

Remodelers prepare for aging baby boomers

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His wife and business partner, Janet Butterfield, said in an ideal world, every home would be designed from its inception in a way that allows its occupants and visitors to navigate it no matter their age or abilities. Doorways and hallways would be wide enough for wheelchairs, light switches and door-knobs would be easy for arthritic hands to navigate, lighting would be plentiful for weakening eyes, spacious bathrooms would be located on the ground floor for individuals with bad knees or in wheelchairs. Such design is referred to in the industry as "universal design" and adheres to a principle of "visitability."

Houses with the accessibility features already in place add an element to a home that has proved marketable. Janet, also a CAPS, talked about a man who'd had his home remodeled to facilitate aging in place. When he sold the house about a year ago, he marketed it as an accessible house and it sold right away.

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Janet Butterfield,
Accessible Bathrooms & More

"That is a selling point for remodeling," she said. "You can spend this money and it adds money to your house, versus moving into assisted living and it's gone."

Janet said baby boomers will approach aging in place in a different way from their parents.

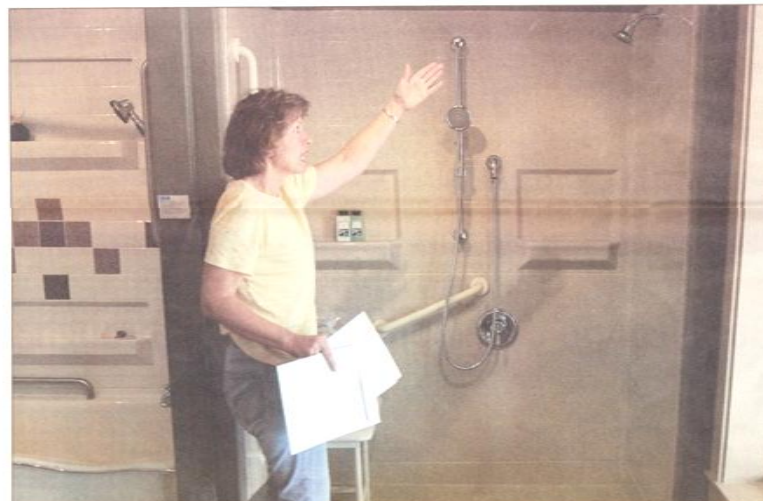
"A lot of these older people now make do with what they have," she said. "We don't anticipate baby boomers will do that. They're used to having whatever they want, and they're more willing to pay for modifications."

Aging in place is a goal which the AARP is trying to get baby boomers to think about early.

"Barriers between the individual and environment can result in a sense of isolation and can make it difficult for an older person or a person with disabilities to have the social interaction



Aging in place specialist John Frazier (left) discusses remodeling plans with Eagle homeowner Joe Mortenson. Mortenson is remodeling part of his garage and home in order to better accommodate the accessibility needs of his elderly mother. Behind them, contractor Brett Roth of Roth Construction, Boise, and carpenter's helper Gabe frame a new bedroom wall.



Accessible Bathrooms & More co-owner Janet Butterfield explains how lower barriers enable seniors to enter and exit showers more safely at the Best Bath Systems showroom in Meridian.

and independence that contribute to a healthy lifestyle," said AARP Idaho director Jim Wordelman. "Perhaps one

of the more difficult obstacles to overcome is getting younger people, such as boomers, to think carefully about their

potential future needs in housing accommodations and to plan accordingly."



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