



TIM,
we are retired and would like to remodel our home to make it comfortable for us in our retirement years. What should we look for?

This is an interesting question and one that many will be considering soon. By 2020, the number of Americans age 50+ is expected to reach nearly 120 million, according to U.S. Census Bureau projections. And with a majority of them interested in living in their own homes for as long as possible—Houzz’s recent Aging-in-Place report found that 61% of respondents 55 or over planned to stay in their

homes indefinitely.

Let’s begin by defining what Aging-in-place or sometimes called Universal Design is exactly, and what it can do for us if we plan to live out our golden years in our existing home. The main tenet of universal design is making a home safer and more comfortable for its occupants by incorporating features such as grab bars, lever faucets, wide doorways, zero-threshold showers, etc.

The design standards for the homes we currently live in, were developed many decades ago, when the number of people who wanted to live out their retirement years in their existing home was much lower than it is today.

Therefore, a growing number of people will need to remodel their home to accommodate their needs today, many of which were overlooked in the original design.

Most of us would like to get a return on our investment when we remodel our homes. With that in mind, this year’s Cost vs Value report was the first to include a universal design themed project converting a ‘standard’ bathroom into one that incorporates accessible features, like a shower, widened doorway, and appropriate grab bars and the like. According to the report, it’s a decent investment, with an average 68.4% ROI in the 1st year

after completion. Also, it's important to remember that (like many home improvement projects) the true value of universal design lies beyond its monetary gains.

What to look for: When discussing universal design, understand that creating a well-designed, accessible space isn't always so easy, so plan to hire a professional builder and designer. Ideally, a builder/remodeling company with in-house designers that understand your needs and can design your improvements without making your home look institutionalized. Sometimes space can be limited and the ability to see the remodel project in 3D can provide valuable insights and put apprehensive clients at ease. Moreover, these changes can significantly alter the structural integrity of your home, so a professional builder/remodeler will be needed to add the structural elements necessary to support new loads.

A proven track record: Lastly, Hiring a professional builder/remodeler who has completed many similar projects will make the process fun and enjoyable while eliminating unfortunate missteps that can sometimes appear. With the right builder/remodeler at your side, you and your loved ones will enjoy your beautiful and functional home for many years to come. **BG**



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