

Making Your Home age-appropriate *can create appeal*

All of us have something in common with our homes. Sure, style, design, and location are at the top of the list, but how about age?

As we age, buyers – especially baby boomers – are either looking to transform their homes into a place that they can stay in for as long as possible, or to find one that's already equipped for them to age in place. So you should consider the age of your home, and your own age, to be the most comfortable. And in doing so, you may actually make your home more valuable to a wider audience of buyers, should you ever sell it.

According to the National Homebuilders Association, making a home suitable for the golden years is economically sound. The baby boomer generation (77 million people) makes up 28 percent of the U.S. population. Assisted living for this generation can cost more than \$60,000 per year, not counting moving expenses.

That's pretty pricey. So, if you've taken some steps to make your home an age-in-place sanctuary, make sure you highlight those renovations if you ever put your home on the market. If you haven't made any revisions, perhaps, some minor adaptations can make your home stand out and be more comfortable for any age.

"People who are middle-aged and younger are also opting to use products that are safer because they see the benefits. They are choosing to use tiles that have textures that prevent slippage. They're looking for ways to make the home look aesthetically pleasing and assist them with moving comfortably into their later years," says Steve Walton, Senior Design Consultant for Marrokal Design & Remodeling.

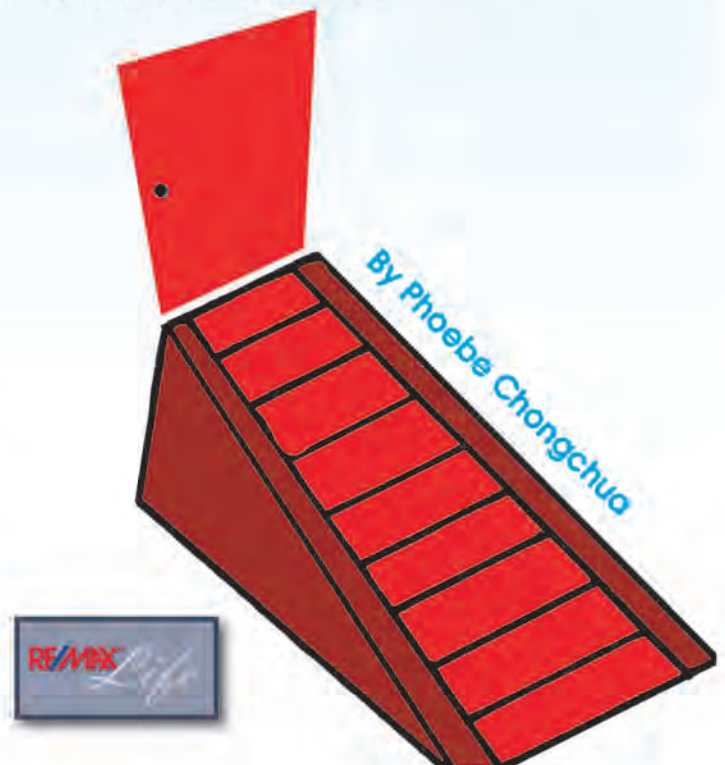
The most common renovations involve widening hallways, making bathrooms more expansive, opening up showers and adding railings in bathrooms and around the house.

"Hallways are generally three feet, which is wide enough to get a wheelchair through, but the door openings in a standard home are about two-feet-six or 30 inches wide," Walton says. "So those need to be widened to a minimum of two-feet-ten or three foot, which is a standard width," says Walton.

Larger showers are popular – and a good investment.

"The universal design of a walk-in shower has mass appeal because of its convenience and easy access for all. If you have the space, that's best; if not, then the shower has to be remodeled so that the doors are frameless. That way, there's no frame or track that sticks up and prevents the wheelchair from rolling over it," Walton says.

Textured, no-slip tiles are becoming more popular, regardless of owner's or buyer's age. Filling in sunken living rooms so that there's no change from one room to the next is also commonly requested by contractors.



Often, adapting a home for an aging-in-place family is a tiered process. Homeowners start with a few things and then have work done over the years. Inside the home, safety is what prompts many to take action. Actions such as adding lighting at the bottom of the stairwell can certainly help the elderly, but it also adds value for any homeowner, no matter the age.

Outside the home, you can add appeal by removing steps and adding a gradual slope; it allows easy access for wheelchairs and baby carriages. Here's another good tip that often more modern homes already have – levers instead of doorknobs. They are easier to open whether someone is elderly or has an injury such as a broken arm.

Yet another benefit for homeowners is that some aging-in-place remodels are considered medically necessary tax deductions. Check with your tax accountant to learn more.

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