

HousingZone

Tips for Incorporating Aging-in-Place Design Into a Home

News Release -- 11/20/2009 12:42:00 PM

Jacksonville, Fla. (Nov. 13, 2009)

– A recent study by the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) showed nearly 80 percent of Baby Boomers surveyed said they planned to remain in their current homes into their retirement years. According to Sisler Johnston Interior Design, incorporating aging-in-place design principles will make it easier for these individuals to overcome the physical barriers of the aging process and retain independence while living in comfort and style.

“Aging-in-place is a growing movement that will continue to influence new home construction and remodeling projects,” said Judith Sisler Johnston, president of Sisler Johnston Interior Design and ASID Allied Member. “The earlier in life one decides to minimize physical barriers and other household restrictions, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, the more prepared they will be for aging, illness or other situations that may restrict their mobility on a temporary or permanent basis.”

Aging-in-place includes the basic principles of universal design. Suited to the needs of all ages, this design style promotes independence within all types of living environments for all levels of ability. When combined with thoughtful, long-term planning, aging-in-place will produce pleasing solutions as opposed to temporary alterations to fix an immediate need.

Sisler Johnston believes the most cost-effective approach is to pre-plan and include universal design features and modifications in new construction or home renovation projects. Proper planning should include the assessment of entries and thresholds, furnishing arrangements, illumination, wall and window coverings and



The combination of durability and functionality along with a pleasing environment appeals to many aging-in-place residents.



Grab bars are critical elements to sustained mobility and should be part of the planning process, as seen in bathroom at Fleet Landing's Villa model at the Palms.

security. There are many features and products available for the home that enhance accessibility, mobility and ease of use without detracting from appearance.

It is essential to have open areas and flexible spaces on the first-floor. Locate the master bedroom and bathroom on the ground floor. A first-floor home office with a full bath nearby could be adapted as a bedroom for a caregiver in later years. Adequate lighting is necessary and levers instead of knobs on doors and cabinet pulls can make it easier for occupants to get into and out of spaces.

It is also important to create good traffic flow with few or no trip hazards between rooms. Tile and resilient flooring should have skid-inhibiting, slip-resistant finishes. Wider, 36-inch doorways will make rooms accessible to all and make it easier to move large items like sofas, entertainment centers and bedding. Exterior accessibility is also important. Doors should open without restricting movements, creating barriers to independence or limiting visitors.

The kitchen is the heart of home and its proper design will ensure its usefulness. Many new home floor plans highlight accessible, well-designed kitchens that are combined with family rooms and dining spaces. Some may include workstations with internet access, closed-circuit video and wireless controls. In the ASID study, seniors desired kitchen design upgrades that also can make aging-in-place easier, such as newer appliances, flooring and counter surfaces. Raised counter heights, sinks and other plumbing choices can also make it easier to get around.

Design upgrades not only make bathrooms more beautiful, but can enhance safety since slippery surfaces or inadequate lighting can lead to dangerous falls. Grab bars are critical elements to help sustain mobility and should be part of the planning process. Proper lighting is important and the addition of solar tubular "skylights" can provide a solution to flood the area with light. To illuminate pathways to and from bathrooms, dimmers are recommended. The installation of tubular lighting along the base of cabinets has a dramatic aesthetic while providing functional illumination. Like the kitchen, higher counter heights, sinks and other plumbing choices can make it easier to get around bathrooms.

For furnishing improvements, Sisler Johnston recommends a round pedestal table in the dining room. The shape lends itself to involving everyone in conversation and its pedestal base lacks legs at the edge that may interfere with mobility aids. She also suggests assessing sleeping areas to ensure comfort and accessibility. Items like bedroom seating, bedside tables and adjustable beds may be desirable living enhancements as sleep patterns change over time.



The flat in Brylen Homes' Berkshire model at Queen's Harbour is an excellent idea for visitors, caregivers or elderly family members. It includes a kitchenette and bath, and the open floor plan allows for easy mobility throughout the room.



Home theater systems are a popular choice for today's baby boomers because of their affordability, functionality and easy access.

Sisler Johnston's design expertise has been featured in Residential Design for Aging in Place, a textbook by Drue Lawlor and Michael Thomas. The authors included numerous photographs of spaces designed by Sisler Johnston that illustrate the design principles of independence and livability.

Sisler Johnston Interior Design offers comprehensive interior design services for commercial and residential clients. The company specializes in marketable designs for active adult and continuing care senior lifestyle communities. Sisler Johnston Interior Design also designs community centers, builder model homes, private residences, hotel guest accommodations and office suites.

Judith Sisler Johnston, president of Sisler Johnston Interior Design, is an allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), the International Interior Design Association (IIDA), the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), and is a Certified Green Professional (CGP). She is Florida's leading authority on designing spectacular environments that are inspiring, functional and contribute to the wellness and self-esteem of their occupants. Sisler Johnston and the company's team of licensed, talented designers work with clients to enhance their surroundings with designs that range from traditional elegance to contemporary classic.

For more information about Sisler Johnston Interior Design, call (904) 288-0908 or visit www.sislerjohnston.com

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