



AIA
New York

AIA New York Position Statement: Design for Aging

The world population of people over the age of 65 is increasing. By 2020, it is estimated that people aged 65 and older will outnumber children under the age of five for the first time in human history; by 2050, over 15% of the world's population will be 65 or older, topping out at 1.5 billion people. This is equivalent to the combined current population of North America, South America, and Europe.¹ Architects can play a significant role in helping to address this demographic shift, through policy advocacy, through community involvement, and through creating spaces that recognize the needs of all ages.

New York City is at the forefront of this reality and these trends: 16% of the city's population, nearly 1.4 million adults, are age 60 and older. This number is projected to increase by 40% to almost 2 million residents by 2040.² Plainly, the need for age-friendly residential buildings and age-conscious community planning has never been greater. The built environment must meet the needs of this growing population, especially in the areas of housing and healthcare. Architects and the building community play an increasingly significant role in ensuring that the city remains a safe place to grow old -creating places that encourage wellness and healthy living for all.

The American Institute of Architects

AIA New York
536 LaGuardia Place
New York, NY 10012

T (212) 683 0023
F (212) 696 5022

www.aiany.org

As our population ages, more New Yorkers are choosing to 'age in place,' remaining in the homes and neighborhoods they have helped build and contributed to all their lives. Ninety-six percent of older New Yorkers are currently aging in place.³ This means older adults can participate actively and meaningfully in their communities and live in a manner of their choosing, for as long as possible. Moreover, Americans of all ages benefit from a diverse society in which different generations lead interconnected daily lives.

In New York City, AIANY is working with local governments and advocacy groups as part of the Age-Friendly NYC initiative. The comprehensive set of policies is being implemented throughout the five boroughs, with several initiatives being expanded throughout the state. Centers for Healthy Living are another new model for providing seniors with integrated fitness, therapeutic and cultural environments that can become vibrant community resources that the AIANY supports.

AIANY's *Aging in Place Guide for Building Owners*, which promotes age-friendly design, considers the social and physical changes that seniors become subject to over time, in order to reduce physical and psychological barriers and the potential for injury. It recommends modest changes to existing buildings, with the goal of enabling older adults to maintain and maximize their physical capabilities and continue to live independently.

Principles

- Recognizing the desire for most seniors to 'age in place' and the economic limitation for most seniors, AIANY encourages the expansion and development of community based, intergenerational facilities which also contain special services for seniors.



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- AIANY supports design that advances numerous social objectives including liveliness, safety, sustainability, health, pleasure, dignity, equitable use, and inclusiveness.
- Architectural design can have a significant impact on the quality of life for seniors. AIANY supports the guidelines and codes of the NYC Department for the Aging, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, the Fair Housing Act, and other protections that ensure the health, safety and welfare of our aging population.
- The built environment should be designed for an all-inclusive range of individuals, with sensitivity to how they experience an environment. In particular, public buildings and spaces should be inviting and accessible to all ages.
- The design of new residential spaces should accommodate people with diverse abilities, to be barrier-free and allow for the maneuverability of wheelchairs, and to be flexible to meet the changing needs of users.
- AIANY supports improvements to the urban environment, such as improved sidewalks and accessible parks that integrate various age groups in neighborhoods.
- AIANY supports on-going development of public transportation, which enables seniors to live independently. Accessible transit options greatly reduce the need for automobile use and ownership, which for many seniors may become both unsafe and unaffordable.

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¹ [World Population Ageing Report](#), United Nations, 2015

² [Aging in Place Guide for Building Owners](#), AIANY Design for Aging Committee et. al, 2016

³ [2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#), U.S. Census Bureau, 2015