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Remodeling or addition helps in-law feel at home

Question: How can I remodel my home to allow a parent or other relative to move in?

Answer: More baby boomers are facing a difficult decision about where their formerly independent parents should live.

For some, the answer may be remodeling a room at their home or adding an in-law apartment.

Here are some tips to consider when changing your home into a multigenerational residence.

Think safety: Bedrooms should have a window 44 inches or lower from the floor for a window escape in case of a fire. There should also be a working smoke detector.

Resident's needs: Discuss the needs and expectations of the person moving in before doing any work.

We recommend working with a conceptual designer or space planner. If a homeowner is going to spend money on a remodel, this step ensures that the space flows with the rest of the home and fits in with the short- and long-term needs of the person living there.

Think long-term: If and when parents or in-laws move in, do take time to make sure the new areas are handicapped-accessible. This might not be a current need, but it could become one in the long term.

Some clients have thought about turning an upstairs storage area into a bedroom. Remember that an upstairs bedroom means steps to climb and that not all storage space is meant to be used as living space.

Easy access: In-law quarters are best suited for the main floor of the home. Try to eliminate any need to use stairways. If the space to be remodeled has a basement entrance, this can help create easy access and privacy. A basement with stairs and/or unfinished areas can certainly be great living spaces for the kids or middle-aged people, but they aren't always accessible to the elderly.

Consider an addition: Additions don't always mean huge projects. A conceptual designer can rework existing areas to create the needed accommodations. That may only require a small addition to a home.

Working in tandem with a professional remodeler, a homeowner can make the new addition look as if it has been there for years.
