



Thoughtful Design is Livable Design By Lee Tripi

Over the years, our clients by and large fit a profile that have a few consistent denominators. One of those common features is that they value their home and desire to stay in it well into their elderly years. They want it to be comfortable, visually appealing and most of all, livable. This means that they want to move around freely, with no clutter or obstructions that prevent this easy movement. This is where our space planning knowledge plays a part in the design. This is also where we steer clear of fashion trends and specify elements with lasting, natural appeal.

Even though our clients don't specifically ask us to incorporate Universal Design ideas into their plan ---- because their personal health and aging isn't at the forefront of their thinking, we seize the opportunity to educate them on some things that might come into play as they age. Encouraging them to think about the future seems to run counterintuitive to "living in the present", however when Baby Boomers plan for a renovation, the kitchen and bath in particular, should be relevant for at least 20 years before another renovation is required.

While we can establish that improving a "dated" look might be the focus of a renovation, we also emphasize an awareness of it's livability. Jodi Olshevski, executive director of The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence says, "People can do both with Universal Design--- an approach that's easy for everyone to use, regardless of age, size or ability." "Universal Design is visually attractive. If Boomers are willing to incorporate 'livable designs' when they remodel, they'll enjoy immediate benefits." says Olshevski.

Here are few elements that we consider when planning a kitchen or bath renovation:

- Pull out drawers in base cabinets.
- Lighting from multiple sources.
- Level thresholds between kitchen and adjacent rooms.
- Easy to handle pulls, rather than knobs.
- Single lever faucet handle.

- Comfort height toilet.
- Grab bars in tub and shower areas.
- Adjustable height, hand held shower hose.
- ADA fixtures, appliances and spacing requirements.
- Walk-in shower with little or no curb.

We've been able to achieve this last one by raising the height of the floor surrounding the shower an inch and sloping it toward an infinity drain.

Olshevsky noted that , "While most of us remain healthy and active as we age, we may still experience changes in balance, strength, flexibility and reach. Universal Design makes it easier to adjust to these changes and live comfortably and safely at home for a lifetime.

LEWA Creative has been incorporating these design principles for 25 years. We believe in good design defined as thoughtful and above all else, livable.