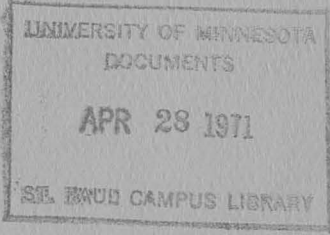


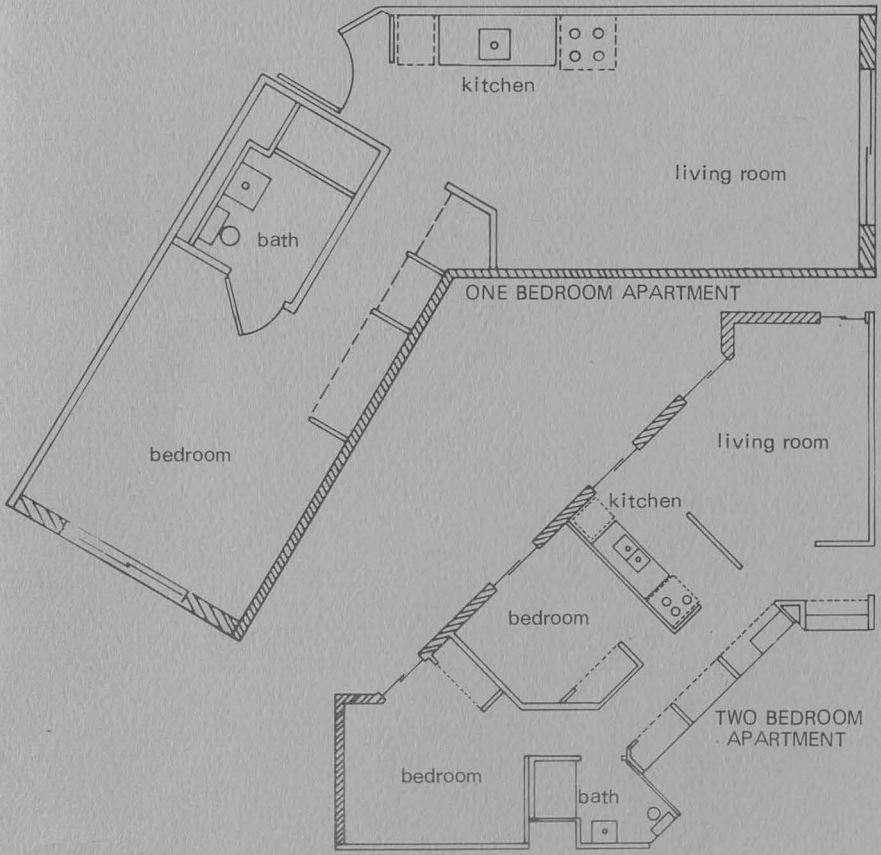
# MAKING ELDERLY HOUSING

# *Livable*



HARRIET E. MELDAHL  
Area Extension Agent, Rehabilitation

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



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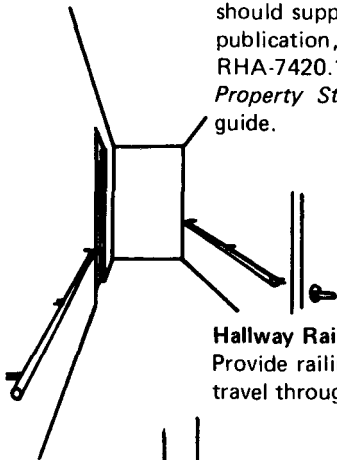
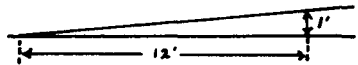
Senior citizens may want less living space than they once might have required; however, easy maintenance and safety become more important at this stage of life.

Providing shelter alone is not enough. Consideration should be given to creating a safe, healthful, and stimulating environment, without over-emphasizing features that remind the occupant of his age or infirmities. Considering effective use of space will help extend the healthful life of older people and allow them to care for themselves longer, rather than having to be placed in nursing homes.

## General Features:

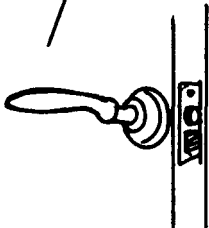
### Ramps

Ramps, both inside and outside, are necessary with certain grade level or elevation level specifications. The maximum grade should be a 1-inch rise in 12 inches to provide for unassisted movement by wheelchair or walker. Ramps should supplement steps or step ramps as specified in the publication, *Low Rent Housing Turnkey Handbook*, RHA-7420.1. Specification #E 407-3.11 in the *Minimum Property Standards for Elderly Housing* is an excellent guide.



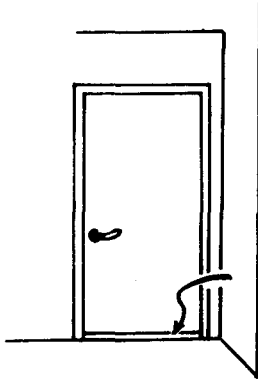
### Hallway Railings

Provide railings on both sides of all hallways to allow safer travel through these areas.



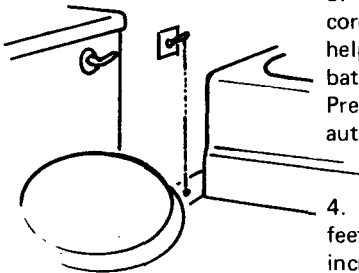
### Door Hardware

Provide all inside door latches with a lever-type handle rather than a round or oval knob, because elderly persons with little strength in their hands or with arthritic hands find it difficult to operate round or oval knobs.



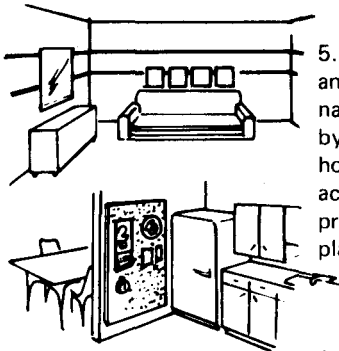
1. Locate all apartment electrical switches, convenience outlets, and thermostats 36 inches above the floor (except over kitchen counters) for easier reaching and safety (HAO-CRO TSD-O, Revised 8-1-70; Addendum No. 1 to *Minimum Property Standards, Housing for the Elderly*, HUD, page 12).

2. To allow for possible future installation of carpet and padding, have at least 1 inch of space between the bottom edges of all inside doors and the floor. If this space is not provided, installing carpeting later can create a stumbling hazard in the door-swing area. Because most inside doors are metal, this allowance cannot be made at a later time.



3. Provide telephone outlets, as well as alarm buttons or cords, by the bed for use by the occupant when he needs help because of injury or illness. "Tub" rooms (additional bathtub facilities) should have an emergency call system. Presently this is at the discretion of the local housing authority.

4. All single doors within a living unit should be at least 3 feet wide (present size for all interior doors is 2' 8"). The increased width will allow easier passage for handicapped (Addendum No. 1 to *Minimum Property Standards, Housing for the Elderly*, HUD, Page 46; Revised 8-1-70, page 5).



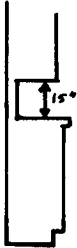
5. Provide wall hanging areas in the kitchen, bedroom, and living room. This will help eliminate the "don't pound nails into the wall" directive. This could be accomplished by several methods (e.g. cork-board, picture mouldings, horizontal hanging strips at two levels, pegboard, or other acceptable devices) that would encourage individual expression by the occupants and still maintain the physical plant in good condition.

6. Doors in bathrooms and public toilet compartments must swing out or have hardware to permit double swing action (Addendum No. 1 to *Minimum Property Standards, Housing for the Elderly*, RHA 7420.1; Revised 8-1-70, page 5).

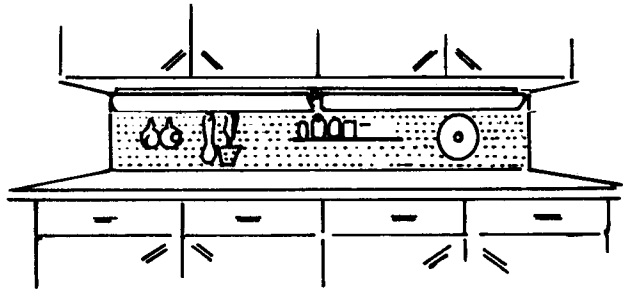
## Kitchen Features:

Energy-saving kitchen planning is necessary because many elderly are plagued with backaches, varicose veins, poor eyesight, partial disability from circulatory diseases, and arthritis. Proper design and furnishing of the kitchen can help people care for themselves over a longer period of time and practically eliminate the early transfer to nursing homes or hospitals, which is much more expensive.

A few small items that could be incorporated into kitchen planning to enable better living are:



1. Open space between kitchen work counter top and the bottom of the top cabinets should not exceed 15", except over the kitchen sink. This would allow for safer and more convenient use of the upper cabinets as well.

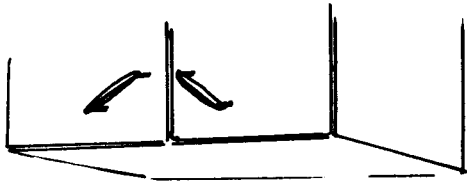


2. Cover the back-splash area between the counter tops and upper cabinets with 1/4" perforated hardboard. Adjustable shelves can be attached to this surface at an easily-reached height for small items.

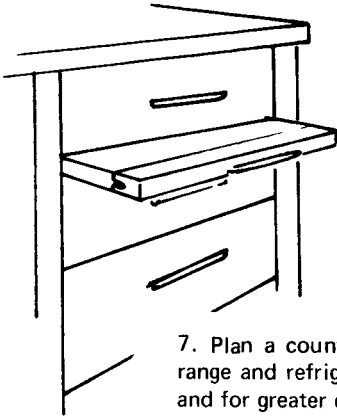
3. Provide strip lighting under the upper cabinets to increase the light level at the counter top; this is necessary because of poor eyesight and because most kitchens in elderly housing are placed in a darker area of the apartment not near natural light or windows.



4. Upper shelves in kitchen cabinets, as well as shelves in storage areas, should be easily adjustable for storing items of varying heights. This allows for better utilization of the space provided (this does not apply to the shelf over the hanging rod used for clothing storage).



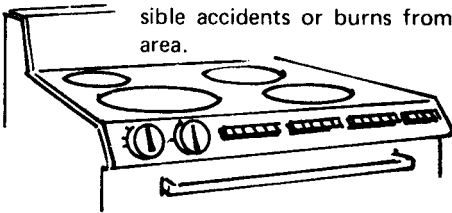
5. Mount handles on kitchen cabinet doors — if supplied — at a 45 degree angle to allow for easier grasping and a more natural position for the hand.



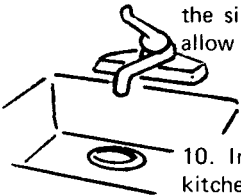
6. Provide a work top or pull-out board at 28" to 30" above the floor and a minimum of 18" wide to allow some kitchen tasks to be accomplished while seated. A pull-out board could be placed between drawers. This lower work height would allow a senior citizen to sit while preparing food and therefore to save energy.

7. Plan a counter top that will be adjacent to both the range and refrigerator for greater safety in handling items and for greater convenience.

8. The burner and oven controls of the stove should be front-mounted for easier reaching and also to prevent possible accidents or burns from reaching over the cooking area.



9. Use a single-lever type faucet control in the kitchen sink. This allows a person to control water volume and temperature with one hand at the same time. If possible, the sink should have its drain at the rear of the bowl to allow for increased storage space below the sink.



10. Install a fire alarm or heat-sensing unit over the kitchen stove area to alert the occupant and management of a possible critical situation (applicable local code).



11. In refrigerator-freezer combination units, it is generally better if the freezer compartment is on the bottom. This places the compartments at an easier-to-reach level. Refrigerator doors should open away from the adjoining counter space to allow for placement of foods from this unit directly onto the counter.

### Bathroom Features:

1. All floors in bathroom showers and all tubs should be supplied with non-slip surfaces to prevent injury due to slipping or falling.

2. Shower enclosures should have a non-slip surface on the seats that are an integral part of this unit. These areas, when slippery, could be the source of injury.

3. Single-lever controls should be provided for water volume and temperature. This could prevent burns and allow the occupant to use the assist bars while adjusting the water.

4. A shower head should be of the hand-type, adjustable in height, with a flexible hose attached. This allows for easier use in hair washing and personal cleanliness.

5. Provide a cord or chain-operated alarm system located between the water closet and the tub or shower so the occupant can alert management of his need for assistance due to accident or illness (option of local housing authority).

6. Provide assist bars in tub and shower areas and also on at least one side of the water closet. The bar on the side of the water closet should be mounted at a 45 degree angle to allow for better and safer handling of one's self at this unit (HAO-CRO TSD-9, page 6).

