

The Accommodating Home

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to create an inclusive resource for homeowners that provides information on accessible housing and aging in place, how accessible design can have a positive impact on any homeowner, and what steps homeowners can take to create an accessible home. After preliminary research and informal conversations with homeowners it was surmised that there is a lack of education about how home design can negatively or positively affect a homeowner's living experience. Many resources that are available concerning accessible design and aging in place are directed towards designers and contractors. Other resources address specific issues and do not cover the broad topic of aging in place in relation to the home environment. Points on the most important topics were compiled. Additional resources were also provided for further information.

Introduction

When you are 30, 40, or 50, and in your prime, it is difficult to imagine that the body that carries you through your day will one day become a daily challenge. It becomes necessary to make some lifestyle changes accordingly. Many people do not realize that the future physical limitations that lay ahead for them will not only pose a problem in how their bodies function, but also how they will be able to use their bodies in the world that surrounds them.

Homes frequently require modification to accommodate the needs of the individuals that live there. The cost of modifying a home can be overwhelming, and assisted living may not be a desirable option. There are financing options available to assist homeowners with alterations. Multigenerational living arrangements are also an option in alleviating the burden of rising housing costs and assisted living costs, as well as home modifications.

The world does not always accommodate people with physical limitations. That is where the informed consumer and the professional knowledge of the designer is essential. By being informed consumers, homeowners can create a home that will work **for** them instead of **against** them.

Procedure

The information for this research project was found by consulting various resources. The most important topics from these resources were selected and summarized. Additional printed and on-line resources were noted for those who would like more information. Checklists were compiled to be used by homeowners to identify current and potential problems in their homes. Then specific lists of modifications were created that could help solve these problems. Topics such as multigenerational housing, financing options, and working with a contractor were also summarized. All of the information collected was compiled into a booklet/ research paper that is available to any homeowner.

Results

For any home the bathroom, kitchen, and stairs pose the greatest safety risk. These risks increase with such factors as age, injury, or physical illness. For individuals planning to remain in their homes into the later years of their lives, modifications may be necessary. For others, however, accessible modifications can create a more accommodating environment. Accessible design is not meant only for those with physical limitations; everyone can benefit from an accessible home. Homeowners can become educated on these modifications and decide what would best for their home.



Figure 1. When a bathroom sink is attached directly to wall it allows for knee space.

Figure 2. A sink that projects beyond the countertop edge is easier for a seated person to use.

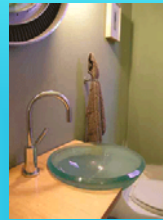


Figure 3. Safety guidelines for a shower include slip-resistant flooring, roll-in accessibility, seating in shower, hand-held shower head, grab bars and lighting in shower.



Figure 4. Heavy items and those that are most frequently used should be stored in midlevel and lower cabinets.



Figure 5. An accessible kitchen should include such features as a raised dishwasher, varied counter heights, knee space, open floor area, and low storage.



Figure 5. Handrail should extend beyond stairs and be properly attached to the wall.

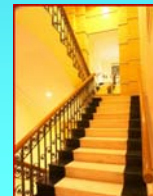


Figure 6. Staircases should be well lit. Color contrast can help those who have impaired vision. A handrail should be installed on both sides of stairs.

Discussion

For many, buying a home will be the largest investment of their life. Owning a home can be a sign of accomplishment or it may be the fulfillment of a life long dream. A family home can serve as a meeting place for the holidays and somewhere to visit during the summer. It is no wonder that many aging adults prefer to remain in their home rather than move to an assisted living facility.

With so much importance placed on the idea of a home, equal significance should be allotted to the safety, function and efficiency of the home. With the services, products, and resources that are available today, the homeowner now has the ability to develop a residence that is customized to their wants and needs. Aging in place is a growing trend and now the industry is growing to support that trend. My goal in this research was to help homeowners become aware that their surroundings can be altered to better support their lifestyle. It is imperative that people feel completely comfortable in their home. There are modifications that can be made to make the home work for the individual, to create **the accommodating home**.

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