

HOMEOWNER'S ENHANCEMENT GUIDE

Chapter 10: *Aging In Place*



WHAT IS AGING IN PLACE?

Aging in place is also called universal design. As it relates to design and construction, it combines ease of use for all ages and ability levels with safety for all occupants. With a little advance planning, the ideas in this chapter can be incorporated seamlessly and invisibly into a remodeling project or new addition.

Many of these suggestions are low in cost but can make a tremendous difference if you become temporarily or permanently disabled or wish to stay in your home as you age.

The baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, account for almost 27% of the population of the United States - 77 million people. As they age, many will develop functional limitations, some severe. By the time the average American is 75 years old, there is a greater than 50% chance that they will have a functional limitation, and a 20% chance that their limitation will be severe.

Most seniors, 85%, want to age in place but 90% of their houses will not allow them to remain at home as they develop functional limitations. By making improvements now, we can create lifetime homes that can age with their owners and have features that will help the house sell when the time comes.



This bathroom view shows how an accessible sink, grab bars, and a shower with a wide door and a fold-down seat can be easily incorporated into a universal design.

AARP

The American Association of Retired Persons, AARP, website offers more detailed information on retrofits to your home.

www.aarp.org

NAHB - CAPS

The National Association of Homebuilders maintains a list of certified aging-in-place specialists.

www.nahb.org/caps

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OUTSIDE

Spend less time maintaining the yard and exterior of the house!

1. Plant low-maintenance shrubs and trees. Many plants are offered in dwarf varieties that will grow more slowly and mature at a small size, therefore, reducing the need to prune frequently.
2. Leave brick unpainted. Natural brick surfaces are low-maintenance.
3. Install low-maintenance siding. Many options are available including fiber-cement, vinyl, and metal. Compare warranties and recycled content.
4. Provide a step-free, 2'10" wide entrance from the walkway, driveway, decks, and patio spaces into the main level of the house.

CARPORIT/GARAGE

Don't add on without looking at these considerations!

1. Consider a sloped pad/floor to eliminate the need for a ramp.
2. Ensure that the height and width can accommodate a lift and raised roof van.

ENTRY

It's easy to make the transition from outside to inside accessible and safe!

- **INSTALL** a sensor light at the entry.
- **LOCATE** the doorbell at an accessible level.
- **ADD** both high and low peepholes for safety.
- **INCLUDE** a bench to put packages on while opening the door.

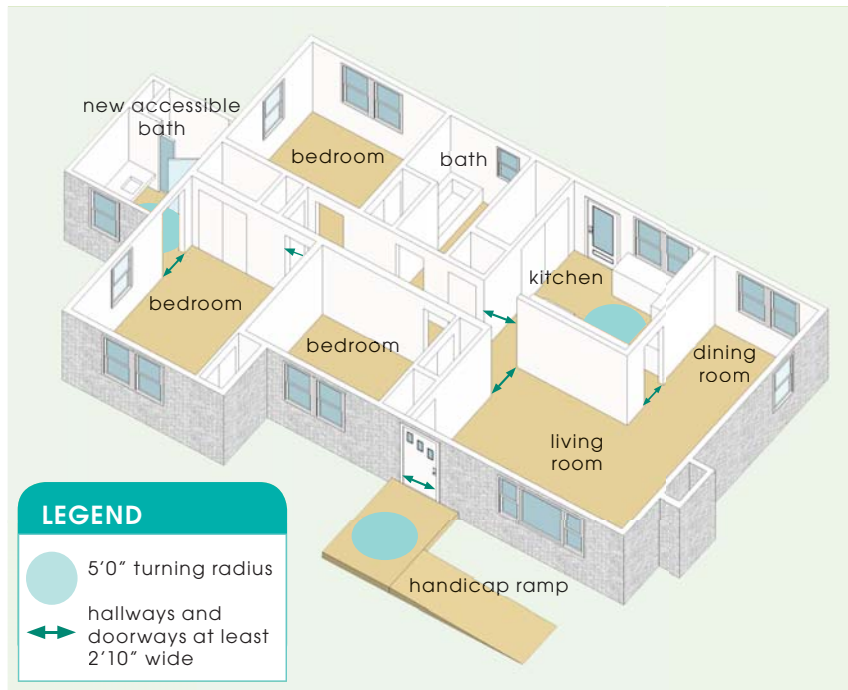
FLOOR PLAN

If you're remodeling, plan ahead and update your floor plan!

- **REMOVE** any existing steps between rooms on the same level.
- **LOCATE** a bedroom and full bathroom on the main living level.
- **LEAVE** a 5'0" turn space in the main living area, kitchen, and at least one bedroom and bathroom.
- **PROVIDE** a hallway at least 2'10" wide.
- **CONSIDER** an addition with universal design features that can serve as a children's playroom, home office, room for caregiver or be easily converted for an aging parent.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?, continued



Simple modifications such as increased doorway width and planning for a 5'0" turning radius in major rooms will increase the functionality of your house should a family member experience decreased mobility. This diagram shows an appropriate turning radius at the front door, in the kitchen, and in the new accessible bathroom as denoted by the blue circles.

MAKE YOUR OWN HOME EMERGENCY EXIT PLAN

The ReadyAmerica website of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) provides a number of readiness publications available for download including how to develop an emergency exit plan.

www.ready.gov/america/publications/allpubs.html

INTERIOR OPENINGS

Do you know how wide your doorways are now?

- **INCREASE** the width of doorways to at least 2'10" wide to allow clear passage.
- **USE** lever handles instead of doorknobs.
- **PLACE** new windows so that sill height is lower for ease of operation.



Lever handles are easier to grip than traditional doorknobs.

Develop a HOME EMERGENCY EXIT PLAN and test it out - ESPECIALLY if there are family members with decreased mobility.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?, continued

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DID YOU KNOW?

55% of all fall injuries among those 65 and older occur in the home, another 23% outside, near the house.

Source: AARP

STAIRWAYS, LIFTS, ELEVATORS

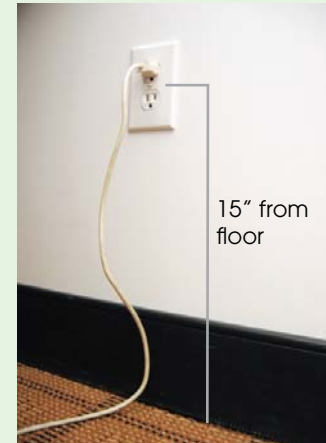
A simple injury can make some of these improvements necessary.



- Incorporate handrails on both sides of the stairways.
- Ensure that there is adequate stairway lighting.
- Consider use of contrasting colors on treads and risers and for top and bottom steps.
- New stairways should be at least 4' wide to accommodate a future lift.

ELECTRICAL, LIGHTING & HVAC

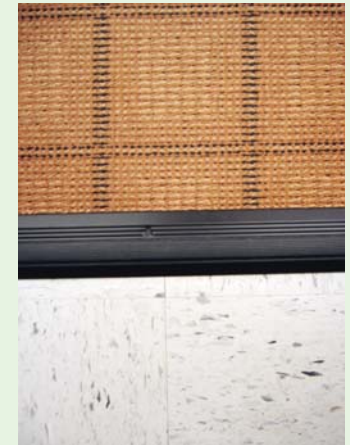
Update wiring and switches and bring your house into the 21st century!



- Place wall switches no higher than 48" from the floor. Raise receptacles to no less than 15" from the floor.
- Replace conventional light switches with rocker, touch or motion sensor switches.
- Wire the house for intercom, security, and computers.
- Place HVAC equipment so that filters are easily accessible.

FLOORING SURFACES

Test how safe your floors are by walking through your house at night, without the lights on.



- Use slip-resistant, glare-free, smooth surfaces throughout house.
- Choose low-pile carpet with firm padding for carpeted areas.
- Indicate a change in surface levels with a color or texture contrast.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?, continued

BATHROOM



1. Install contrasting banding on countertops to define the edge.
2. Use a curb-free shower pan for barrier-free shower access with a minimum opening of 2'10." Add a fold-down seat or built-in bench/shelf.
3. Choose an adjustable height showerhead. Pick fixtures with anti-scald/pressure-balanced features.
4. Mount shower controls so that they can be easily reached from outside the enclosure.
5. Incorporate grab bars into the design or allow for their later placement.
6. Vary the height of vanities to accommodate those shorter or taller than average.
7. Pick faucets with lever handles or pedal controls.
8. Choose a wall-hung sink with a slanted panel to hide pipes.
9. Consider a toilet with a seat height of 17" to 19".

KITCHEN



1. Vary the heights of countertops to accommodate children, adults, and seated cooks.
2. Install contrasting banding on countertops to define edge.
3. Use pulls rather than knobs. They are easier for small or arthritic hands to operate.
4. Consider the placement of appliances for universal access. Elevating the dishwasher and using refrigerator drawers are two options.
5. Choose appliances that have easily readable and accessible controls.
6. For wheelchair access, incorporate open space under the sink, a prep area, and the cooktop.
7. Choose base cabinets with pull-out trays, turntables, and open shelving.
8. Pick faucets with lever handles or pedal controls and anti-scald/pressure-balanced features.

CHANGES to your **BATH AND KITCHEN** can be **USEFUL NOW** for kids and later for you.

