

## Aging in Place - November 2021

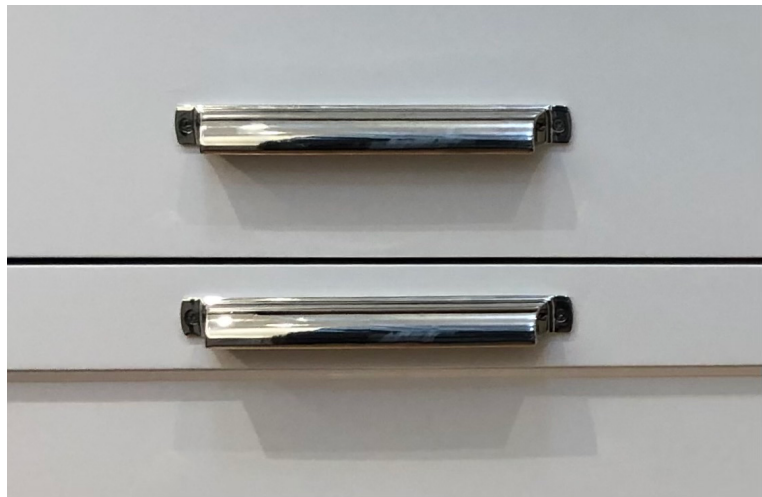
My wife and I recently moved into our aging-in-place apartment. We're only in our late 60's and in good physical condition, but when we decided to downsize and purchase another apartment, we did so expecting that our new apartment would be our last. When we finally exit our new apartment, we hope that it will be feet first.

Over time, I had accumulated a list of design elements for aging-in-place. I listed these when we first met with our contractor to discuss a gut renovation of the apartment we had purchased. We've worked with our contractor for over twenty years, but when I laid out my list he smiled and nodded the way one does when humoring a small child. We met again a few weeks later to review initial plans. I reminded our contractor of my list expecting the same patronizing smile. I was surprised when he enthusiastically responded, "Doug, I drank the Kool-Aid, I'm recommending this to all my clients!" So, what design elements did we incorporate?

Even before considering modifications, we chose our new apartment wisely. Location is important. Fortunately, we purchased in New York City which has many features of a giant Assisted Living facility. There's excellent healthcare. Most neighborhoods are very walkable and accommodate rollators and wheelchairs. There are many transportation options, and one can get almost anything delivered to one's door. There also are numerous cultural, entertainment and educational offerings to stimulate the brain. Most apartments are on one floor with elevator access so one doesn't have to cope with stairs. (We also eliminated almost all doorsills to make things easy should one of us eventually need a rollator or wheelchair.) Our building has doormen and porters and two of our children live nearby to call on if needed.

To make our new apartment especially aging friendly we incorporated the following elements:

**Door levers and drawer pulls instead of knobs for potentially arthritic hands.**



**Comfort height toilets with easily filled toilet paper holders. One toilet also is wired and plumbed to add a bidet seat later if needed (e.g. if incontinent).**

**Bathroom door is A.D.A. compliant - wide enough for a wheelchair.**



**Walk-in shower with seat and handheld shower head (grab bars can be added later).**



**Wall outlets raised from baseboards for easy access.**



After moving in we heard of another great idea: raising the washer and dryer so one needn't bend down to do laundry. We'll seriously consider this when needed (along with grab bars in the shower).

Incorporating a full range of aging-in-place improvements is easiest when moving and/or undertaking a major renovation. However, new door handles, drawer pulls, and toilet paper holders can be incorporated at any time and for relatively little cost.

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