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Home renovation firms specialize in helping baby boomers age in place

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The team at Creative Housing/Creative Renovations wants to help baby boomers reframe widespread thoughts about making adjustments to their home based on their aging.

"All too often home renovations for safety and accessibility are perceived as a 'surrender' to the aging process," said Cristy Buenconsejo, Creative Housing director of projects and design.

"We are encouraging seniors to think of the renovations as a positive means to support their desire to live independently in their own home for as long as possible."

The Columbus-based handicapped home remodeling and contracting organization's spin on aging in place may resound with a generation known for embracing youthfulness.

With the youngest boomers celebrating their golden birthdays last year, now is a good time for those who wish to remain in their homes to start thinking about updating their property.

"It is difficult for seniors to accept the undeniable physical impacts of an aging body. But it is paramount to plan ahead," Buenconsejo said, adding that reacting out of necessity could lead to rushed work and unsuitable solutions.

"We sometimes find seniors needing to remain in short-term care facilities much longer than they would like, because they simply cannot return to a home that now presents them with barriers to their daily living."

The Ohio Department of Aging recently posted a bulletin on its website stating that aging in place begins in the bathroom.

"Any real estate agent will tell you that updating your bathroom is one of the best things you can do if you want to sell your home. But, it's also one of the best things you can do if you plan to stay in your home for a long time to come," officials wrote.

"As we age, our physical abilities and needs change. If our homes don't keep up with those changes, problems can arise, and the bath-



room is the room that often presents the most challenges."

The aging department said some older adults could benefit from professionally-installed grab bars for bathtubs, comfort height toilets, non-slip flooring and brighter lighting.

"Never use towel racks, toilet paper holders or shower curtains for stability or to hold your body weight," officials wrote. "They simply weren't designed for that purpose and eventually will let you down — literally."

Creative Renovations, which com-

pletes more than 250 adaptive home renovations each year, specializes in widening hallways and doors, wheelchair ramps and lifts, automated lighting, kitchen remodels, voice-activated technology, room additions and accessible bathrooms.

Buenconsejo said there are statistics available to support the notion that bathrooms can be a dangerous place.

She said the aging department's statement highlights real challenges related to everyday routines.

"Simple steps can indeed be done to provide safety in order to prevent injury," Buenconsejo said. "The important thing is to plan ahead and act proactively, rather than react to a crisis situation."

In addition to bathrooms, Buenconsejo said boomers should have safe entranceways and a clear evacuation route through their home.

"Steps are obvious challenges, but a commonly overlooked area is the bedroom," she said.

"As we age, it may become more and more challenging to simply get out of bed in the morning before our bodies

limber up. There are simple solutions to help with this daily activity."

Buenconsejo said being able to remain at home while aging often has financial and emotional benefits, resulting in better quality of life for older adults.

"Beyond that, though, is the peace of mind felt by family members, knowing that their parents, siblings or other relatives are safely enjoying the comforts of home as they age," she said.

For boomers who don't know where to begin with revamping their home, Buenconsejo said it can be as easy as asking the first question.

"Inevitably, that question and its answer will lead to the next, and so on," she said, noting that consulting a professional is a good move for a lot of homeowners.

"Some other things to be mindful of are identifying priorities, budgets and acceptable concessions. Another big part of getting started is embracing that making changes for oneself and their loved ones is a good thing."



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