

*Washington/October 5, 2006/*—With October 8-14 designated as National Aging-in-Place Week, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) is encouraging consumers to plan out their future needs early and to learn about the smart ways homes can be designed or modified to ensure convenience and safety as residents age.

Although baby boomers may not want to admit it, aging does have an effect on our daily life. When it becomes difficult to travel up and down stairs, a first-floor master suite may make life less problematic. Installing task lighting and lowered electrical outlets and switches makes household chores easier on the eyes and back. Basic alterations like these can make it simple for all of a home's residents and visitors to carry out daily activities no matter what their age or ability.

Many aging-in-place alterations are not noticeable to the eye, but add a wealth of convenience to the home. These features can also improve a home's overall safety.

"It's easier than ever to build aging-in-place features into a new home, or modify an existing home to include them," said Norman Cohen, a builder from Atlanta and 2006 chair of the NAHB 50+ Housing Council. "These simple concepts, which are incorporated right into the home's design, can enable homeowners to continue living in their homes as they get older."

Some simple aging-in-place features that builders and remodelers are incorporating into new and remodeled homes include:

- At least one bedroom and bathroom on the first floor. Having a full bath and a master bedroom on the main floor makes it troublesome for those who have difficulty climbing stairs.
- Conveniently located and easy-to-use controls and handles. Replacing traditional knobs with lever handles allows for people with arthritis or carrying a sack of groceries to open doors more easily. Raised electrical outlets and electrical switches positioned slightly lower are easier for wheelchair users to operate and also limit bending.
- No-step entrances. Having at least one entry without steps creates effortless access for all, regardless of mobility.
- Wider doors and hallways can make a home more accessible to everyone.
- Larger bathrooms with safety features. A bigger bathroom makes maneuvering easier for people with walkers, crutches and wheelchairs or a caregiver. Grab bars can provide stability and prevent falls.
- Improved lighting. Failing eyesight is a greater concern as we age and proper lighting can help Baby Boomers adapt. Adjustable controls, or dimmers, can help prevent glare and ensure proper lighting. Meanwhile, multiple controls in different parts of a room can help limit the number of trips needed to turn lights on and off.

Consumers who are interested in renovating their homes are encouraged to hire building professionals with experience in the aging-in-place field. The NAHB Remodelers Council offers a [Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist](#) professional designation, the only national program that teaches professionals how to modify a home for safety and accessibility while ensuring an aesthetically pleasing environment.