



PIONEER

DESIGNING
KITCHENS AND BATHS
FOR MULTI-GENERATIONAL
HOUSEHOLDS

As of 2016, approximately [64 million Americans](#) lived in a multi-generational home. With a large population of baby boomers now aging, sandwiched generations are looking after both their parents and their under-25 kids.

Multi-generational homes are on the rise.

Designing or renovating a multi-generational house can be a challenge due to the number of residents under the same roof, each with different wants and needs. Privacy, space and accessibility are all considerations, and when it comes to bathrooms and kitchens, designers and architects have their work cut out for them.

We've created this checklist to help you deliver a result that your clients will be happy with — for both functionality and style — which are two important considerations for your clients in a multi-generational space.

1. BATHROOMS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE

Bathrooms are one of the most frequented rooms of a house, and multi-generational families have a variety of needs. From the youngest generation to the oldest, each family member has both physical needs and individual wants.

However, multi-generational homeowners don't want to sacrifice style for safety and vice versa, which can present an additional challenge to designers, architects and general contractors. Here's how that can be achieved.



Easy to Handle

Common bathrooms, such as powder rooms, should reflect this diversity. Both elderly and very young generations may have challenges with mobility and grip. Small hands struggle with awkward faucets and elderly folks face gripping issues. In addition, older generations often have mobility devices such as canes, walkers or wheelchairs.

Fixtures such as faucet handles are adaptable for a diverse range of mobility needs. Single-handed and [touchless sensor faucets](#) are a great solution — but a lot of designs are stereotypical and don't reflect the modern style multi-generational homeowners are looking for.

You can also choose an ADA-compliant handle. These handles ensure that the effort used to turn them meets ADA requirements, so anyone can use the faucet, regardless of physical disabilities or limited mobility.



Requirements include being able to use the faucet with only one hand, as well as being able to turn on a faucet using less than 5 lbs of force and without twisting or straining your wrist.

Finding an ADA-compliant faucet is easier than ever. Just look for the ADA symbol on the product page or packaging.

Showers for Everyone

Shower enclosures have been on the rise for a few years now, and varieties in design and accessibility have reflected this growing trend. In smaller bathrooms, shower enclosures make use of optimal space and account for considerable safety above traditional step-in tub/shower designs.

Creating a shower design that is both accessible and stylish is simple. An enclosed shower can make a smaller bathroom look bigger with seamless glass enclosure and a luxurious [rain showerhead](#). Mixing textures and colors adds a layer of attention to design and sets a shower enclosure apart from the same old styles that can be bland.

If mobility devices or chairs are needed, ensure the shower has no lip that can be tripped over or stumbled on.

Metals like copper or matte black create a personalized look that looks designer without the designer cost. Slate or mosaic tiles pair well with all shades of faucets and showerheads and are designs that are both popular and have longevity.

Make sure the shower products you choose also come with temperature stops. Every new shower valve is now required to have an adjustable maximum temperature limit stop as a safety feature. This stop either limits the rotation of the shower valve toward the hot setting or limits the maximum temperature flowing from the shower to 120F or less to prevent scald injuries.

Water Consumption Doesn't Have To Be Boring

Multi-generational family residences have much higher utility bills than single-generation, and those costs are often shouldered by sandwich generations. Not only that, but multi-generational residents are increasingly concerned about environmental factors such as excess water consumption. This is reflected in many renovation and new-build projects.

Bathrooms are one of the biggest culprits to excess water consumption, not necessarily because of the residents but because of the materials used. Showers alone are responsible for about [17% of the water used](#) in the home — and that just increases with multi-generations and the frequency of showers. A single average family uses nearly 40 gallons of water a day; with multi-generations, that number increases.

The good news is that there are ways that water preservation can be incorporated into bathroom design without sacrificing style, quality or cost. Materials such as a low-flow [Lux-Flow rain showerhead](#) will conserve water without compromising the shower experience. Low-flow showerheads have a flow rate of 1.75 gallons per minute. For the average 10-minute shower, that's 7.5 gallons of water saved! Multiply that by the number of people in the house, and the savings quickly add up.

There are also low-flow options available for kitchen and lavatory faucets, ideal for those looking for products that [meet WaterSense and Calgreen certifications](#). The WaterSense program is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) partnership program that aims to protect the future of the U.S. Water supply by providing people with easy and identifiable ways to conserve water.



Just look for the WaterSense logo on the product page or packaging when choosing your faucet or showerhead.

Safety for Everyone

Multi-generational bathrooms need to be safe. This is a large concern particularly for multi-generational homes that house both elderly and young children.

Non-slip showers are crucial when considering the safety of residents. Falls in the shower are unfortunately more common than not, and a vast majority of them occur among the elderly. While a fall for a young adult may not be as detrimental, for an elderly person, this could mean a trip to the emergency room and years of complications.

Fortunately, there is a variety of non-slip bathroom tiles now available. Laying down a non-stick mat that looks unsightly and can attract grime and mildew is something of the past thanks to advancements in bathroom technology. And with the growing popularity of non-stick tiles, the options of design and style expanded so it's easy to find a look that is perfect for your clients' style.



Mirrors and Towel Holders

Mirrors and towel holders are an often overlooked part of the bathroom design, and particular care should be taken when choosing these items for a multi-generational home's bathrooms.

Mirrors that are small often make it difficult for all members of the family to use them. Some members may require seats while using the vanity while others need higher mirrors. Having a large mirror over the vanity — or even a full-length mirror on a separate wall — is helpful in making every family member feel comfortable. And there are so many beautiful mirror designs from simple or frameless to ornate framing.

Towel holders also comprise not just a detail of design but accessibility and safety. Installing towel holders out of reach of the shower can compromise safety as people will need to either step outside the shower and off the non-slip tiles, or reach out too far.

Plus, a lot of towel holders now are heated, which is a simple add-on that's no longer an unaffordable luxury. When designing a bathroom, make sure the towel holder is both near the shower and able to hook up to the electrical outlet for a heated indulgence every resident in the home will enjoy.

Shower Seats and Grab Bars

Shower seats and grab bars are an integral part of safety and accessibility. In fact, in order to keep bathrooms accessible for all generations in a multi-generational residence, shower seats and [grab bars are not just a perk](#), they're essential.

Many older generations have mobility needs that require particular balancing tools or seats. A lot of shower designs can easily incorporate these features, and this is one of the reasons why a seamless walk-in shower is a great idea (and is so popular). A shower seat can easily be incorporated into the wall using the same non-slip tile, which also makes cleaning easier as there aren't any unsightly nooks and crannies that scum can build up in.

2. A KITCHEN FOR EVERYONE



Right next to bathrooms, kitchens are one of the most frequented rooms in the house and are often considered the heart of the home. But unlike bathrooms, kitchens have to accommodate many people at once. That means space and accessibility need to be incorporated into the design.

Think About Sound

With many residents under one roof, sound can be a challenge. With a lack of sound-absorbing textures and stone and steel surfaces, kitchens carry a lot of noise. This can make for an unpleasant kitchen experience and can oftentimes cause stress and chaos. No one wants that!

Sound-absorption materials include acoustic panels you can put on the walls and island, as well as more traditional methods such as floor mats and slow-close hardware on the cabinets and drawers to avoid loud banging sounds.

French and pocket doors can also help reduce sound. Being able to close off open areas so kitchen noise doesn't echo through the house (or echo into the kitchen from other areas) makes for a home that is comfortable and functional. These doors can be set into large openings and even across a large one-room space such as open-concept homes. Setting them into walls or hideaway doors allows the space to open up again.

Countertop Heights and Appliance Locations

There are standard dimensions for most kitchen countertops, but 'standard' doesn't work for everyone. For instance, they don't take into account those with mobility devices and height differences. Make sure to ask: Do these standards meet the requirements of the residents or do they need adjusting? And most importantly, will they continue to work in the future?

In multi-generational homes, just because standard countertop heights work now, this doesn't mean they will be functional in the future as generations age and may need wheelchairs and walkers in the future. Adjusting for these potential accommodations now can make the kitchen experience worry-free for a lot of residents. And it ensures that any visitors who have aids are able to move freely throughout the kitchen and home.

Appliances can be customized as well for multi-generational homes, for many of the same reasons. Children are particularly curious and don't quite understand the dangers of a hot oven or opening a dishwasher while it's running. Elevating appliances and setting them into the cupboard design can help with this.

Grip and Touch-Free

Just like bathrooms, multi-generational kitchens should be inclusive of all physical and mobility needs. A lot of older generations (and even the small ones with little hands helping out!) have challenges with grip and managing faucets single-handed.

Sensor and one-handed faucets help create a functional and inclusive kitchen for everyone in the home. And don't forget the [pot filler](#)! Pots filled with water can get heavy and unmanageable for a lot of residents, and a pot filler is both a gorgeous addition and a safety feature that will help reduce accidents and injuries. Plus, it encourages all members of the family to cook!

3. OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS



While design and accessibility are paramount in designing kitchens and bathrooms in multi-generational homes, there are a few last crucial considerations: durability, longevity and maintenance.

The last thing any resident wants to do is worry about durability or sacrifice style for cost and longevity. Luckily, there are plenty of design options available that are accessible, beautiful and durable – and that [won't break the bank](#).

Items in the kitchen and bathroom that take a lot of maintenance aren't necessarily a wise decision for a multi-generational home. With the amount of use these rooms get, keeping on top of maintenance can be an unnecessary burden and stress.

Faucets that are easily manageable are ideal for multi-generation homes. Caring for durable faucets simply requires quick daily wipedowns and easy-to-clean parts. For more tips on how you can direct your clients to care for their new bathroom and kitchen faucets, check out [this handy article](#).

Last, but certainly not least is warranty. Homeowners don't want to have to worry about any future issues with bathroom fixtures. Making sure all parts come with industry-leading manufacturer warranties will go a long way in pleasing your clients. Plus, it lets them know you care about their well-being.

Choose Pioneer

If you want to give your clients the best of all worlds, choose from the Pioneer family of brands: Pioneer, Olympia and Central Brass. At Pioneer, we want to make choosing bathroom and kitchen faucets the easiest part of your project. You can choose with confidence, knowing that you will get high-quality products and customer service that stacks up against the more expensive brands but with a much more manageable price tag.

With an industry-leading 10-year commercial installation warranty and limited lifetime warranty for residential use, you can be sure that you're making the right choice for your clients.

Are you ready to get started? Great! We're here to help you make the best decisions for your clients' multi-generational homes. Check out our full [line of products](#).

Questions? We offer direct access to assistance and customer care that is helpful, caring and industry-leading. [Contact us](#) today.