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IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

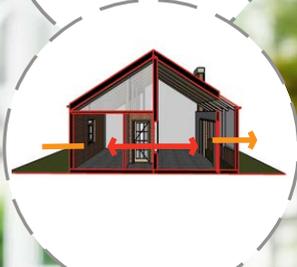
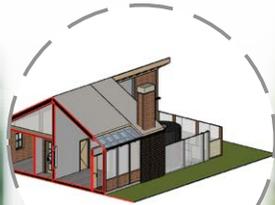


**Terwilliger Center for
Innovation in Shelter**

HEALTHY HOMES

Guidelines & Checklist

**Pillars of a healthy home that
promotes physical & mental
wellbeing**



www.aak.or.ke



HEALTHY HOMES

Guidelines &
Checklist Summary

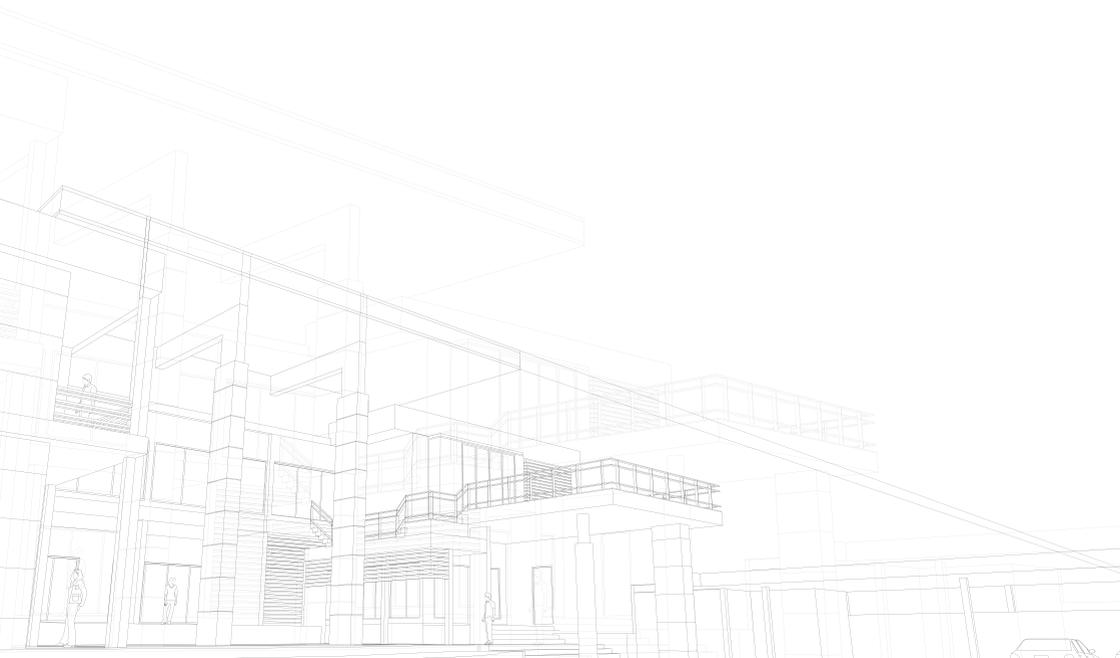
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in collaboration with
Habitat for Humanity International



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Innovation in Shelter**



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Pillars of a healthy home that promotes physical & mental wellbeing



Natural ventilation for all habitable spaces



Use of appropriate available materials



Natural lighting for all habitable spaces



Adequate safety & Security provision



Proper noise control



Proper & regular maintenance



Adequate water, Sanitation & drainage provision



Orderliness in house layout design



Provide for vector control



Incorporate good interior design



Good building/house Accessibility



Avoid overcrowding



Select a good habitable spaces Neighborhood



Integrating greenery in our homes

Foreword

One thing that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the fore was that most homes do not adhere to health standards. The pandemic redefined the living norm, and the home became the first line of defense when governments put in place protocols to reduce the spread of the virus. An assessment of the impact of COVID conducted by AAK in informal settlements within the Nairobi Metropolitan Region revealed that it was very challenging for people living in the informal settlements to comply with some of the COVID-19 prevention protocols, such as; social distancing, since the dominant housing typology is single rooms. The pandemic also hit when these settlements had been facing a perennial lack of and shortage of basic infrastructure such as water and sanitation, increasing the prevalence of infection among household members

Global planning principles provide for the creation of sustainable living with adequate access to proper housing and basic essential infrastructure within the neighborhoods. Unfortunately, 80% of buildings in Kenya are built without engaging professionals. This means that most buildings in the country are built by unqualified professionals and lack the minimum standards of a healthy

home. Many of these buildings suffer from sick building syndrome a cause of numerous illnesses experienced by residents who are completely oblivious of the cause.

The AAK, together with Habitat for Humanity International, developed the Healthy Homes Guidelines and Checklist to provide design standards that will help all housing typologies, including those in informal settlements, to be resilient to COVID-19 and future pandemics. In their simple form, the guidelines are privy to the fact that most builders are self-builders who engage artisans and unqualified contractors. They provide the minimum standards which should be adhered to during construction and renovation and can guide vetting of already constructed homes.

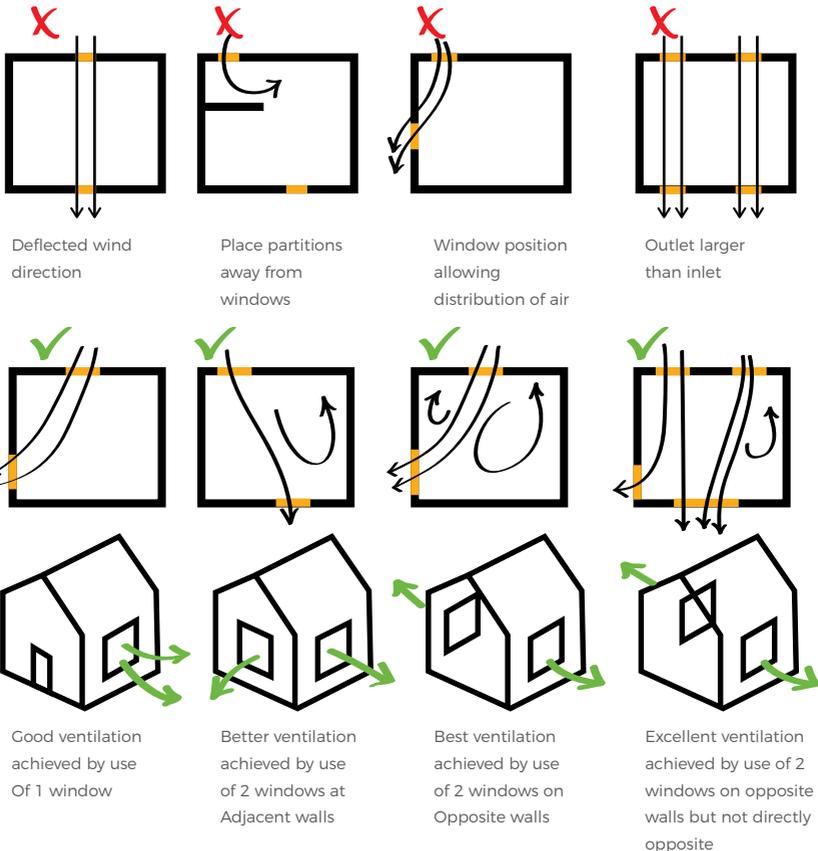
The last section of the document contains a checklist of all the aspects of a home that the user should consider. This enables them to get a clear picture of the health aspects of the house and know if it is a fit one. As we continue to advocate for the role of built environment professionals in the construction industry, this is an immediate solution to achieving healthy homes in our country.

1. Ventilation & Cooling

Effective ventilation helps keep your home healthy, energy-efficient and safe. This is achieved by:

- i. Select window types that direct or avert airflow into the space.
- ii. Orient windows and doors on adjacent or opposite walls to take advantage of natural cross ventilation.
- iii. Wider buildings tend to have difficulties delivering fresh air to all home areas, and narrower buildings do better in this regard.
- iv. Open spaces around the house (especially on window locations) to allow free flow of air.

How to Achieve Ventilation That Promotes Healthy Homes



2. Lighting

Good day lighting can be achieved by:

- i. Avoid direct sunlight into a working space as it may compromise visual needs of occupants such as reading a book.
- ii. The choice of house interior colour should be such that it allows

uniform reflection of light within the space.

- iii. The size of the window must be proportional to the size of the room to allow adequate and uniformly distributed light in a room.

3. Sustainable and Clean energy

Clean sources of energy reduce the need for fossil fuel power generation. We can incorporate clean energy use by:

- i. Solar energy can be used for heating, artificial lighting in homes and buildings, heating water directly, cooling and running appliances among other uses.

- ii. Use energy efficient appliances for lighting and heating.

- iii. Use clean energy sources for cooking e.g. LPG, briquettes, biogas

- iv. Use energy efficient cooking appliances e.g. improved fuel stoves (jikokoa, maendeleo stove).

4. Noise Control

This can be achieved by:

- i. Locating spaces such as bedrooms, a home office, or living rooms, away from roads or noise sources makes sense instead, you can place naturally more 'noisy' rooms, such as utility rooms, kitchens, playrooms, and the like, in these spaces.
- ii. You could also look at shielding those spaces you want to be quieter using an internal courtyard configuration, for example, or by installing fencing or hedging.
- iii. To prevent internal noise transfer,
 - take a look at increasing the thickness of internal walls, introducing acoustic insulation to stud walls, or using solid masonry as opposed to stud walls.
 - iv. Noise control along busy roads may also be reduced using landscape elements such as earth berms and vegetation which filter part of the noise pollution.
 - v. Consider use of double glazing to windows and use of solid core doors with weather strips around the edges.

5. Water and Sanitation

Ideal Water Conditions

Improved (safe for drinking) water sources include piped household water connection, public standpipe, a water kiosk, and bore-hole, protected dug well, protected spring,

collected rainwater, or packaged or delivered water. Improved sanitation facilities include flush toilets (to a sewer system, septic tank, or pit latrine), ventilated pit latrines, and pit latrines with slab or composting toilets.

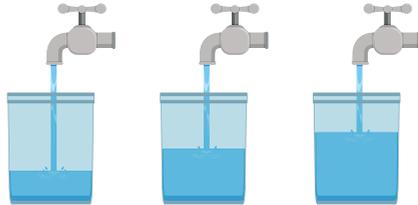
Aspect	Ideal Conditions
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to water should be optimal; water should be available in the house or plot or the neighborhood - Piped water may be dual, i.e., have two sources, consumable and Non-consumable. If the case, the two systems should be well separated (CDC & U.S. DHUD, 2006).
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The water should be clean and consumable, free from contaminants - Good quality water should have no color, taste, and smell - Water from water vending kiosks should be transported in clean jerricans and appropriately sealed to avoid contamination (WHO, 2022a)

Aspect	Ideal Conditions
Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The supply should be enough for the whole household (WHO recommends 50-100 liters per person per day) - The supply should be consistent, available all year round with no interruption - Water pressure should be enough to sustain the domestic activities - All taps should be firmly fitted to avoid leakages and wastage.
Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep an emergency supply of water stored for when supply is cut - Stored water should be protected to ensure that treated water is not re-contaminated. - Water systems must be well separated from sewerage systems to avoid contamination of water systems (WHO, 2022a). - Tanks previously used for non-food grades such as fuel and sewage should not be used for storage. - Water storage tanks must be easy to regularly clean and disinfect. They should not have sharp corners. - The tanks must also be covered and fitted with a water access point.

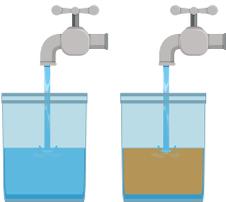
How to Achieve Water Supply that Promotes Healthy Homes



Access to Water supply
at household level



Consistent and Adequate supply at
household level



Good quality water should have
no color, taste, and smell



Stored water should be protected to ensure that
treated water is not re-contaminated.

Ideal Sanitation Conditions

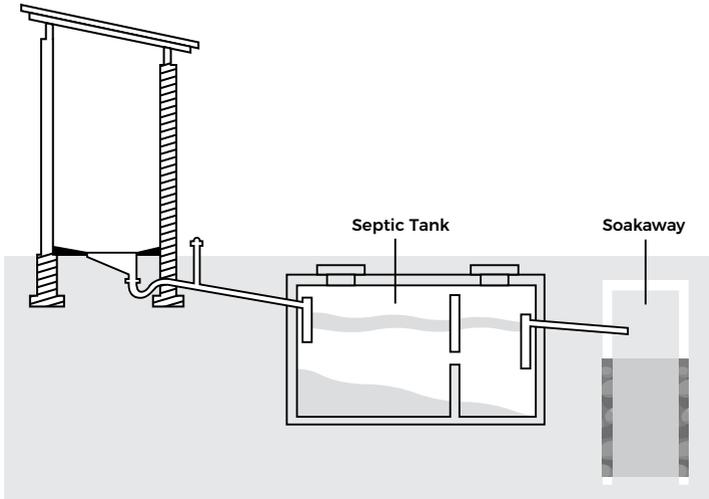
Traditional pit latrines include a pit covered by a slab with a drop hole and superstructure. The tank may be below the latrine, where the excreta drops directly into the tank.

Pit latrines and soak ways should be at least 30m from a groundwater source while the bottom of the latrine should be at least 1.5m above the water table. Every tank must have a ventilation system to allow gasses such as methane to escape. Provide a handwashing facilities outside the toilet/latrine. Solid waste collection should be done frequently (minimum twice weekly). Procure waste disposal services where the service is privately provided.

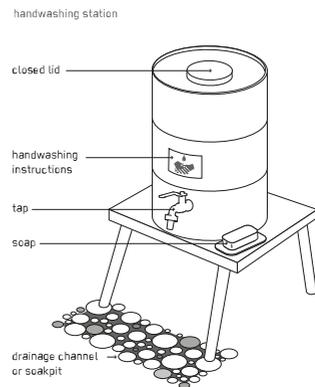
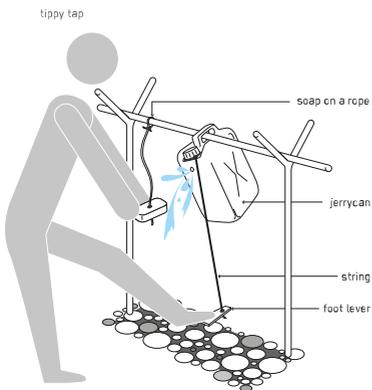
Ensure that the waste is being delivered to a certified and approved landfill by a certified waste disposal company. Household waste can be segregated into recyclable (e.g., papers and cans), organic (e.g., food and biodegradable materials), hazardous waste (e.g., batteries and aerosol cans) and general waste (e.g., broken utensils).

Below are sustainable waste disposal strategies:

- i. To decommission a pit latrine, it can be topped up with soil and covered.
- ii. The covered full pit or trench poses no immediate health risk and the contents will degrade naturally over time.
- iii. Use bio digester system to digest and decompose solid waste in black water and reuse the water for agricultural purposes like watering gardens.
- iv. Composting kitchen waste and other biodegradable solid wastes to form manure for agricultural purposes.
- v. Using sludge from septic tanks can be used in trenches or pits for tree planting.
- vi. Waste to energy; sludge from septic tanks and pit latrines can also be used to generate biogas.
- vii. Plastic and metallic waste can be sold to waste pickers for recycling and reuse



A typical section through a Septic tank



Simple Handwashing station recommended outside every pit latrine

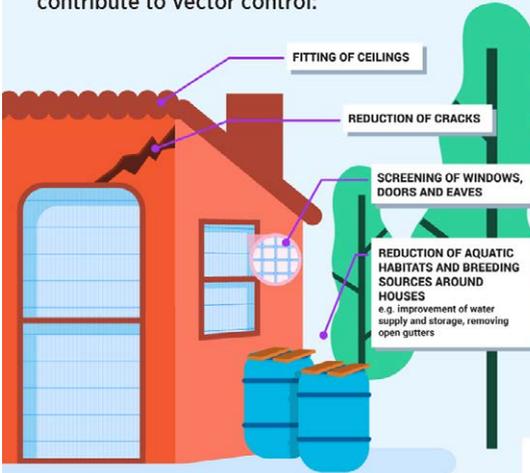
6. Vector Control

Preventing mosquito house entry and reducing mosquito production around the home would help reduce the transmission of these diseases.

- i. Malaria and Aides-transmitted diseases are consequences of stagnating water. There is need for proper drainage systems and proper water storage. This reduces the chances of water stagnation which would otherwise be aquatic habitats and breeding sources of vectors around houses.
- ii. Garbage is a breeding ground for vectors, proper waste management in the surrounding area reduces vectors.
- iii. Tight fittings, self-closing doors, fitted ceilings, and closed eaves (This is the gap between the top of the wall and the overhanging roof) removes open spaces that would allow vectors into the house. This removes breeding places and entry points for vectors.
- iv. Replacing thatched roofs with roofs made with solid materials such as corrugated zinc or iron, as thatched roofs serve as breeding places for vectors such as fleas.
- v. Lifting the house off the ground could reduce mosquitoes' house entry and hence disease transmission. Studies show that raising a house off the ground will reduce mosquito house entry, and even closing the area beneath the building with permeable or impermeable walls is likely to be protective.
- vi. Cracked, dusty and uneven mud floors provide refuge for flea larvae, house dust mites, argasid ticks and other vectors that transmit diseases.

KEEPING THE VECTOR OUT

How housing improvements can contribute to vector control:



Creating vector-proof housing helps to address several vectors and diseases simultaneously. It is therefore a cost-effective and sustainable approach to disease reduction.



World Health Organization

More than 80% of the world's population is at risk from at least one vector-borne disease such as:



MALARIA



DENGUE



LYMPHATIC
FILARIASIS



LEISHMANIASIS



CHAGAS DISEASE

Housing interventions also promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those related to health, economic growth and poverty reduction.

HEALTHY HOUSING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

#EnvironmentalHealth

7. Accessibility

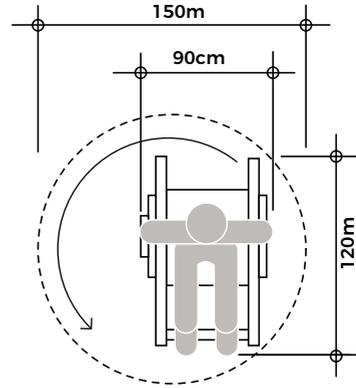
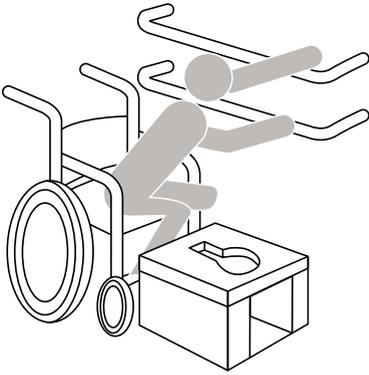
Disability disproportionately affects low-income households, and has a higher prevalence in low- and middle-income countries. Accessible homes should go hand in hand with accessible surroundings for maximum accessibility. Ways in which we can make accessibility easy for users:

- i. The pedestrian crossing should be equipped with traffic control signals.
- ii. The house should provide easy access from both the street and car parking spaces in all weather and light conditions, with a safe and step-free continuous path of travel using a ramp.



- iii. The entry pathways should be even and firm, have low level lighting directed at the path, contrast from the surrounding and covered from the weather.

- iv. The windows should be low to allow for an unobstructed view with handles placed low and easy to operate with one hand.
- v. Wall sconce or low wall lighting is recommended for easy changing of light bulbs.
- vi. The working spaces should be appropriately sized and at a low level mounted at approx.
- vii. Pull-out shelves and easy-to-reach cabinets are preferable for wheelchair-friendly spaces.
- viii. Sinks should have knee space beneath for those with wheelchairs, such as designs with drains near the rear.
- ix. Bathrooms should have wall-mounted sink is preferred as it leaves knee space below, with pipes shrouded to protect the legs of a wheelchair user. A low tiled shelf behind the sink puts storage within reach. A tilting mirror adjusts for easy viewing while standing or seated



Guardrails provision and Recommended space to maneuver

8. Building Materials and Finishes

Applying certified and green building materials such as ones approved by the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) and the Green Building Council, or even using traditional and locally available materials can improve the indoor environment.

When about 1/5 of the occupants complain of health problems associated with staying inside despite the building having proper lighting and ventilation, these complaints could be attributed to the building material among other factors such as poor sanitation. Building materials used on walls, floors, ceilings, roofs, and other

components of a structure can welcome health issues for occupants or for workmen involved in building services, maintenance, demolition, and refurbishment.

Examples of local green materials

Earth: This is the most abundant construction material with many uses. In construction, earth is used to make mud stick houses, rammed earth walls and bricks/blocks (adobe bricks, ordinary bricks, compressed earth bricks, interlocking stabilized soil bricks etc). Earth can also be stabilized and used to make earthen floors (both suspended and slab beds).

Thatch: It is environmentally friendly roof materials available due to its biodegradability in nature. Thatch reed is grown and harvested without machinery and is usually sourced from rural communities. This means the industry also creates jobs, which are much-needed considering the high unemployment rate. In Kenya, thatch is available in the form of grass, makuti or papyrus reeds.

Wood: Unlike concrete or metals, wood is a building material that can be grown and regrown through natural processes. This makes it renewable. In addition, wood can suit many aesthetics with different species providing varied mechanical, acoustic, and thermal properties. Wood can be used as round poles, timber, mass timber, Cross Laminated Timber (CLT), timber boards and other housing products made from timber based products like saw dust.

Reused/Recycled Materials

Using construction materials made from waste greatly contributes to environmental conservation as waste that would have otherwise ended up in landfills is diverted into useful products. Examples of wastes that can be reused or recycled into construction materials include agricultural waste (sugar bagasse, coffee husks, rice husks, and saw dust), construction demolition waste, and plastic waste.

Some building materials can contain chemicals of concern that can lead

to short-term and long-term health impacts. Short-term impacts can include skin allergy, eye irritation, throat irritation, and sneezing, while long-term impacts can include asthma, cancer, and infertility, among many others.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), some materials such as paints and varnishes may contain Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). These substances turn into gas when they come into contact with the atmosphere and their exposure can cause skin allergies, eye or airway irritation, headaches, and even shortness of breath and memory loss.

Examples of hazardous materials

Asbestos, lead and Some plants are hazardous & noxious (Pollen grains, roots, Experience acute health and comfort effects that appear to be linked to time spent in a building. Fatigue, headaches, and dizziness are among the most common symptoms.

Benefits of Green building Materials to the Building Owner and occupants:

- Reduced maintenance/ replacement sap) can affect the nervous system, reproductive system, blood, and kidneys and cause digestive problems, memory and concentration problems, and muscle and joint pain. Building occupants.
- Energy conservation.

- Improved occupant health and productivity.

Benefits of Green building Materials to the Building Owner and occupants:

- Reduced maintenance/

replacement costs over the life of the building.

- Lower costs associated with changing space configurations.
- Greater design flexibility

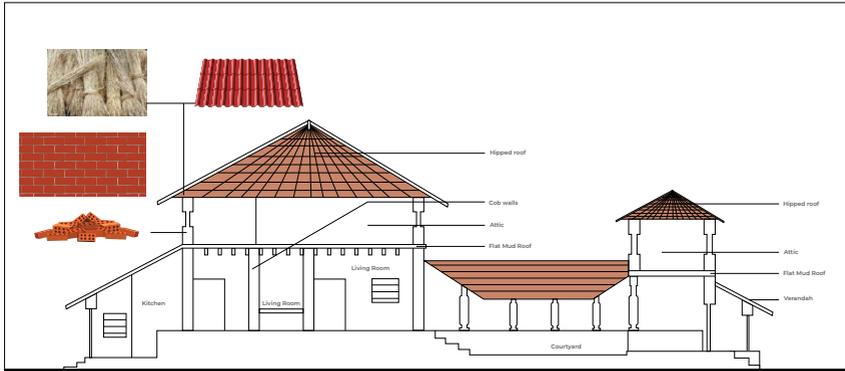


Figure 33: Use of local material in a home Source: Thannal Natural Homes (2021)

9. Safety & Security

Home safety and security are essential considerations often overlooked by builders, renters, leases, and users. If left unchecked, these risks may result in bodily harm, injury, or even death to those residing in and around the home. Ideal Safety and Security Conditions:

- i. Entrance to Front Door and Front Yard - If the entry door is raised, the entry steps should not be too steep or cracked.
- ii. Fire Safety various daily appliances and equipment can cause fire outbreaks at home. Check all power cords and extension cords for exposed wires.
- iii. All doors and windows should have lockable and strong doors and hinges. Adding window bars will ensure a person cannot fit through the window.
- iv. Window sensors or glass break sensors will sound the alarm in case of any forceful entry through the window

- v. You can also plant prickly bushes under first-floor windows and keep them well-trimmed.
- vi. Placing lights around your front and back yards, pathways, and other outdoor structures will keep intruders away and reduce your risk of falling on your way up the front steps. You should not have trees near your windows but if you do, reinforce the windows with extra security.
- vii. Neighborhood watch: Having a neighborhood watch can also be instrumental in reducing crime rates in your neighborhood.

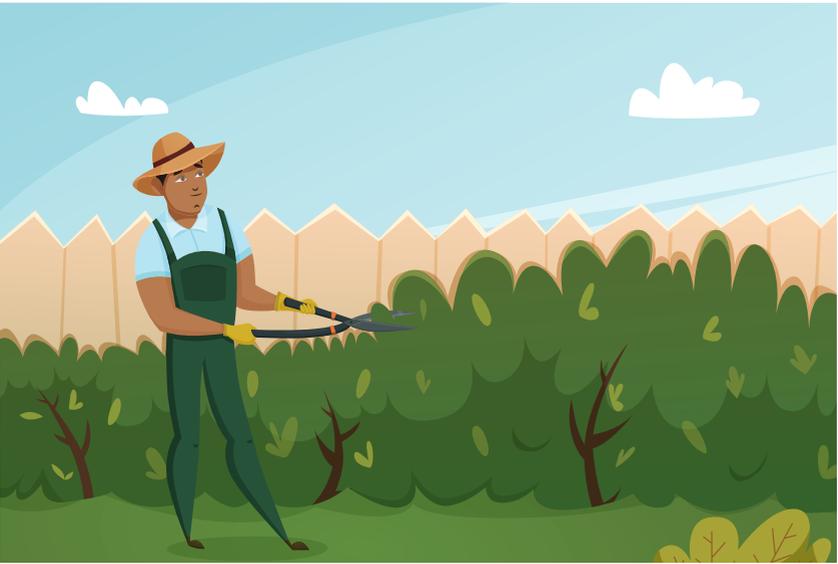
10. Maintenance

This is primarily caused by instances of subpar construction and inadequate building maintenance and repairs. Properly maintained property often requires minimal and less frequent repairs hence saving on costs.

- i. There should be no holes and cracks on walls and foundation of the property. Existing holes and cracks should be filled and repaired frequently.
- ii. Roofing: damaged roofing leads to leaking and with poor ventilation causes molding. Frequent inspection and roof repair should be done; at least bi-annually. Their surface should be kept intact and cracks repaired immediately to avoid expansion of the cracks.
- iii. Gutters connected to the roof should be cleaned frequently to avoid blocking and ensure adequate drainage of rainwater.
- iv. Reduction and repair of cracks and crevices on walls, floors and roofs should be frequently done to reduce indoor vector hiding and resting places.
- v. Walls and floors- Molding on walls and floors is usually resulting from leaking of roofs, structural issues and absence of adequate ventilation.
- vi. Windows and doors- Windows and doors are the main avenues of ventilation in a building. Routine maintenance should be done at least once a year for windows and doors. Windows and doors should be frequently cleaned to remove dirt, old lubricant remnants, airborne debris and other insect life remnants.
- vii. The property should have an adequate supply of proper trash bins whose size and number is suitable for the number of dwellers on the property and the number of times trash is collected.



Frequent inspection and roof repair should be done; at least bi-annually.
Fix a damage found on the roof.



Frequent mowing, edging, and weeding, preferably every month, should be done



Windows and doors should be frequently cleaned to remove dirt, old lubricant remnants, airborne debris and other insect life remnants.

11. House Layout

It includes planning for the spaces found adjacent to each other, sizes of these spaces depending on their use, placement and sizes of openings and furniture arrangement. The layout affects the functionality of a room.

Living room minimum size is 9.5m², it is one of the most frequently

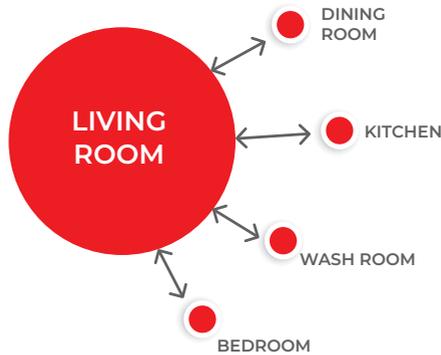
visited spaces in your house.

Bedrooms are the second most used space in any house. The bedroom size should be such that it allows for a bed to fit and allow for space (minimum 700mm) around the bed to make the bed. The International Residential Building Code requires a minimum for a single bedroom

person to be 6.5m² and 9.2m² for a double bedroom. Kitchen minimum kitchen size should be 3.75m² and must have one properly laid-out drainage system. It is a moist prone area hence can be slippery with a high risk of injury.

The bathroom should be in close proximity to the bedrooms and the

bathroom size should meet the household size requirements. The minimum toilet area recommended is 1.4m² (1.5m by 0.9m). The washroom is an important area where we excrete harmful toxins from our body and get cleaned. So, it has to be super clean and disinfected as much as possible.



Bubble diagram showing relationship between the different spaces found within a house and their relationship to each other

12. Interior Design

It involves making interior spaces functional, safe, and beautiful.

Art: Many studies show that viewing art can have a positive impact on

your mood and mental health. A study reported that looking at art triggers some of the same responses as falling in love.

Paint: color affects the mood, mental and psychological health of the users of a space.

White is a neutral color that is common in most homes. White reflects light and heat for example in Mombasa county all buildings have been mandated to be painted white to help reduce heat absorption.

White also evokes feelings of cleanliness, purity, and innocence.

House plan; the house interior plan should allow for and accommodate house plants and lighting fixtures appropriately. Snake plants, spider plants and ferns are all great air-purifying options.



The Colors of Interior Design



Did you know that color can have a profound effect on your mood? Take a look at these charts before deciding what color paint you should buy.

RED



-  **MENTAL REACTION:**
INSPIRES ACTION AND CONFIDENCE
-  **ASSOCIATION:**
FIRE, ENERGY, STRENGTH, POWER, LOVE
-  **MOOD:**
INTENSITY, ANGER, EXCITEMENT, LUST



ORANGE

-  **MENTAL REACTION:**
STIMULATE APPETITE AND ACTIVITY
-  **ASSOCIATION:**
CHEERFULNESS, CAUTION, WARMTH
-  **MOOD:**
IMPULSIVENESS, FEAR, CONFIDENCE

YELLOW



-  **MENTAL REACTION:**
BOOST COMMUNICATION
-  **ASSOCIATION:**
WARMTH, JOY, FRIENDSHIP, SOCIALIZATION
-  **MOOD:**
FRIENDLY, HAPPINESS, OPTIMISM

GREEN



-  **MENTAL REACTION:**
RELAXES MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY
-  **ASSOCIATION:**
NATURE, MONEY, LIFE, GROWTH
-  **MOOD:**
CALM, HAPPINESS, LUCKY, PATIENT



BLUE

-  **MENTAL REACTION:**
CALMS AND AIDS INTUITION
-  **ASSOCIATION:**
PEACE, SOFTNESS, SERENITY, WATER, COOL
-  **MOOD:**
PRODUCTIVE, CALM, RELAXED, COLD

PURPLE



-  **MENTAL REACTION:**
UPLIFTS AND ENCOURAGES CREATIVITY
-  **ASSOCIATION:**
LUXURY, FUN, ROYALTY, MAGIC
-  **MOOD:**
HAPPINESS, PLAYFULNESS, PRODUCTIVE



SOURCES

WWW.COLOUR-AFFECTS.CO.UK/
WWW.PANTONE.COM/
WWW.PSYCHOLOGYTODAY.COM/
WWW.BRAINPICKINGS.ORG/
WWW.PSYCHOLOGISTWORLD.COM/

The amount and type of lighting directly affects concentration, appetite and mood. Example provision of task light fixtures in areas

like home office, study areas and kitchen counter areas as these areas require concentration.

HOW INTERIOR DESIGN PROMOTES HEALTHY HOMES



Use of indoor plants, it has been proven that humans thrive when they have a connection with nature



It includes painting, calendars, posters and photographs. studies show that viewing art can have a positive impact on your mood and mental health



Adequate amount of light improves mood and energy levels, while poor lighting contributes to depression and other deficiencies in the body.



Color affects the mood, mental and psychological health of the users of a space. Different paint colors, trigger different emotions to the user of a space.

13. Household Occupancy/ Crowding

There is a very close association between crowding and poor health outcomes. To reduce health problems relating to crowding one must be on the lookout for the size

and number of rooms relating to the household number.

The following are recommendation to prevent crowding in a household;

Checklist for Accessibility. Please tick (✓) if available and cross (X) if not.

Household number	Minimum provision to prevent crowding
1	A single room, bedsitter/ studio apartment (32ms ²)
2 or less	A single bedroom (50m ²)
>2	A double room/ 2 bedroom house (74m ²)

However, due to financial restraints one may not be able to accommodate these minimum recommendations. . In such a case, where the house is small and the household number is big, it is

recommended to have operable openings in shared spaces, reduce too much furniture clutter, clean the house regularly and avoid low ceiling rooms as they make the house feel smaller.

14. Green spaces

All homes require access to a green space which may be provided in various forms including on ground planting, balcony gardens, indoor living walls, pot plants, green roofs and vertical gardens. The following shows ways to integrate green spaces sustainably in our homes;

Plant Species Variety - these increasing biodiversity, a composition of various plant species provides a more vibrant experience for the homeowner, with the possibility of reaping more benefit from an array of plants than one would from selected species.

Preferably use native plants for landscaping as this will require

less water for irrigation and less maintenance.

Use Low Maintenance plants In addition to irrigation, green spaces require routine plant replacement, pruning and weeding.

Landscape Elements- Where space permits inclusion of landscape elements such as garden furniture and water features enhances the green space experience.

Non-Invasive species- Invasive plant species should be avoided as they tend to colonise other plant species within the space.

ELEMENT	GREEN SPACES
Plant species variety	
Water-wise	
Toxic free	
Low maintenance	
Landscape elements	
Noninvasive species	
Productive spaces	

UPDATING AND EXPANDING THE GUIDELINES

The healthy home guidelines will be reviewed regularly.

This is to ensure that they remain relevant and up to date. Review of the guidelines will incorporate the addition of pertinent pillars that affect healthy homes over time.

They will seek to accommodate sustainable and new designs, alternative materials and advancing technology in the built environment, to meet the ever-changing needs of citizens while adopting lessons learned from future unavoidable catastrophes e.g. COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, the scope can be expanded in the future to be a usable guide

for built environment professionals, policy makers, and other housing stakeholders.

The major purpose of this document is to provide the general public with useful information to consider when planning to build their homes or rent a house for living.

In this regard, we will be pleased to receive constructive criticism on the issues presented herein and will keep updating the content, including the checklist.

You can send your thoughts and comments to aak@aak.or.ke





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**Terwilliger Center for
Innovation in Shelter**

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