

What is AGING IN PLACE and ADAPTIVE DESIGN?

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Adaptive Design as it relates to construction and remodeling is simply put, "Creating an environment suited to a person or persons with a particular set of physical and/or sometimes other challenges." "Aging in Place" is the same thing but as it relates to a person whose physical challenges or infirmities are more or less age related. Some examples might be stroke, illness, accident or fall, or any of the myriad of calamities out there waiting unfortunately for any of us.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate what Certifies Aging In Place Specialists (hereafter CAPS) do is the following:

Couple A are in their late sixties. One partner is still completely able while the other has had a stroke, and requires care beyond the abilities of the able partner, in their home as it is situated. The stroke victim is sent to an assisted living facility. The family home is necessarily sold to pay for care. The able partner has to find a new place to live, possibly alone. The couple are separated. Morale throughout the family is very adversely impacted. Life savings are being depleted. The grown up children have two separate places to visit to be supportive of their parents. Any inheritance they may have anticipated and which the parents may have intended to leave them.

Couple B are identical to Couple A, except they engage a CAPS professional. A few modifications are designed for the kitchen. An existing bathroom is gutted. A gated tub or wheel chair accessible shower is installed. A wheelchair accessible wall hung lavatory is installed. Likewise a wall hung wheelchair accessible toilet with appropriate safety rails and supports is installed. Perhaps a pocket door is installed for easier wheelchair access. Perhaps a ramp from the driveway to the backdoor is installed. Perhaps a stair lift is installed if required. In this case in a perfect world the money, perhaps \$50,000 comes from a home equity line.

These modifications allow the couple to stay together in their home. Hopefully the home appreciates in value over the intervening years and the loan is paid down. Morale is markedly better. The estate, their life savings remains intact. It is a much improved quality of life for the entire family. The able partner can now be the capable care giver. Perhaps a visiting nurse comes over a few times a week to augment the care.

Was couple B a simplification of how it goes in real life? Perhaps, but only for the sake of brevity in this article.

The course or progression of the health and abilities of the parties involved must be taken into consideration. Stroke victims with successful rehabilitation can improve significantly with hard work and good fortune. On the other hand, debilitating illnesses,

with inevitable downward spirals, such as MS., Parkinson's, Huntington's Chorea, Lupus, Scleroderma, unfortunately, have to be considered in the design, with modifications, in preplanned steps incorporated strategically into a plan.

The wishes of the clients and their family should all be taken into account, along with lifestyle, tastes, and budget should all be taken into account.

There are many amazing products now available for this growing market, with more being introduced every day. A very few of these follow:

Cabinet lift systems which allow the kitchen cabinets to be raised and lowered. Worried About cabinets accidentally being lowered onto the legs of a wheelchair bound client? Not to worry, as micro processors with sensors sensitive enough to feel the hair follicles on the leg of the client, automatically stop the cabinets, even overriding ongoing commands to lower the cabinets further.

Wheelchairs impervious to even a marine environment, to say nothing of a shower.

Remote controlled bathtub lifts to allow a caregiver to lower a client into a tub, change their posture or attitude, and then help them back up after the bath is finished.

Semi-permanent thresholds exist for wheelchair accessible showers. These are used to convert from regular use to wheelchair access or back in the other direct if the client should improve.

Some other products are; motion activated faucets and soap dispensers, moveable adjustable safety rails in a myriad of configurations, stair lifts, refrigerator drawers, dishwasher drawers, cabinet organizers which pull out the cabinet contents when the door is opened. The list goes on and on with new additions almost daily and the baby boomers age, and the market for these products grows.

Similarly, the need for CAPS designed home modifications is growing steadily.

These same modifications are needed for anyone of any age who may be incapacitated for any reason.

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