting & Electrical

LOW-COST, DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) MODIFICATIONS

LED Bulbs

Replace all bulbs with LED lights for consistent brightness. Choose light temperatures based on room function:



Kitchens, Hallways, and Living Rooms:
3000K–4500K



Bathrooms:
3000K–4000K
(frosted or diffused to reduce glare)



Bedrooms:
2700K–3000K

Dimmer Switches & Smart Appliances

Install dimmer switches to create more flexibility. Install motion-activated shut-off devices that turn appliances (like stoves) off if accidentally left on.

CONSTRUCTION-REQUIRED MODIFICATIONS

Lower Light Switches

Lower switches to approximately 33 inches from the floor.

Outlets

Raise outlets to 22 inches from the floor and add outlets where needed, including nightlights.

General Lighting

Increase lighting in dark areas, particularly near stairs and in between rooms. Add additional outlets for lamps.

Tips for Working with Contractors

FOR QUALITY, SAFE IMPROVEMENTS

- Choose licensed and insured contractors for quality work worth your investment. Check their license on the [Michigan License and Regulatory Affairs \(LARA\) website](#). Ask for proof of insurance.
- Pick trustworthy contractors by reading reviews, asking for photos of past work, and comparing multiple estimates. Request a written estimate with project details, total cost, and timeline, and avoid paying in cash (but if you do, get a receipt).
- A reasonable deposit of 10-20% should cover materials; avoid contractors who demand larger up-front payments.
- If work requires pulling a permit with the city, the estimate and scope of work should include this information.
- Pay as work progresses, checking quality along the way.
- Choosing reputable contractors, even at a slightly higher cost, can help you avoid risks and ensure your needs are met.