

# High-Tech, Low-Tech and No-Tech Ways to Make a Home More Senior-Friendly

[The following is adapted from the column I submitted for the December 2019 issue of "Prime Time for Seniors.]

Most seniors would like to age in place — that is, to stay in the home they know and love instead of relocating into assisted living. At the same time, there are practical considerations, especially if a senior lives alone.

There are no-tech and low-tech ways to address the issues associated with aging in place. What's new and perhaps less known to you are the high-tech and "smart home" solutions that are becoming more and more common. But let's talk first about those better known no-tech and low-tech solutions.

The common no-tech solution is, of course, to have a caregiver who either lives in or visits you on a schedule. This, however, can be very expensive, unless you're lucky enough to have a loving family member or two who can serve that function, perhaps trading free rent in your home for assistance with household chores, such as cooking and laundry.

The ideal home for aging in place, according to **Jenn Gomer of CarePatrol**, has a main-floor master bedroom, main-floor laundry room and a walk-in or roll-in shower — typically a ranch-style home with few or no stairs, although there are 2-story homes with main-floor masters and main-floor laundry. Ideally, the home should be close to at least one family member or friend on whom you can count in a pinch.

If a senior has a fall or is hospitalized, Jenn suggests meeting with an occupational therapist, who can look for trip hazards and suggest

grab bars or railings where they could be beneficial. However, multiple falls should be seen as a warning sign that you may need to change the home environment.

Jenn encourages her clients to be open to getting outside help with difficult activities. For instance, if you have a bad knee and your laundry is in the basement, consider allowing a friend or family member to help with laundry or getting an outside home care service to assist. Installing laundry hook-ups on the main-floor is another option, if practical.

A classic low-tech tool is the medical alert button you wear on your person. The original product was introduced by Life Alert Emergency Response in the 1980s, but there are numerous other companies now offering such a product.

Another challenge can be grocery shopping, but one low-tech option nowadays is to order groceries online or by phone and having them delivered, rather than going out on icy sidewalks and parking lots.

If adapting your multi-level home into one that works for you is not practical, Golden Real Estate's agents can help you find a home with one-level living. In addition to identifying currently available homes that meet your needs, we can alert you every time a new home matching those needs comes on the market

Golden Real Estate can make a senior's move easier by providing totally free moving from his or her current home to their new home, or to a senior community if that's their choice. (Jenn Gomer can help with that.) We have our own trucks and movers and provide you with free moving boxes and packing materi-

als, including wardrobe boxes and bubble wrap. You just pack and unpack, and we can even find someone to assist with that. (If you know someone who would like to be on our call list for moving or packing assistance, let me know.)

Patio homes, typically ranch-style homes with exterior maintenance done by an HOA, are few and far between, but if they're out there, we can find them within 15 minutes of them going on the market. I just sold one this fall.

We'd love to live in a patio home with grounds maintenance handled by the HOA, but we have the equivalent of that at less expense by hiring someone to mow our lawn in the summer and do spring and fall yard clean-ups. It's great!

Regarding making your current home more senior friendly, Rita and I love the stair elevator which we have on the stairs to our basement in our ranch-style home. We got a great deal on a used one, and they're easy to install, assuming you have a straight staircase. The seat and armrests fold up when not in use, so they can work on any staircase that is at least 3 feet wide. Rita and I are still quite mobile and don't need to use our stair elevator currently, but we like knowing it's already in place for when the need arises. Meanwhile, it's handy for transporting cases of wine and other heavy items to and from the basement.

If you have stairs with landings and turns, custom-made stair elevators can be purchased, but they get pricey. I can recommend some vendors. For those straight staircases, I can help you find a used one and someone to install it.

A senior friend who lives alone buddied up with a neighbor and texts that neighbor every morning when she gets up. If she forgets, the neighbor texts her asking if she's okay. Also, that neighbor and two others have keys to her house.

Now, let's talk high-tech solutions. For such devices, you need to have a smartphone and have internet and Wi-Fi installed in your home.

As a matter of personal safety, I think everyone should consider a video doorbell. When someone rings the bell, it sounds as usual in your home, but it also rings on your smartphone, with a video of the person ringing the doorbell and the ability to converse with him or her. The device can also alert you when there is motion at your front door, and the video is stored online where it can be shared with police. The best part of such a video doorbell is that you don't need to be home, you only need to have your smartphone with you. The visitor has no way of knowing that you're not home. Simply having a video doorbell is a good crime deterrent, because thieves recognize it. We bought our video doorbell from [www.Ring.com](http://www.Ring.com).

There are so many other Wi-Fi connected devices that you can install in your home which alert you on your smartphone. You can even buy Wi-Fi-connected "smart outlets" which make any non-internet connected lamp or appliance controllable (and easily monitored) on your smartphone. I suggest viewing all the many different devices available from various manufacturers at [www.SmartHome.com](http://www.SmartHome.com).

**Property Tax Is the Original 'Wealth Tax'**

Like you, perhaps, I was surprised and not quite sure what to make of the proposal from more than one presidential candidate to impose a wealth tax, not simply an income tax, on the super-rich.

Then it occurred to me that it's really nothing new. Homeowners already pay a "wealth tax" in the form of property taxes, but it's not a graduated tax paid only by the super-rich.



## Reader Asks: Should I Spend Money on Home Staging?

There are two kinds of home staging: 1) vacant home staging where you rent furniture and accessories; and 2) rearranging your furniture and other "stuff" to make the home show its best.

The jury is out on the former (which can cost a lot of money), but the latter is essential and doesn't need to cost you any-

thing. At Golden Real Estate, we provide staging consultations free to our sellers. One of our broker associates, David Dlugasch, is a Certified Home Stager<sup>®</sup>. Like all our associates, I can give general advice on staging your home, but I hire David to provide a full staging consultation free to my sellers.

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**Jim Smith**  
Broker/Owner, 303-525-1851  
[Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com](mailto:Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com)  
Broker Associates:

**JIM SWANSON** — 303-929-2727  
**CARRIE LOVINGIER** — 303-907-1278  
**KRISTI BRUNEL** — 303-525-2520  
**CHUCK BRUNEL** — 303-885-7855  
**DAVID DLUGASCH** — 303-908-4835  
**ANDREW LESKO** — 720-710-1000  
**CAROL MILAN** — 720-982-4941