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Designing homes for senior citizens

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ABSTRACT

From the designer's perspective, we ideally look to answer several considerations catering to the end user needs. It is always challenging to design concerning specific age groups where we tend to respond beyond the design standards as such. This paper will help you to comprehend that there is a list of things you ought to keep in mind while designing homes for elderly people.

Keywords— Senior citizen home, Designing, Designer's perspective, Design standards

1. TO INFORM COMFORT, SAFETY, AND THEN AESTHETICS

Homes for seniors are markedly different in terms of living and lifestyle from those of growing families or working families. Let us take an example. Many seniors continue to contribute to their professions through advisory or consultancy or education well into their retirement. In such cases, the spare bedroom is then more than just that. This space can be used predominantly as a home office, which transforms into a guest bedroom for visitors or extended family. So, we believe it is important to understand the needs and requirements of the end-users when designing or choosing their home.

2. THEIR HEALTH CONDITION, MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

As seniors age, another key area of focus should be on support staff requirements within their home. Occasional night-stay nooks should be considered for short-term caregivers. Proper designated space for long-term caregivers/nurse, along with adequate storage for their belongings, should be considered. Medicine storage space should be conveniently located. Considering that difficulty in mobility with age is a possibility, it is essential to keep in mind the need for at-home medical equipment.

It is important to design buildings keeping in mind the mobility needs as well as the safety requirements of our seniors. Ramps with adequate gradients (say, 1:12 slope), stairs with handrails, toilet with safety bars near the WC and shower areas, appropriately placed emergency alarms are minimum design considerations when designing for seniors.

To summarize this part one of the article, being empathetic while designing shall direct assistance.

- Consider not to remind the seniors of their illness,
- Equipment and medicines are discretely stored but with easy access,
- Neatly organized home, that is easy to maintain,
- Interior decorations should ideally reflect the family's aspirations and preferences,
- Aesthetically arranged room to create a warm, peaceful and non-clinical feel. Mementoes marking a well-lived life, itself will be aesthetically pleasing.

3. COMFORT, SECURITY AND PRECAUTIONS

Although we can help mitigate some risks through design, it is important to practice common precautions while doing house chores. Such as not climbing ladders if seniors have difficulty with balance, removing safety hazards before dusting and cleaning, placing anti-slip floor mats in wet areas, always keeping your emergency contacts within easy reach and much more.

If housekeeping is outsourced, it is important to train the staff to put items back in their place to avoid the trouble of searching for items later by seniors as family members may not be always around.

4. SOME DESIGN PRINCIPLES WE FOLLOW WHEN IT COMES TO FLOORING AND SAFETY

Key criteria point at

- (a) Slip resistance
- (b) Easy to walk on and
- (c) Easy to maintain.

In order to confirm the ease in mobility and care, some of the things which we can make sure of are:

- No floor level transitions between rooms on the same floor
- Reduce the number of door thresholds to essentials only
- Avoid any loose rugs and floor carpet. Alternately, secure the rugs and carpets using anti-slip rug underlays.
- Use dry bathrooms, which have dry areas near the WC and Wash basins and the wet area is confined to the shower area. Dry bathrooms reduce the possibility of slipping and falling.

- Provide good evenly distributed ambient lighting across all floor areas without creating glare.

5. SUFFICIENT LIGHTING ACCORDING TO AGE

Changing vision as we age is an important consideration when designing homes and buildings. Eyesight changes and common eye ailments require brighter and cooler lights and lesser yellow lights. Also, it is important to ensure there is adequate ambient light for general lighting (safe movement around furniture, obstacles, etc.) and focused lights for task activities (like reading books or instructions on medicines, etc.)

In addition, day lighting is another important consideration in home design. Rooms should not be checked only on the sufficiency of windows for light and ventilation. Glare-free distribution of light within the room (by locating sun shading devices properly) is a critical consideration. Imagine a large window casting harsh sunlight into the room. Even if lux levels

are appropriate, this would cast strong shadows in the interiors and result in relative darkness. Lighting distribution analysis should be age appropriate to avoid contrasting light-casts, which can impact vision performance.

6. CONCLUSION

A recent study found that household chores done by seniors gives them a sense of purpose and contributes to both physical and mental well-being. As designers, our focus is to help active seniors be as independent as they can. And that means ensuring that there is an ease in doing any activity, simplicity in maintenance and housekeeping, reducing small everyday risks, and creating a safe beautiful home that supports active ageing.

7. REFERENCES

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