

Building Your Forever Home

Building your forever home means you intend to live there for a very long time — perhaps for the balance of your life. With that in mind, your home should be thoughtfully designed to mature gracefully alongside you and your family. Long before breaking ground, the design phase is the ideal time to consider how your lifestyle, mobility, and daily routines may evolve over the coming decades.

The goal is simple: create a home that is flexible, comfortable, and capable of adapting to changing needs — without ever looking institutional or clinical. Good universal design is subtle. When properly integrated, these features simply feel thoughtful, spacious, and timeless.



Here are several important considerations when designing a forever home:

Main Floor Living

A main-floor primary owner's suite is one of the most valuable long-term design decisions you can make. Stairs eventually become a navigational challenge for nearly everyone, whether due to age, injury, or temporary mobility limitations.

If lot size or architectural style requires multiple stories, consider incorporating a residential elevator during the planning phase. Residential elevators are often more cost-effective than people realize, especially when planned early in construction. Even if the elevator is not installed immediately, designing stacked closets or dedicated shaft space now can make a future installation simple and economical.

Wider Doorways and Accessible Hardware

Interior doors should ideally be 34"–36" wide to comfortably accommodate if ever needed mobility devices. Main entry doors should be at least 42" wide, or consider elegant double-door configurations for both accessibility and visual impact.

Lever-style door hardware is strongly recommended over traditional knobs, as levers are significantly easier to operate for individuals with limited hand strength or arthritis. Proper installation matters — levers should return upward rather than downward to reduce accidental catching on clothing or mobility equipment.

Open Floor Plan and Circulation Space

Space planning is critical. Hallways should ideally be at least 42"–48" wide, and clearances between cabinetry, kitchen islands, appliances, and furniture should accommodate future mobility needs. A minimum of 48" clearance in kitchens and major walkways creates a far more comfortable and functional environment for all ages.

These generous dimensions not only improve accessibility but also enhance the overall feeling of openness and luxury within the home.

Bathroom and Ensuite Design

The ensuite bathroom deserves special attention in a forever home. A curbless walk-in shower is one of the smartest investments you can make. Beyond accessibility, curbless showers provide a clean, modern aesthetic often seen in high-end custom homes and luxury resorts.

Additional considerations include:

- Reinforced wall blocking behind tile and drywall for future grab bar installation
- Comfort-height toilets
- Handheld shower heads
- Slip-resistant flooring
- Wider vanity clearances
- Adequate lighting and natural light whenever possible

Importantly, these features can be beautifully integrated into the design without sacrificing elegance or style.

Entryways and Exterior Access

Consider minimizing or eliminating steps at primary entrances. Zero-threshold or gently sloped entries provide easier access for strollers, groceries, luggage, and future mobility devices while creating a seamless indoor-outdoor transition.

Garage access should also be considered carefully, particularly during Western New York winters when snow and ice can make navigation hazardous.

Planning Ahead for Technology

A forever home should also anticipate future technologies. Consider pre-wiring for:

- Security systems
- Smart lighting and automation
- Emergency communication systems
- Motorized window coverings
- Backup power systems
- Future medical or monitoring technologies

Thoughtful infrastructure planning today prevents costly retrofits tomorrow.

A Home Designed for Life

Notice that none of these considerations make a home feel institutional. In fact, most contribute to better architecture, improved functionality, and a more refined living experience for everyone — regardless of age.

The true beauty of a forever home lies in its ability to quietly adapt over time. A thoughtfully designed home provides peace of mind knowing that as life evolves, the home will continue to support your independence, comfort, and lifestyle for generations to come.