

# Beyond the Code Design for Successful Aging

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DESIGNS for INDEPENDENT LIVING

## Beyond the Code – Design for Successful Aging

Its an old saw that when we design to meet the “code” we are designing to the minimum standard. Today we are focusing on single family, perhaps multi-generational ,residences. . Single family homes give us the opportunity to interface with individuals and creatively design environments that enhance their quality of life in a special way. Code provisions can not address every individual’s specific residential needs. Besides, even if the scope of the ADA were extended to single family homes – the focus is not the same.

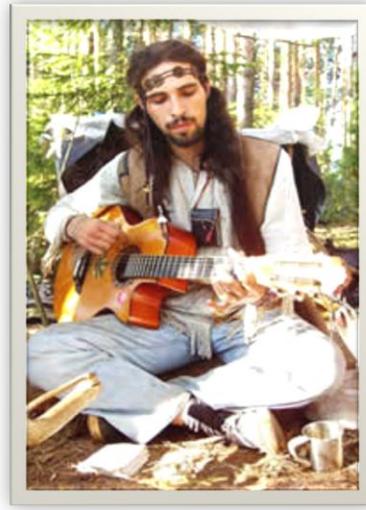
ADA is “disability focused”

Disability is not limited by age

Disability is subject person focused and doesn’t take into account interactions with friends, caretakers and family

Disability takes a snapshot of current conditions

Do you do what you did ?



Why look at successful aging? Well, do you still do all the things you did 20, 30, or 40 years ago? Do you still want to do all those things?

Can you physically and mentally do all those things?

“ Do not try to live forever  
- You will not succeed”

George Bernard Shaw

'nough said. But we can try to live long and well. Whatever that means.

But, you still do what you do



We still want to enjoy activities – physical and mental.  
And as we'll see, engaging life defines successful aging .

# Aging in Place

The AARP's "Fixing to Stay" study also found that:

- People 50 and older who said that their homes would not meet their needs as they grew older were almost twice as likely to feel isolated.
- Older consumers want a means of identifying professionals they can trust.
- Those professionals need to be reliable, honest and have training in the proper skill-sets to modify, design and build a safe, barrier-free home.

The statistics are overwhelming that we want to stay in our homes.

WE are here and aging and need the services to maintain our independence and ability to live in our own houses.

The undeniable fact is that our population is aging and is going to be dealing with the features of aging for many years. The boomers will be followed by the "echo-boomers" born between 1980 and 1998.

There are 82.5 million detached homes and the median year of construction is 1974. These houses are going to require modifications to match our needs into our later years.

Who is going to commission these renovations? Those who plan for themselves and those who plan for their relatives: their older parents.

They look toward AARP and AARP advises them to look for Certified Aging in Place designers and contractors.

On learning this, I searched for architects in CT who had become Certified Aging in Place Specialists. Finding none, I had several thoughts Why are contractors getting this? And here is a growing market opportunity with the chance to do some good too.

The response to making my specialty known have varied. Very recently I made a proposal for an "accessory apartment" to create a multi-generational household. I believe we will be seeing a lot more of this in the future. Some residential developers are marketing the multi-generational suitability of homes already.

# DEFINING SUCCESSFUL AGING

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## 1. Avoiding Disease

Avoiding disease

Much better than having to re-gain health or make life-style accommodations

## DEFINING SUCCESSFUL AGING

1. Avoiding Disease
2. Maintaining High Cognitive and Physical Function

Maintain the physical and mental abilities to engage life.

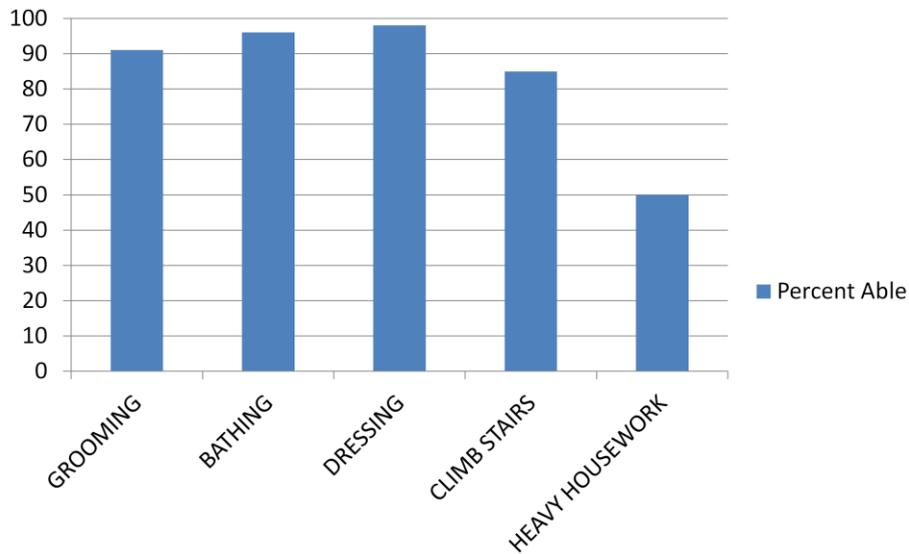
## DEFINING SUCCESSFUL AGING

1. Avoiding Disease
2. Maintaining High Cognitive and Physical Function
3. Engagement with Life

And ultimately do that.

Aging is a gradual process. You will hear the term ADL or “activities of daily living” used in defining the need for care-giver assistance. In developed countries there is a demonstrated high level of life satisfaction among older adults – linked to the fact that not all decreased abilities lead to dependence.

## The Framingham Disability Study



American Journal Public Health 1981

The Framingham Disability Study showed the for the ADL's of grooming, bathing, walking across a room, transferring from bed to chair, dressing and eating, the independent ability levels were between 91 and 100% depending on the activity for persons 75 to 84 years old. Fifty percent were able to perform heavy housework and 77% could walk a half mile.

People with disabilities age and some people develop age related disabilities

## REDEFINING INDEPENDENCE

- **Some define “independent” as:**
  - Seeking a desire for freedom
  - Not subject to control by others
  - Not requiring or relying on others
  - Not looking to others for one’s opinions or guidance

We want to maintain our independence. But what does that mean?

## REDEFINING INDEPENDENCE

- **Empowering Definitions of “independent”**
  - Seeking a desire for freedom
  - Not subject to control by others
- **Limiting Definitions of “independent”**
  - Not requiring or relying on others
  - Not looking to others for one’s opinions or guidance

We need to be empowered to engage life. The “lone wolf” approach is limiting, not empowering

## **Achieving and Maintaining Independence Throughout Our Lifetime**

- A. Maintaining independence requires help throughout our lifetime
- B. Assistance comes in many forms– eg. home repair, cleaning person, mailman, garbage man, doctor, lawyer, financial planner, health care workers
- C. People who plan ahead AND accept assistance remain “independent”.
- D. This is a new way to look at “independence”.

We architects can help clients to plan ahead and structure their independence.

## Steps to take to be in charge of One's Independence

- **Personal Planning**
- **Health and Prevention Planning**
- **Financial Planning**
- **End-of-Life Planning**
- **Legal Matters**

How many people recognize the importance of these steps?

How many people treat their homes as life-supporting investments as opposed to financial investments ?

As professionals, we are in a position to advise our clients that planning for aging includes their homes.

We are aware of the advice we all should take, why don't we take it?

## Why Don't People Take These Tips ?

### – Tips

- Have regular annual medical and dental check-up's
- Enjoy healthy eating habits, regular exercise Keep working and/or volunteer, become and remain regularly engaged with others
- **Evaluate your home for safety – present and future**
- Be honest about present needs and anticipated lifestyle changes – plan in advance
- **Architects can design a new home or modify an existing home to adapt.**

### – Obstacles

- Don't see the need
- Don't have time



I found that while I may not think that “Aging” means “ disabled” - the public links the sensitivities and skill sets involved so I have received calls to help younger people with accessibility concerns And I have been able to offer services through Home Free Home

My first project with brought me to this bucolic setting where we are helping our client, who has a progressively debilitating illness to remain at home, with his teenage daughter for as long as he can.



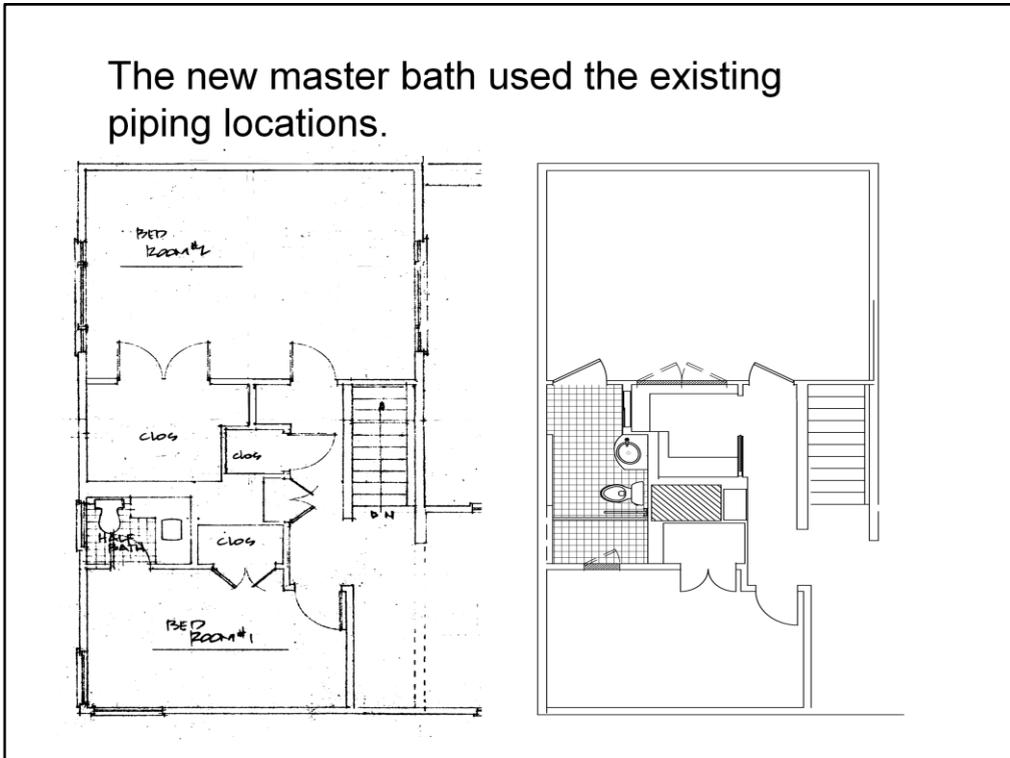
The house itself is modest, but has the benefit of grade level access.

The client was using this bathroom  
some distance from his bedroom



Bathroom and kitchen functions are critical. This gentleman is confined to a wheelchair and was having to deal with this bathroom. He had cabinet pulls attached to the door frame that he could use to help his movement into the room.

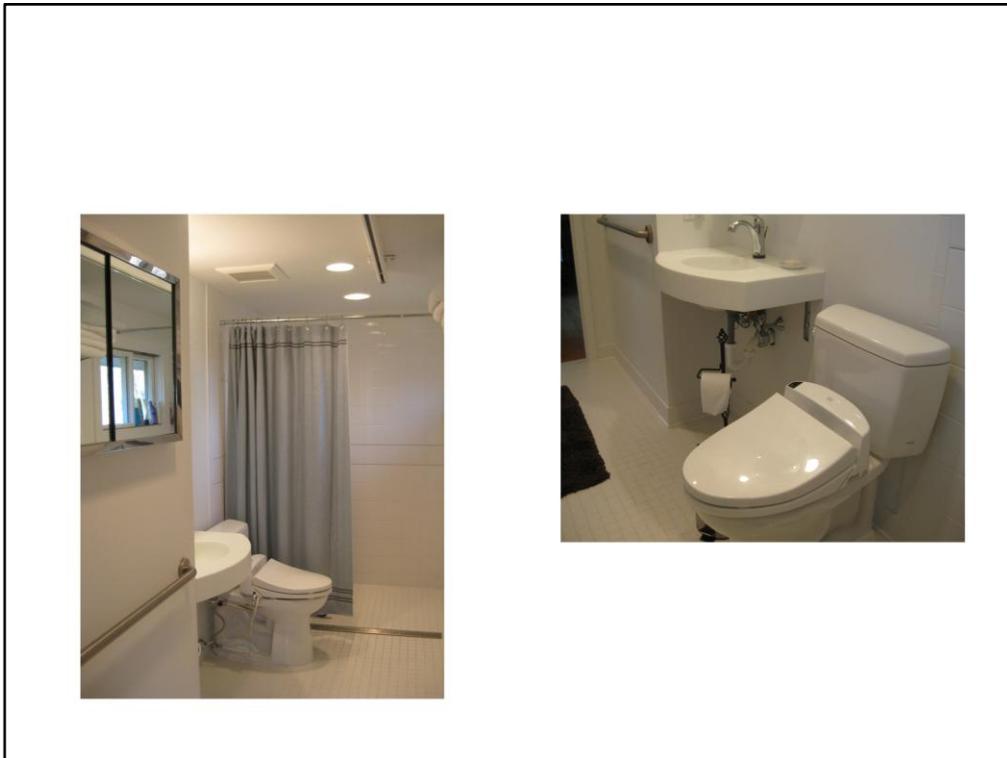
The new master bath used the existing piping locations.



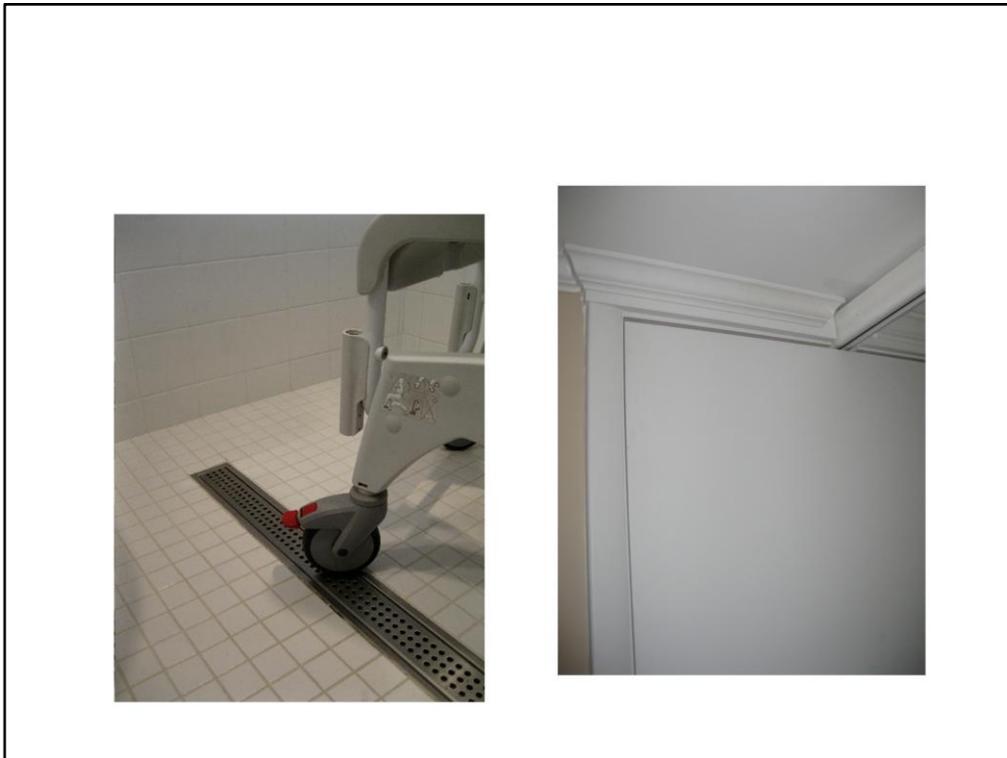
An accessible bathroom adjacent to his bedroom was needed. This new bathroom connected to the existing main sanitary piping.



Adjacency to the bedroom allowed for a ceiling mounted rail for transfer from the bed to shower and toilet.

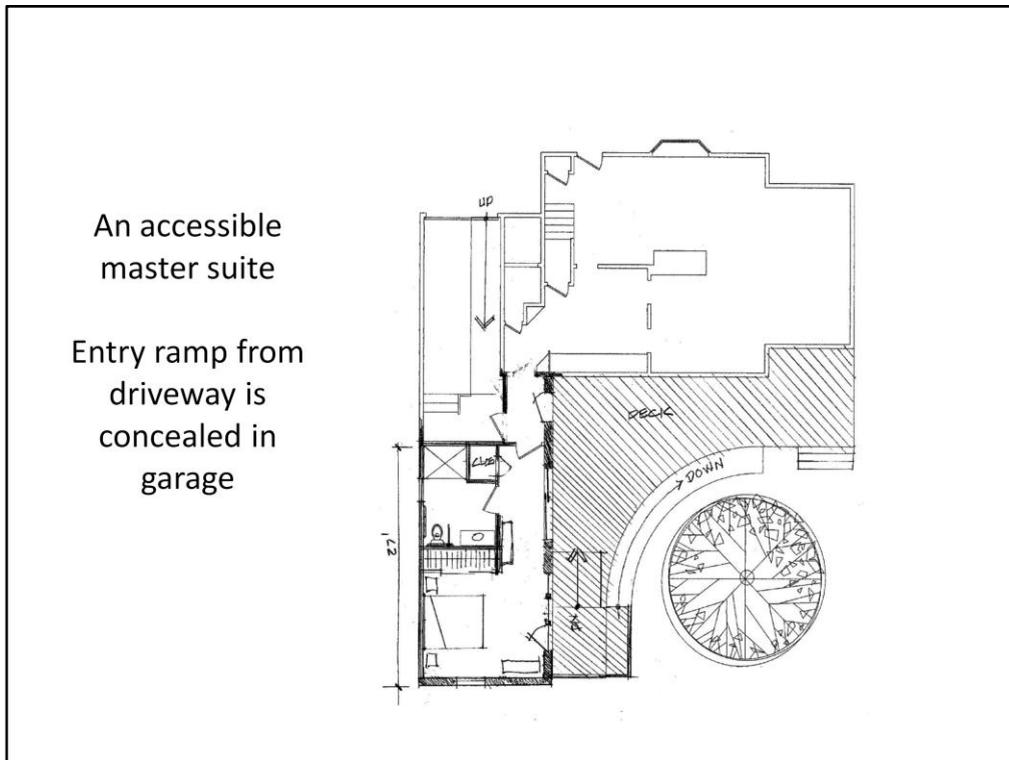


The walls are lined under the drywall with plywood, allowing for secure future attachment of assistive devices, grab bars, etc.



Think about the functional details. We chose to position the drain at the front edge of the shower area to create a single slope pitch from the back wall of the shower by adding to the height of the subfloor and not cutting or reframing to create a recess.

You can see more pictures from this project on the Home Free Home website.



Sometimes new space will be required and most clients need to consider the future value of their homes.

When no longer needed or desired, the ramp can be removed from the garage. Where it could be inexpensively constructed, without changing the landscaping.



The back end of the garage presented a connection location that wouldn't interfere with the living spaces while tying into the existing circulation to the kitchen.







# Living at Home

Growing older can mean loss of ability to move around and perform daily functions. But, by making some changes, the home can be a major factor in maintaining an independent lifestyle.

AARP surveys indicate that up to 89 percent of participants aged 55 and older want to live where they currently reside.

One can make the choice to stay in their home. Home, where our most meaningful objects and best memories of our experiences are.



While most of us know we want to stay at home. Sometimes being reminded that this is possible has to be stated.

Studies have documented the high level of denial of the need and excuses that are made for not fulfilling the widely accepted desire to “age-in-place”

**Why Not ?**



## Why Not ?

- COST

“The economic cost of implementation was perceived as being outside their means”



Study by Rehabilitation Research Center on Aging, State University of New York at Buffalo.  
Edward Steinfeld, Arch. D.  
Scott M. Shea, M. Arch.

## Why Not ?

- COST



“The economic cost of implementation was perceived as being outside their means”

Make financing assistance available and make getting it unstressful

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The objections are not insurmountable and professionals, like us, can lead the way.

# Why Not ?

- STRESS



“The physical and  
psychic energy required  
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Provide “one stop shopping” for .. services.. maintaining high quality and reliability

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- SELF ASSESSMENT

“a belief that a change in the environment can make a difference in one’s quality of life ”



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Develop an awareness of the advantages of home modifications

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## **WE ALL CAN HELP**

- CARE GIVERS
- ELDER-LAW ATTORNEYS
- ARCHITECTS
- INTERIOR DESIGNERS
- CONTRACTORS
- ACCOUNTANTS
- BANKS & CREDIT UNIONS

The ability to help is not limited to architects, but can be led by us. Living independently is easier with good resources and we can network and team with other professionals to help.

# Universal Design Concepts

*Bottom left: Pull-out cabinets allow for easier access to items.*

*Bottom right: Appliances placed below cabinets require less bending.*



- Barrier Free
- Accessible
- Adaptable
- Visitable

I present these concepts again to emphasize that the home environment influences caregiving and the interaction of others. And that Universal Design Principles extend beyond the physical boundaries of houses. Combining the UD principles with societal support the whole community benefits.

This in turn leads us to the virtual “village” arrangement. I urge you all to look into the “Village” movement as a means to sustaining life satisfaction.

## Making houses homes for a lifetime



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Make your houses homes for a  
lifetime

