

Age in place – and in style

Mindful aging-in-place upgrades can offer peace of mind and a sense of style.

The table is set; the appetizers arranged. Champagne is chilling and ready for a toast. After carefully renovating your home, the hour has come to show it off. When your guests arrive to “ooh” and “aah,” they gawk at your flush bamboo flooring and fine recessed rugs. They marvel at your multilevel marble countertops and roll-away island. They envy your motion-activated lighting, keyless entry and automated temperature control. It slowly dawns on them that they’ve entered a thoughtfully planned home with fewer trip hazards, wider doorways and more accessibility, visit-ability and livability for everyone. And it’s downright elegant.

This is exactly what retirees, who are living longer than ever, say they want. But achieving it takes some planning. So, how can it be done? It’s all in the details.

As nearly 90% of retirees plan to stay in their own homes, it’s never too early to consider adaptive design elements for your renovation projects. And because homes are meant to be enjoyed by all, making your living space safer and easier to navigate increases its visit-ability, which means guests of all ages and abilities will feel welcome.

Remodeling projects can be costly, but considering the average \$84,000 a year for a private room in a nursing

home or the \$40,000 a year for assisted living, the price of removing hazards from your home pales in comparison. Moreover, refined, universal design likely will increase resale value and appeal to a range of buyers.

When undertaking renovations – be it in one room or throughout the home – working with a Certified Aging in Place Specialist is smart, and if you think that means you’ll end up living in a hospital-like setting, think again. As improvements that make a home more universally livable have become increasingly common, they also have become more attractive and high-end. Imagine the amenities of a finer hotel – inside your home.



Contemporary fixtures and finishes create a clean, modern look.

Mirrors create brighter spaces, which can prevent tripping.

Lower shelving puts what you need within reach.

Chic, floating vanities are unexpected and accessible for all.

Effortlessly roll or walk in to a barrier-free spa-like shower.

Posh powder rooms

- Curb-less showers, with stonework, textured tile, mosaics and metallic finishes, provide a sleek, modern look.
- Arm-height, recessed shelving makes reaching a thing of the past – and it's convenient for the grand-kids, too.
- Grab bars in high-end finishes are difficult to tell apart from, say, antiqued-bronze towel racks.
- Teak or marble seating areas add elegance.
- Full-length mirrors, skylights and large windows can open a space.
- Motion-activated lighting saves energy and helps prevent tripping.
- Open shelves or glass-front cabinets look elegant and can reduce time spent searching and reaching.
- Chic, floating vanities at varying heights are not only unexpected, but accessible for all.

Craftsmanship in the kitchen

- Movable marble islands can help open up the space.
- As with the bathroom, stonework, textured tile, mosaics and metallic finishes enhance your space.

- Consider glass doors and soft-close, pullout shelves and drawers with polished pulls.
- Counters with varying heights allow for sitting while you prep.
- Wall ovens are sleeker and more convenient than a traditional oven/stove combination.
- Dimmable under-cabinet lighting can help set the mood and is useful when navigating during the night.

Finishing touches

- Wood, bamboo and cork flooring are durable, sustainable and easy to maintain.
- Create a master bedroom, full bathroom and laundry room on the first floor.
- Wider doorways and hallways can accommodate a double stroller, or – if needed – a wheelchair or walker.
- Resurfacing sidewalks or driveways instantly boosts your curb appeal. And eliminates tripping hazards.
- Voice- or motion-activated lighting can add value and convenience. So, too, can other smart devices, such as keyless entry, smart thermostats and connected appliances, all of which can be accessed via a mobile device.


By the numbers

>25%

The number of homeowners over the age of 55 who have a bedroom and full bathroom on the first floor of their homes

7,000

The number of contractors, architects, interior designers and occupational therapists who have become credentialed Certified Aging in Place Specialists since 2002

Choosing updates that offer style and safety make a house more livable and attractive to all. Be sure to budget for renovations over time so your home will meet your needs now and down the line, when mobility may become a factor. Planning ahead means you can get the look and functionality you want without jeopardizing your future quality of life in retirement. 

Sources: AARP, Qualtrics, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HomeAdvisor, MetLife Mature Market Institute, Consumer Reports, Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University

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