

Accessible Home Renovations

“Building Independent Living”

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Our Mission

Accessible Home Renovations provides seniors and special-needs homeowners with consulting services and remodeling solutions aimed at keeping them safe and independent in their homes.

Our Purpose

We specialize in providing home modifications to aid in accessibility, barrier-free living and safety in the home. Whether you or a loved one wishes to “age-in-place” within an existing home or have special needs as a result of progressive, abrupt or traumatic health-related conditions, we can help you with modifications needed to increase safety and comfort at home – making it easier to live well.

Our goal is to create an environment that promotes a person’s independence, retains their privacy and dignity, and makes the most of a person’s abilities. We are fully licensed and insured for the work we perform and can coordinate all phases of service from home evaluations, to design plans, to construction. Retro-fitting an existing home for accessibility renovations requires specific expertise, and as a Certified Aging in Place Specialist and Licensed Contractor, our blend of construction know-how and accessible design expertise allows our organization to best assist you in making the most of an existing home's opportunities.

Aging-In-Place

Across the nation, an aging population is beginning to realize that retirement, and the retirement home, aren't all that far away. According to the AARP, over 80 million Americans will reach retirement age within the next 15 years. That realization has led to the rise of a home design and remodeling philosophy known as "Aging in Place." In short, it means

the preference to remain in the familiar environment of one's current home while growing older, rather than relocate to new quarters, a senior community or, if need be, a care facility.

Additional supporting data published by the AARP:

- 89 percent of people age 50 and older said they would prefer to remain in their home indefinitely as they age
- Some 70% of seniors spend the rest of their life in the place where they celebrated their 65th birthday
- 77 percent of Americans age 45 and over (about 59 million) live in single-family residences
- 86 percent of Americans age 55 and over (about 45 million) own their home
- Between now and 2019, 75 million baby boomers will turn 55, an age at which they are likely to be caring for an aging relative and/or seriously planning for their retirement.
- At 2025, baby boomers will comprise about 25 percent of the total U.S. Census Bureau
- This demographic group is projected to have an average life expectancy of 80 years

Having to leave home as one's needs change would mean leaving behind a comfortable setting, familiar community and many memories. In addition, a certain amount of control is lost when one leaves home. This control provides the underpinning to our feelings of dignity, quality of life and independence. One's home is a strong element in that sense of security.

Staying in your own home as you age is typically less expensive than an assisted living facility – which can often run from \$1500 to over \$3000 per month! Basic home updates to allow for more comfortable living at home start at less than \$1000. If a more comprehensive remodel is desired or needed, typically it will add to the value of your home.

To live in a safe, independent and comfortable manner, an aging adult's home must have things such as:

- easy ("zero step") access in and out of the primary entrance
- safe, non-slip flooring surfaces
- wide doors and hallways with good lighting
- easy access to bathroom and sleeping areas
- stable furniture
- proper backing for grab bars, handrails or staircase lifts

Often times, comfort and safety changes are small and relatively inexpensive, such as:

- Levered door handles vs. knob
- Door threshold heights w/bevels (< ½ inch)
- Handrails on both sides of stairs
- Illuminated rocker switches for lights
- Bench near entrances for setting down purchases and resting

Unfortunately, most homes aren't built with the needs of aging seniors in mind. According to the U.S. Department on Aging, the majority of the aging population in the U.S. lives in a home that is 20 years old or older, abounding with narrow interior doorways, hard-to-reach kitchen cupboards and potentially hazardous bathroom fixtures. These homes will most likely need some upgrades if those dreams of staying at home are going to be made possible. The good news is that there are a number of things that can be done to make living independently at home easier, more comfortable and safe.

The very best time to perform these preparations is to do so before there is a crisis and a need for barrier-free and easily accessible living. If you're going to remodel, think about making your house more user-friendly, not just more beautiful, for when you have to have that knee replacement or develop a chronic condition.

Aging-In-Place Philosophies

With all this said, you're probably wondering whether your, or your parent's, house is aging in place friendly or not. The

Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) suggests that homeowners examine the following areas to determine this:

- **Accessibility**—As we grow older, easy access to everything from cabinets and storage space, to second story bedrooms and bathrooms can become an issue. If you presently need stairs or stools to get to an area, it's a good candidate for an Aging in Place upgrade. And if you're really in it for the long haul, it's smart to evaluate hallways, doorways, and bathrooms to see if they can accommodate wheelchairs and walkers as well. Finally, don't discount areas you presently take for granted. Introducing handrails throughout your home (especially in hallways, and in the bathroom, tub, and shower), and increasing lighting throughout your home, can go a long way in making things safe and accessible for an aging adult for years to come.
- **Adaptability**—How easily can your home be adapted to accommodate special needs and the challenges of aging? Whether you're thinking about a kitchen remodeling project, or re-doing the bathroom, it's never too early to design additions and remodels with adaptability in mind. For the most part, that means it's important to design for extra space, so that you can add Aging in Place friendly features like handrails, movable cabinets, and even residential elevators, if they should become necessary down the road.
- **Visitability**—One of the most debilitating factors that Aging in Place design tries to combat is isolation. As seniors, and their friends, grow older, it's easy to become "trapped" in the home. That said, remodeling with visitability in mind is a big part of living a satisfying life as you get older. Make sure your home is accessible to family and friends (especially aging ones!), and think about making extra space available should you ever need to hire live-in help. Replacing steps with ramps, widening doorways and hallways to accommodate limited mobility, and adding an extra bedroom or two, are all options that you might want to consider.

Certified Aging in Place Specialists (CAPS)

At this point, accessibility, adaptability, and visitability aside, you're probably wondering what your home is going to need to keep you, or a loved one, out of a nursing home or retirement community. You can certainly do your own research and design your Aging in Place upgrades on your own, or you might want to hire a professional that specializes in this sort of thing.

Finding a contractor familiar with accessible design and construction practices can be a real challenge. To address this, the AARP and the National Association of Home Builders teamed up to create a certification called Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS). They did this so that those seeking to live at home independently could trust contractors with this certification to provide them the guidance and direction on the best solution for their situation.

The CAPS program provides guidelines to contractors for designing and remodeling homes for maturing adults and those with special needs. Certified Aging in Place Specialists (CAPS) are home improvement professionals that have completed a specialized training program administered by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). According to the NAHB, CAPS contractors are trained in "the unique needs of the older adult population," "aging in place modifications," "common remodeling projects," and "solutions to common barriers" that the aging population commonly faces. In other words, they know building, and they know how to apply an Aging in Place philosophy to make your home work for you as you get older.

Accessible Home Renovations is a certified CAPS organization. To obtain this designation, we completed a thorough education program followed by rigorous testing. Through our certification, we have proven we have the skills and abilities to meet the highest standards required to perform this type of remodeling.

Selecting a Remodeler

Most of us understand—when making key purchases such as a car, furniture or jewelry—price matters. The quality of the item is most often connected to the cost of the item. Unfortunately, that same assumption is not generally applied when selecting a remodeler. Your home is the largest financial investment you make, and generally, the value will be

increased with a remodel project. However, in selecting the right remodeler for your specific project there are many factors that should influence your choice.

Remodelers often review detailed plans and provide free estimates in the hope of being selected as most qualified for a project. Yet homeowners, expecting great value and quality results, choose a remodeler on the basis of cost. Hiring the remodeler with the lowest bid may seem like a deal at the time, but as the saying goes, “You get what you pay for.” Often, those remodelers with the lowest bids choose to cut corners in their building processes. They employ subcontractors that change from job to job and therefore can’t be certain about what they will produce. Sometimes, they even hire illegal workers to keep costs low. Furthermore, they use lower quality materials, sub-standard methods of construction and tend not to warranty the work for any period of time. Additionally, when reviewing plans, they subscribe to the minimum requirements. This can lead to potential problems during the building stage that will end up increasing the cost of the project later. Thorough review of plans can cost more at the onset, but it is a cost well worth it in the long run. When a remodeler is aware that a homeowner’s decision will be based on cost, there is a temptation to underestimate the expense of a project in order to get the business. Once hired, they increase expenditures as the project progresses. This is unfair to the client because it creates budget problems. It is also unethical and a business practice that reflects poorly on the industry.

The success of a remodel project depends on more than just cost. When selecting a remodeler, consider the importance of trust, confidence and peace of mind. By interviewing prospective remodelers thoroughly, the best fit should become evident quickly. In order to evaluate each remodeler fairly, prepare a set of questions in advance. Ask how long they have been in business and find out about certifications and registrations they possess. You will also want to know about their project management and communication skills. Equally important are contracts, billing and change order procedures and warranties of work.

The cost of the project is important, but it should only be one of many factors in the selection process. Invest your time and energy in the early stage of the project; interview and choose a remodeler that you feel confident in and can build a solid relationship with throughout the design and construction phases.

Your project’s success depends on it.

How We Can Help

If you’d like to stay happily at home for as long as possible, our Aging in Place design and solutions might be the answer you’ve been searching for. Accessible Home Renovations was founded to provide a range of support services that help seniors remain independent. Our focus is on detailed home assessments and plans for aging in place, retrofit and remodeling services and home technology for control and communications.

Whether you just need a plan for what to do and a few simple repairs and upgrades, or you’ve decided on a major remodel, Accessible Home Renovations can help you. Please call today to find out more at 413-655-2626.

It begins with an objective assessment. Accessible Home Renovations has developed a comprehensive checklist tool which provides a complete room by room analysis of issues in your home—both those that are immediate concerns and any situations that could become issues in the future. Our assessment will covers areas such as:

- Kitchen and bathroom safety, accessibility and upgrades
- Lighting
- Slip and fall safety
- Grip and reach assistance
- Communication and visual assistance
- Fire and burn safety
- General livability issues

Our assessment is not an appraisal of financial value nor is the sort of home inspection that is needed for real estate transactions. We look for common issues like secure flooring, proper ventilation, problematic lighting and inappropriate design elements. The outcome of the assessment is a comprehensive list of issues from big to small which you can then use to develop a plan for your future in the house.

With a clear assessment, you can make a plan for what to do. The assessment provides you with a list of issues and problems. Some of them are very easy to fix. Others will require more detailed evaluation. And, since few of us have an unlimited budget, it is important to prioritize those that should be done soon and then plan for those that can be done later.

Our analysis will provide:

- Ideas for simple, basic solutions to common problems.
- Estimates of the cost of remodels.
- A recommendation to guide your thinking.

Don't wait until it is too late.

The best time to make this plan is while you are still healthy and vital. So that the plan reflects your desires. So you can be sure your spouse will be comfortable. So your children recognize you will be safe. And by acting as early as possible, you can ensure that you have time to:

- Recoup your investment in home remodeling.
- Get comfortable with any changes or new systems.
- Eliminate risks before an accident happens.

Too many seniors deny the inevitable and wait until their health is failing to take steps - yet research suggests that home modifications are actually of the greatest advantage to active, vital seniors.

Our Services

Our list of services and home renovation offerings includes complete remodeling of bathrooms, kitchens, bedrooms, and other living spaces, including widening of doorways and hallways. We install stair chairs, patient and wheelchair lifts, exterior access ramps, generator systems, and can provide complete ADA compliant construction.

Typical needs are for access ramps, grab bars and bathroom modifications such as accessible showers and walk-in bathtubs. Special needs remodeling might also include options such as anti-scald temperature controls in bathrooms, wheelchair or walker accessible doorways, motorized sink cabinets, automatic door openers, non-slip flooring, or custom built ramps. Here is a sample list of the projects we can handle for you

Home Safety Assessments	Access Ramps & Walkways	Snow & Ice Free Ramps
Covered Parking and Garages	Automated Door Openers	Exterior Chair Lifts
Door & Hallway Widening	Ceiling Lift Systems	Stair Lifts
Bathroom Modifications	Grab Bars, Railings and Supports	Roll-In and Walk-In Showers
"Drive Under" Sinks	Kitchen Modifications	Accessible Home Appliances
Fall Prevention and Anti-Slip	Service Animal Access Solutions	Safety Equipment Installation
Workspace Improvements	Cleanups	Accessible Room Additions
New Home Construction		

Frequently Asked Questions

How much do you charge?

Rates vary depending on the size and condition of your home and the services needed. In all cases our hourly rates are comparable to what you will find for other craftsmen and service providers of comparable quality and professionalism. One of our goals is to provide services as effectively as possible, and our unique focus on the in-home needs of seniors means we can often address issues more cost effectively than someone who is less knowledgeable. We are happy to provide a no cost (and no pressure) estimate of services for you.

Are you licensed?

Yes, we have earned our CAPS certification (Certified Aging In Place Specialist) and are licensed and insured in the state of Massachusetts.

What cities and towns do you serve?

Currently we serve the greater Berkshire County, MA area.

Appendix: Can you afford to have Mom or Dad move into your home?

As our parents get older and begin to decline in vitality, many of us consider letting them move into our home. After all, it's easier to care for an elderly mom or dad in a nearby room, rather than one who's across town or even in another state. Here are some key factors to consider — and to plan for — if you're contemplating such an invitation.

Your home in its current form may be just fine for you, but what about for Mom or Dad? If your home is modest, a lack of space is the first hurdle to overcome. Do you have the room to afford them the privacy they're accustomed to and to maintain privacy for you, your spouse and family? If there aren't enough bedrooms or bathrooms and only one kitchen, then those living arrangements can quickly prove inadequate.

The costs of fixing this problem depend on the solution you choose. Some people with homes that are too small buy entire new homes or build additions or in-law suites in the old one. The costs can be frightening: According to Remodeling magazine's 2011-2012 Remodeling Cost vs. Value Report, the national average cost for a midrange master suite addition is \$106,196.

At the other end of the spectrum, having a home that's too large can be tricky, too. An aging parent with physical issues — like a bad back, faulty knees or a hip replacement — may not be able to climb the stairs in a two-story residence. Installing an electric stair lift for moving from floor to floor usually runs about \$5,000 to \$10,000, depending on the manufacturer.

Even if such major renovations aren't required, it's a good idea to plan on upgrading some basic areas, like your bathroom. Many older people require handicapped-accessible toilets, or showers and tubs with handlebars and grab rails.