

## **Trends in Senior Housing so you can stay in your own home longer - with safety, independence, comfort, and the ability to function.**

- SRES Members Newsletter

**Aging in Place** deals with how to modify and adapt existing homes. **Universal Design** primarily deals with the creation upfront of easily accessible homes and products rather than after the fact modification. **Think of it as pre-planning.**

### **What is Aging in Place?**

- Remaining in your current home as you grow older –

“Not having to move from one’s present residence in order to secure necessary support services in response to changing needs.” - *Journal of Housing for the Elderly.*

- A new variation is aging in your current community, where your friends, activities, and organizations are located but in a different house or condo, not your home of thirty years where you raised your children. -

The National Association of Home Builders defines aging in place as:

- Remaining in one’s home safely, independently and comfortably
- The pleasure of living in a familiar environment throughout one’s maturing years
- The ability to enjoy the familiar daily rituals and special events that enrich our lives
- The reassurance of being able to call a house a home for a lifetime

### **Do you live in an NORC?**

Over one-fourth of seniors live in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, where residents have aged together. Maybe you moved there for the quality high school, raised your kids together, buried each other’s parents, created a tightly knit community, and stayed.

When reviewing your goals, ask yourself, “Do I want to live in a community exclusively comprised of peers? Do I want a blended community of children, families, middle-ages, and seniors?”

Where you are located at age 65 is probably where you will stay. Seventy percent (70%) of seniors live out their lives wherever they were at 65. Many plan for retirement and relocate at 65 or earlier and then stay there. The early baby boomers (born at the end of WWII) are moving in their late 50’s to early 60’s to their vacation homes and then staying put. Some are relocating and then commuting from the planned retirement home to work during those last few years in the work world.

An AARP study revealed that 89% of homeowners prefer to remain in their homes, yet 80% of the population will require special housing needs at some point in time. Modifications can make it possible for you to stay in your own home for many more years.

### **Specific Remodeling**

Breaking a hip is a common and valid fear. Without aggressive physical therapy, the consequences are serious. The obvious changes are handrails and lights in the hallways, grab bars in the shower and tub. But it goes beyond that for safety, comfort, and ability to function.

You and your SRES (Seniors Real Estate Specialist) may wish to consult a professional early on when evaluating what you need now and may need in the near future to stay in your home.

Focus on modifications that cater to any potential limitations. The list below is not a massive to-do list but areas to consider that may uncover previously unrecognized needs.

### **General**

- Adapt lower floor of home for possible one level living
- Increase general incandescent and specific task lighting
- Easy garage or parking access
- At least one entry without steps

- Doorways 36" wide with off-set hinges on doors
- Levered door handles instead of knobs so Grandpa Arthur (short for Arthritis) doesn't have to grasp and turn the handle
- Electrical outlets at 18 inches instead of 12
- Easy to open or lock patio doors and screens
- Light switches at 42" instead of 48"
- Adjustable controls on light switches
- Lighted, glow in the dark switches in bedrooms, baths and hallways
- Strobe light or vibrator-assisted smoke and burglar alarms
- For easy opening to enjoy that Springtime breeze, lower window sills especially for windows on the street
- Programmable thermostats for heating and cooling
- Contrast colors between floor and walls
- Color borders around floor and counter-top edges
- Non-skid flooring
- Matte finish paint, flooring and counter-tops (eliminates glare)
- Non-glare glass on art work
- Lower the peep hole
- Incorporate an emergency response system, built in or wearable

### **Bathroom**

- Install anti-scald valves for lever faucets and faucet mixers
- Temperature controlled shower and tub fixtures
- Stall shower with a low threshold and shower seat
- Grab bars at back and sides of shower, tub and toilet or wall reinforcement for later installation
- Bathrooms with turn around and transfer space for walker or wheelchair (36" by 36")
- Bathroom counters at workable height
- Installation of medical response device

### **Kitchen**

- Equip kitchen cabinets with pull-out shelves and lazy-susans
- Easy grasp cabinet knobs or pulls
- Task lighting under counters
- Cooktop with front controls; more accessible and keeps your Great Aunt Sophie's blue nylon nightgown sleeves from catching on fire
- Side by side refrigerator to reduce bending; adjustable upper shelves and pull out lower shelves
- Variety in kitchen counter height, some as low as table height (30 inches)
- Gas sensor near gas cooking, water heater and gas furnace
- Color or pattern borders at counter edges

### **Living Room**

- Seating at least 18 inches off the floor (reserve the bean bag chairs for the grandchildren)
- Chairs with sturdy arms and shallow seats for ease of getting up

If you are strapped for cash to remodel and want to age in place, in addition to exploring reverse mortgages, check your State Controller's Office to find out if your state allows low-income seniors to postpone your property tax. Some states allow this with a delay of payment until you sell your property or your estate is settled.

If you want to age in place in a smaller or less expensive home, check out your county's downsizing tax breaks. If you are over 55, sell your home and move to a home of equal or lesser value in the same area, some areas/counties calculate your property tax using the base year value of your old home.

You can find more helpful information at:

**[www.aging-parents-and-elder-care.com](http://www.aging-parents-and-elder-care.com), [www.lifelinesys.com](http://www.lifelinesys.com), [www.seniorcorps.org](http://www.seniorcorps.org)**