



UNIVERSAL DESIGN CONCEPTS - *Sponsored by Home Living Solutions* Home Living Solutions®

## Successful Remodeling in Tough Times

By Laurence Weinstein

**W**hen I first started my successful design/build business 40+ years ago, a wise old timer in the industry told me to learn how to become a remodeling "specialist". He told me to find a real need, and fill it! Following his words of wisdom helped me to consistently succeed for over four decades in both the best of times...and the worst of times.

nation controls two-thirds of the spending capital.

At least 1 in 5 Americans is affected by a functional limitation that impacts everyday living activities. Over 54 million Americans of all ages have some form of permanent disability, and many millions more incur an unexpected short term disability that can last for months and even

years. In addition, the large baby-boom generation are now in their 50's, and as they enter this new life-stage, face changing physical needs requiring practical changes in the home to accommodate these needs. What's more, many are facing important decisions regarding

lifestyle options for their aging relatives, such as the challenge of caring for an aging parent or other family member in their homes.

Personal happiness and independence are deeply affected by our level of ability to perform everyday living tasks and activities—especially within our own homes. Even for perfectly healthy individuals, our ability to successfully cook and bathe efficiently and safely is often seriously impeded by the way most homes have been designed and built through the years.

Homes which were reasonably convenient when we were younger and in good health, can cause serious problems in later years, or when we incur an unexpected injury or illness affecting our ability to

easily walk, bend, grasp, or see. As our lifestyles and needs change... so should our homes be changed to meet those new needs.

Steps leading up to the front door create a potential hazard for youngsters and adults, and a major obstacle for anyone with mobility impairment. Narrow hallways and doorways are hard to get through when our hands are full of groceries, or carrying a young infant, or for someone using a walker or in a wheelchair. Round door knobs can be tricky to use for the small hands of children as well as the arthritic hands of adults. Trying to get something from upper cabinet shelves can be a challenge for anyone who is short or has difficulty stretching and reaching. Getting in and out of the bathtub can be almost impossible; lower kitchen and bathroom cabinet shelves are almost impossible to reach into. Poor lighting makes it difficult and at times dangerous to perform simple daily tasks. Wrong finish materials make house cleaning unnecessarily difficult and often produce harmful indoor air pollution.

### Elements of a "Universal Design featured Livable Home"

A zero-step main entry into the house; all hallways are 42" minimum width and doors 36" wide; all lower kitchen and bathroom cabinets have full extension drawers for ease of use and open finished accessible spaces underneath the kitchen sink, cook-top, and bathroom sinks; elevated, front load and front controls dishwasher and clothes washer/dryer minimize bending;

clear 5' diameter open spaces in all rooms; a spacious curb-less shower; electrical outlets, light switches, and thermostat all mounted at convenient accessible heights; great energy-efficient, high output fluorescent lighting throughout the house...are just some of the needed features!

Livable Homes incorporate certain functional and esthetic universal design features that help make them usable, to the greatest extent possible, by ALL family members. The home incorporating universal design features will accommodate the needs of many different people with varying levels of ability. These features will increase a home's worth, while enhancing its beauty and functionality, resulting in optimum independent and safe living for everyone... through ALL stages of life!

For information about Universal Design featured Livable Homes, please contact the writer at: lwdb@s@aol.com. Check out our website: [www.livablehomes.org](http://www.livablehomes.org).

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### How does one become a "specialist" filling a real need as a remodeling professional?

The current U.S. population over age 50 includes more than 80 million people, with another 40 plus million to be added to its ranks by 2020... and is the fastest growing market today. Someone turns 50 years of age every six seconds. They control 80% of all money in U.S. savings and loan institutions and 77% of all privately held financial assets. The mature market is credited with half of all discretionary spending in the United States. They control 70% of the disposable income in America. It's simple math. One-third of the