

Here Are Some Ways to Make a Home More Accommodating for Seniors

Even if you live in a home with stairs, there are ways to make your home more senior-friendly, so you can age in place instead of moving.

Stairs are the single biggest reason that most seniors want to downsize into a ranch or patio home, but almost any staircase can accommodate a stair elevator — a chair which can transport you from one floor to the next, even around curves. We had a stair elevator on the stairs to our basement in the ranch home we sold last year. We used it mostly for transporting heavy items to and from the basement, including those big purchases from Costco which didn't fit in our kitchen cabinets or pantry. The seat on a stair elevator folds up so you can walk past it easily.

Some homes are built with 4-foot

square closets one above the other which could be sacrificed later on to install an elevator. If you're having a custom home built, consider that idea. Even if you never make that conversion, it's a feature that could raise the home's resale value.

A handyman can often design and build ramps onto your front porch, into your back yard or from your attached garage into the home.

Rita and I are big fans of "chair height" toilets, which cost no more than regular toilets and can be swapped out by a handyman, making it a pretty affordable enhancement. A handyman can also install grab bars in multiple places around your home, especially in bathrooms.

Other easy and affordable improvements could include installing lever door handles to replace door knobs. Another might be to install a

video door bell so you can see who's at your door from your chair (or from afar when on vacation — a stranger ringing your bell wouldn't know you're not home).

There are also internet-connected electric deadbolts which you can lock or unlock using a smartphone. Speaking of security, you can also install internet-connected cameras which not only give you a live view of your interior or exterior spaces but also store that video in the "cloud" for later viewing or sharing.

You might have the handyman install motion-sensing light switches in your garage or bathrooms to turn on those lights when you enter. A photocell light switch can turn on your porch light at sunset. Buy those switches at any hardware store.

One reader suggests a countertop microwave oven as being more convenient for a wheelchair-bound senior.

For bathing, you can buy a walk-in bathtub, but that's a pretty expensive improvement that won't necessarily improve your home's resale value. It could even hurt it. Most seniors prefer a shower, and one that you can roll into is best. At least build a walk-in shower with a bench and hose attachment.

A home with zero outside maintenance is ideal for seniors, but "patio homes" are few and far between and in high demand when they go on the market. I've had clients lose bidding wars for a patio home.

The primary feature of a patio home is that the HOA takes care of all outside maintenance, mowing unfenced front and back yards, removing snow up to your garage door and porch/front door, trimming trees and bushes, etc. Many patio home HOAs even take responsibility for repainting your home's exterior on a schedule (typically 6 years) and have a master insurance policy covering the structure and your roof. You purchase renter's insurance instead of homeowner's insurance.

No patio home? You can hire vendors to mow your lawn and shovel the snow. We had a wonderful Vietnamese family which not only mowed our lawn as needed but did a spring and fall yard cleanup for a reasonable fee. Of course, now that we live in an apartment, we have none of those concerns, and I'm a big advocate of doing what we did — cash out by selling your home if it will produce enough cash to live out your remaining years.



By JIM SMITH
Realtor®

'Cord Cutting' Becomes Common; Here's Our Story

Over the years, Rita and I have bounced around from cable TV to DirecTV to Dish Network because of the astounding increases in monthly fees. Add some premium channels and the cost can approach \$200/month, which is \$2,400 per year, just for TV! Perhaps your story is similar.

A year ago, when Rita and I moved into a 55+ rental that only offers Comcast for internet and TV and doesn't allow satellite dishes, we finally did what so many have done before us: we abandoned both cable and satellite TV, or "cut the cord," as it's called.

So now we only stream our home entertainment, and our primary TV provider now is YouTube TV, not to be confused with YouTube. I recommend it as an affordable solution.

We have Comcast/Xfinity for our broadband internet, which is a busi-

ness expense for me, and their basic internet service is fast enough for streaming YouTube TV (which is \$64.99/mo.) and Netflix.

I love two things about YouTube TV. First, it has unlimited cloud DVR storage. (No equipment for us; just connect to our WiFi signal.) Second, like Netflix, I can watch it on my laptop, phone or iPad, such as at the office or when I'm traveling anywhere in the U.S. (I watched some Denver programs while I was in Hawaii recently.)

We don't watch any programs live anymore, because we want to fast forward through commercials. We preferred Dish and DirecTV over Comcast because they have a 30-second fast forward button. Comcast has no such button. YouTube has a 15-second button, which is good enough.

Meet Our New Broker Associate: Austin Pottorff



I have known Austin for over a decade. He's one of the hardest working Realtors I know, and he has been very successful, especially in finding and listing development sites which he recognizes as having great potential. Previously self-employed under the name Mountain Opportunities Real Estate, he has now joined Golden Real Estate, bringing with him a new development listing which you'll be reading about in a coming column. He is also a licensed drone pilot, and you'll be impressed as I was by the aerial photos and videos which you can view on his website, www.MountainDrone.com.

Austin's politics also align with my own, and I am really impressed by his commitment to the banning of assault rifles, as evidenced by his website, www.KidsLivesMatter.org. I look forward to a great relationship with Austin. You can reach him anytime on his cell phone, 970-281-9071, or by email at Austin@GoldenRealEstate.com. Welcome aboard, Austin!

Price Reduced on Your Golden Dream Home



This solar-powered home at 359 Canyon Point Circle was a model home for the Village at Mountain Ridge, the subdivision west of Highway 93 backing to the Mt. Galbraith Park. (There's a trailhead to the park's 5 miles of hiking trails within the subdivision.) The seller has made many improvements to the home since buying it in 2002, including a total renovation of the gourmet kitchen and master bathroom, plus adding 11.5 kW of solar panels which meet all the electrical needs of the home. The main-floor deck was also completely rebuilt with composite decking, metal railings and a breakfast bar for enjoying the sunrises over South Table Mountain and the City of Golden, which are visible even from the walk-out basement. A walking path near this home allows children to walk safely to Mitchell Elementary School via a pedestrian bridge that crosses the highway. To appreciate all the features of this 4,106-sq.ft. home, take the narrated video tour at www.MountainRidgeHome.com, then come to the open house this Saturday, 12-2.

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