

DESIGN FOR AGING IN PLACE

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

KITCHENS MAY BE THE HEART OF THE HOME, but bathrooms are where we begin and end each day. If you have accessibility problems in the kitchen, you can hire a cook. But if you have accessibility problems in the bathroom, you have to remodel or move.

When you decide to remodel, design with "silent features" that allow your home to grow with you and give you choices for staying later. Here are some tips for helping you and your family members remain safe, independent, and comfortable in your own home at any age and mobility level.

- ▶ Select a Certified Interior Designer (CID) to work with you. A CID is qualified by education, experience, and examination of design principles, applications, and building codes. Many design professionals have additional training, such as Certified Aging in Place Specialists (CAPS), through the National Association of Home Builders.
- ▶ If you can't widen your doorways to 36 inches, consider using swing-away door hinges that allow a door to open wider to gain the necessary space needed for crutches, a walker, or a wheelchair.
- ▶ While your walls are open during a remodeling project, install blocking around the room for any future towel and grab bars. Take a picture to remind you of where you installed the blocking. Learn the difference between a safety bar and a grab bar. (Safety bars are designed and fabricated in pieces similar to a towel bar assembly and attach to the wall with a Moly "expansion bolt." Grab bars are installed to solid-wood backing. A grab bar is 1¼ inches in diameter with the mounting bracket as an integral, welded part of the entire bar, and it should never be used as a towel bar.) This is also a good time to modify the heights and locations of your electrical outlets and switches into more accessible locations.
- ▶ Consider using a curbless walk-in shower and a fixed shower door partition instead of a shower sliding door.
- ▶ Use a wall-hung toilet—it's easier to clean and allows space under and around for a variety of mobility devices. It also allows flexibility for fixtures to be mounted at a height that's right for you.
- ▶ Consider a wall-hung sink for the same reason.
- ▶ Provide ventilation to eliminate excessive moisture, which can lead to slippery surfaces.
- ▶ Select tile and finishes carefully. Look for color and shape differences to help provide visual cues, which are important for distinguishing surface and counter edges.

Good design is always beautiful, regardless of the specialty you're designing for. A house should be built not just for whom you are today, but also for the person you'll become tomorrow.

Patsy Zakian-Greenough is a senior designer at Harrell Remodeling, Inc., in Mountain View. For a free list of Certified Interior Designers in your area, contact the California Council for Interior Design Certification at (760) 761-4734 or by e-mail at office@ccidc.org and include your city or zip code. **THM**



Photo: Bill Enos, Emerald Light Photography

This beautiful and accessible bathroom was designed by Genie Nowicki, CKD, CBD, CAPS, CGBP, CID, of Harrell Remodeling, Inc., in Mountain View.

CCIDC, California Council for Interior Design Certification

Let your home grow
with you when you
remodel your bathroom.