



## Is Your House still Your Home?



# AGING IN PLACE

**Home**, a place with familiar surroundings having provided years of memorable events. Staying in your home might still be your best option.

Why are so many mature adults moving after investing a considerable amount of time and resources into their properties? Before making that decision, why not investigate options that are available to remain in the home you love.

The thought of relocation begins when routines like personal hygiene, cleaning, preparing meals and social activities becomes too difficult to manage. It can feel like moving is the only option to retain dignity and independence. But does moving from a 2000 sq/ft home into a 500 sq/ft nice facility or dorm room make sense?

Many people will store, sell or give

away belongings and downsize to a smaller home that seems easier to maintain when home becomes an obstacle course filled with challenges at every turn. The plan is referred to as retirement or independent community living.

When moving into retirement living, people want a more manageable lifestyle. A common belief is that moving into a retirement community means that help will be available whenever it's needed. It's also believed that moving into an independent living building means that the environment will meet long term accessibility needs for varying levels of ability. Unfortunately, this is not possible in either scenario because barrier free design features are not a current requirement under local municipal building codes

and assistance with homemaking or personal care is too costly to include in monthly maintenance or rental fees for most of these facilities. Yes there is a social appeal (people like to make new friends.) Certainly, many amenities and services are offered outside your designated living space. But community centres and other social environments and programs for senior adults are available in most neighborhoods.

Retirement living communities offer another option. However they can also present many of the same challenges as staying in the existing home. If an injury or illness occurs, performing activities of daily living can be difficult to manage independently no matter where you live. Help should be brought into the home when individual attention is needed. Moving into a nursing home is a common solution for people that require full time assistance, although this personal help will cost over and above the standard living expenses. This is why many of today's senior adults are choosing to adapt their current homes in order to meet their long term accessibility and care needs. Bringing a mix of independent and government provided care services into the family home is a consideration that avoids having to move while natural changes in lifestyle occur.

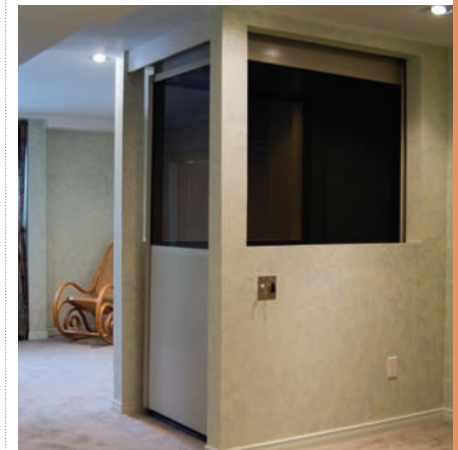
In Ontario, housing built before and during the 1900's was not designed with barrier free living or wheel friendly access in mind. This is largely because local municipal building codes do not specify accessibility as a mandatory requirement for residential construction. Today there is a greater demand for accessibility being recognized. The standards are beginning to improve.

What can be done in order to remain

in the home you love? Modifications can be made to houses, condominiums, retirement homes and long term care facilities. These adaptations are made so that residents are able to live, work and play to the best of their abilities with reduced need for assistance. Examples of how these changes can be made are listed as a resource for some of the most practical home modifications made for independent living and fall prevention to ensure long term accessibility.

### Entrances & Pathways

- Upgrading lighting that surround pathways and entrances for increased visibility.
- Leveling pathways and entrances eliminates trip hazards.
- Security upgrades can keep unwanted visitors away.
- Handrails, ramps and porch lifts increase safety and accessibility for mobility devices such as walkers, canes, wheelchairs and scooters.
- Widening of doorways allows for clear passage of mobility aides and devices throughout the home.



Continued from p.15

## Stairwells & Living areas

- Lighting upgrades inside the home increases visibility of trip hazards such as belongings left on the floor or even a small pet.
- Removal or securing throw rugs will minimize risks associated with falls.
- Handrails on both sides of the staircase and adding a “No-Skidding” floor surface to stair treads makes climbing stairs safer.
- Installation of stairglide’s makes getting up and down levels safer for those having difficulties with mobility or balance.
- Elevators or vertical platform lifts are installed between two levels or multiple levels to achieve complete wheel friendly access for multi level dwellings.

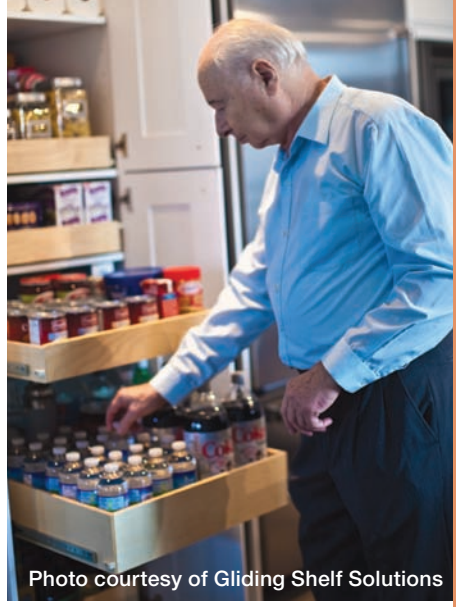


Photo courtesy of Gliding Shelf Solutions

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## Kitchens & Bathrooms

- Installation of full extension glides in existing lower cabinets including under sinks and pantries will allow for easy access to pots, pans, dishes, glasses etc. without the need of bending and crouching or the dangerous use of step stools.
- Installation of shower rails, increases bathroom safety and ease of use.
- “No-skidding” floor treatments reduces slip and fall hazards on wet floors.
- “Safety Bath” tubs make bathing safer and easier for people with mobility challenges.
- Barrier free showers provide independent access to showering for people of all abilities.



prevent major injuries at home. You will begin to realize that by making the appropriate changes it will allow you to live more comfortable and remain independent in your own home for as long as you want! ■

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