

# Home is



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# Where the Heart is

Most homeowners would prefer to live safely and comfortably in their home for as long as possible. In fact, according to AARP, 84% of boomers would like to remain in their current home during retirement. Surprisingly though, only 16% have taken any steps to adapt their home for the future. Most homeowners are falling into the reactive versus proactive column.

Thankfully, homeowners are starting to

understand the importance of being proactive about modifying their homes. It is a simple fact of life that your needs will change. By planning ahead, you will be prepared. The goal with either a Universal Design (UD) or Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) recommended modification is to make your home safe, comfortable, low maintenance and energy efficient. This will allow you to enjoy your time living and not fret about skyrocketing utility bills, drafts, moving around safely or dim lighting issues. By choosing to make Universal Design and energy efficiency improvements over a period of time will allow you to budget and plan in advance rather than incurring sudden expenses when life takes a turn.

It makes smart financial sense to take the initiative and prepare your home now, considering the fact that the cost of some limited care facilities can be \$8,000 or more per month with yearly totals in excess of \$100,000! That figure will only increase over the next couple of years. Universal Design and Aging in Place improvements have shown to provide a much greater return on value than many other home improvement costs.

There are several options to consider when planning for long-term home modifications. Keep in mind that the goal is to make your home safe while allowing for low maintenance. A first floor bedroom and wheelchair accessible bath can make a world of difference. Wider doorways and open vanities under sinks can make these traditionally tight spaces easier to maneuver. An open kitchen floor plan with abundant lighting and easy to reach controls on appliances also add to the

ease of everyday use. You can reduce annual maintenance costs and lower your utility expenses on the outside of your home by installing low maintenance siding, insulation and energy efficient windows. When you remodel, take the time to plan to contemplate your future needs. A back door entry could be designed so that a ramp could easily be added at a later date.

Prior to starting any kind of home improvement it is important to obtain a comprehensive assessment of your home. Choose professionals with a UD or CAPS certification. This will ensure that the remodeler has the knowledge to step into your home and immediately note the best improvements to make for your particular needs. A UD or CAPS contractor has had the experience of working with medical professionals; home health providers, therapists and senior care agents. These contractors will understand the available options by incorporating these elements into the modifications to your home. This will provide you with a "whole-istic" approach to your health and home. By being proactive and planning your project efficiently at the beginning, your home could encompass many of the elements necessary to live safely and comfortably for decades to come. As the AARP survey indicates, this is exactly what homeowners prefer.

## additions • kitchens and baths



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