

ACCOMMODATE WITH STYLE

Creative kitchen design solutions for special needs.

BY PATSY ZAKIAN-GREENOUGH, CKD, CID, CAPS, CGBP



Photo: Bill Ennos, Emerald Light Photography

Architect Trace Kannel of Harrell Remodeling improved the safety and accessibility of this kitchen by leveling the original split-level floor, moving appliances into safe locations, and adding light sources and controls to brighten the formerly dark space.

CCIDC California Council for Interior Design Certification

TODAY'S KITCHENS ARE DESIGNED for multiple users with multiple capabilities. Homeowners often have more than one cook, and perhaps one of those cooks might have special needs for health concerns or accessibility constraints.

When planning a kitchen remodel, more and more homeowners are considering safety, comfort, and accessibility during the design phase. Some basic considerations will help pinpoint problem areas while accommodating a variety of needs.

- Work with a CID (Certified Interior Designer) who has experience with universal design or aging in place.
- Use ergonomic principles to find an efficient and less stressful way of performing everyday movements to dissipate tension in the body. If back problems are a concern, work with your designer to find specific counter heights that alleviate stress during food prep and cooking. A section of counter at a taller height can easily fit the bill.
- Plan for multiple counter heights if cooks of all ages and heights participate in cooking activities.
- Add a pull-out table or use recessed doors under the sink or cooktop to allow for mobility devices or a stool.
- Create more space for mobility devices by removing a wall and widening pathways (at least 36 inches wide) and work aisles (at least 42 inches wide).
- Move electrical outlets and switches to more comfortable and reachable heights for occupants.
- Install pulls on doors instead of knobs for ease of use.
- Select simple, easy-care finishes that have distinct color and shape variations that provide visual clues to distinguish surface and counter edges.
- Place appliances in locations where doors don't interfere with each other or traffic patterns.
- Brighten the room using additional windows or angle skylight wells for natural light.

The most important step is to share personal history and specific needs with your kitchen designer so the end result is beautiful as well as usable. You don't have to sacrifice style for comfort.

Patsy Zakian-Greenough, CKD, CID, CAPS, CGBP, is a senior designer with Harrell Remodeling, Inc., in Mountain View (www.harrell-remodeling.com). For a list of Certified Interior Designers in your area or to view the CID Pages (a visual directory of CIDs), visit www.ccidc.org. **THM**