

Prepare for the Future Today with Aging-in-Place Features for Your Home

Currently there are 77 million baby boomers in the United States preparing for retirement. While few want to admit that they are aging, an overwhelming number of home owners have made the decision that when the inevitable occurs, they want to grow old gracefully—and independently—in their own homes. Because the vast majority of homes we live in are not well designed for aging, a new movement in residential construction has sprung up to meet this new consumer demand. America needs trained remodelers, designers and builders to upgrade our homes so we can comfortably “age in place.”

But what is “aging-in-place”? Aging-in-place means living in your home safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age or agility. It addresses the need to design new homes, and remodel existing residences, to allow people to remain in their current home as they grow older. The easiest way to prepare for aging-in-place is to include universal design features when you are building a home or embarking on a remodeling project. The following features can be added during construction or remodeling jobs for little or no extra cost to you

Getting safely and securely in and out of the house

- Better outdoor lighting such as path lighting to the front and rear doors
- Attractive ramps or a “zero step entrance” for the home
- Package shelf by the front door
- Handrails at steps and porches
- One-story ranch designs for new homes

Changes in the kitchen for easier meal preparation and eating

- Lever-handle faucets with a pull-out sprayer
- Raised dishwasher to avoid back strain (a good idea for front-loading washers and dryers, too)
- Rolling island that can be placed back under the counter
- Revolving corner shelves and pull-out shelves
- Lower, side-opening oven
- Pull-out cutting board
- Adjustable height sink
- Side-by-side refrigerator with slide-out shelves and a water/ice dispenser
- Cooking range with controls on the front
- Larger, more accessible cabinet and drawer pulls

Changes in the bathrooms (the number one place for accidents in your home)

- Two to three attractive grab bars in the shower
- Lever handles on the faucets
- Hand-held shower to use while sitting or standing
- Inset shampoo nooks
- Curbless showers with nothing to step over that can be rolled into if using a wheelchair
- Moving tub and shower controls closer to the entry point
- Anti-scald temperature and pressure-balanced tub shower valves for safer bathing
- Widening entry doors to at least 32 inches
- Higher toilets

Moving around in the house

- Improved lighting with recessed fixtures in common areas and hallways
- Lever handles on doors and windows
- Lower light switches and thermostats and raised outlets
- Place closets in the same location on each floor for easy conversion to an elevator shaft if necessary

- Block in walls to accommodate a future chair lift
- Install doors that accommodate wheelchairs and walkers

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) training program, created in collaboration with AARP, can help you create your “livable home,” whether you are building a new home or retrofitting your existing residence. Look for the CAPS credential as a reliable way to identify professionals to modify your home or build a new one that is designed for a lifetime. CAPS graduates receive training on technical and construction aspects and learn about the unique aspects of working with older Americans.