



Home Owner News



Bill Boeckelman, "The World's Greatest Realtor"

Coldwell Banker Ye Village Realty

Home Improvement:

Universal Design

AARP's Architectural Guidelines Are Of Special Interest To Older Citizens

If you are considering a home alteration, it would be wise to include some of the common sense design features from AARP's **Universal Design Guidelines** in your plans. By definition, **a universal home is a home that suits everyone** so by incorporating these design considerations into your home, you will be converting the home into a user-friendly property with much broader resale appeal. AARP's design concept is not intended to create handicapped accessible homes but rather homes that offer accessibility and appeal for everyone.

According to a recent AARP housing survey, **83 percent of older Americans indicated that they would prefer to remain in their current homes for the rest of their lives.** These older citizens love their communities and enjoy the comfort, convenience, security and independence of living in their current homes.

Realistically however, as people age, the design of their homes becomes increasingly important in how they manage their daily activities. Homes that were perfectly suitable at age 55 can cause problems in later years, as diminishing physical abilities make routine, daily tasks more difficult without some design modifications.

The universal house utilizes some very modest design considerations to enable residents with:

- Limited Reach
- Limited Gripping Strength
- Limited Flexibility
- Limited Lifting Ability
- Limited Mobility
- Limited Vision
- Limited Hearing Ability

to continue living safely, comfortably and independently in their current homes.

While each home presents its own set of challenges, most can be modified inexpensively to accommodate your needs. In addition to improving safety and comfort, these changes should also enhance your home's resale appeal.

Many of today's building codes are being reconsidered to include Universal Design features. In a few years, homes without these amenities may appear dated or obsolete.



Most of the suggested design amenities involve better lighting, non-slip walking surfaces, locating things at appropriate heights, and selecting switches, door handles, & faucets that do not need to be gripped and rotated.

The following are a just few examples of simple, inexpensive Universal Design suggestions to improve comfort, safety, and independence

- Lever door handles & lever faucet handles
- Adjustable closet rods
- Night lights in the bedrooms
- Handrails on both sides of all stairways & steps
- Brighter staircase lighting
- Large rocker light switches that push on & off
- Electric outlets 27 inches above floor
- Peepholes or view panels in front doors
- Walk-in showers with seats & grab bars
- Hand-held adjustable shower heads
- Non-skid surfaces for bathtubs and shower floors
- Full length and/or tilting mirrors
- Telephones in bathrooms
- Adjustable countertops for work space in kitchen
- Kitchen & bath countertops with rounded edges
- Sliding shelves in cupboards, lazy susans in corner cabinets
- First floor bedroom and bath



For A Complete Set Of
AARP's Universal Design Guidelines

Call

Bill Boeckelman

Your Real Estate Information Resource

(914) 681-5792



Aging In Place - Modifying Your Home

There are a number of items to consider when adapting your home. You may wish to consult a professional early in your evaluation process. No one is going to make all of the modifications, but be wise regarding those you focus on.. If you already know your eyesight is failing, focus on modifications that benefit poor, or poorer eyesight the most. If you have arthritis that impairs mobility, focus on modifications that cater to your mobility limitations.

General

- Adapt lower floor of home for possible one level living
- Increased incandescent general and specific task lighting
- Easy garage or parking access
- At least one entry is without steps
- Doorways 36" wide with off-set hinges on doors
- Levered door handles instead of knobs
- 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
- Luminous switches in bedrooms, baths and hallways
- Strobe light or vibrator-assisted smoke and burglar alarms
- 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
- Non-glare glass on art work
- Peep hole at a low height
- Incorporation of emergency response system installed or wearable

Bathroom

- Lever faucets and faucet mixers with anti-scald valves
- 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")
- Higher bathroom counters
- Telephone jack
- Installation of medical response device

Kitchen

- Kitchen cabinets with pull-out shelves and lazy susans
- Easy to grasp cabinet knobs or pulls
- Task lighting under counters
- Cooktop with front controls
- Side by side refrigerator
- 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
- Chairs with sturdy arms

