

Serious Considerations for Aging in Place

For many seniors, the decision of where to live often seems like a no-brainer. If you have always lived in one house, why not just stay where you are? On the surface, this would appear to be logical, but there are some serious concerns that should be weighed before dismissing other housing options.

The home we lived in when we were 40 years old is not the same as the one we live in at 80 because we are not the same. Each home contains serious physical deficiencies for older individuals that we could overcome in younger days. Those limitations can arise from living in a multi-story house or just having a single step-up from one room to the next that can prove to be more daunting over time. Simply put, your home may put you at greater risk for accidents.

Another consideration is the existing family infrastructure in place to assist a senior living alone. Having loved ones or friends nearby makes living alone more manageable as it provides a sense of security and allows for seniors to lean on others for help and not feel they have to go about doing things alone.

One more thing to think about is the neighborhood in which you live. The area you moved into has most likely changed over time – sometimes it has changed multiple times. You want to make sure it is a neighborhood that is safe and comfortable. Also look at the house in relation to important services that are most in need, like medical care.

So how does one know if staying in your own home is a feasible option? As long as the neighborhood is still a safe and comfortable environment, there are some things you can do to determine if you should stay in your own home.

The first thing to do is to take a look at the house as a livable environment in your current physical state. Consider every room for potential problem areas no matter how small. Can you still climb the stairs? Is it still easy to move from room to room and around your furniture? Looking at your home with fresh eyes provides you a chance to see if any alterations can be made to eliminate or minimize those concerns. As you age, it is smart to routinely revisit the house layout and see if any more problem areas have come up due to physical limitations.

Also, try to have an open family discussion as to the availability of different members who can assist the person living alone. Determine what needs your loved one has and who can best fulfill them. Also look to friends and neighbors if possible to lend a hand if they are willing.

Additionally, it may be beneficial to look into services that are available to seniors to help alleviate their stress and sources of concern. From physical assistance, such as lawn care and snow removal, to financial assistance, like bill paying services, there are many options out there at affordable rates to make life easier for seniors.

If living at home is not realistic, you can look into other considerations, such as assisted living or independent living services. Of course, financial limitations may play a role in determining if moving to housing with supportive services is even an option.

Unfortunately, nearly one-third of seniors do not qualify for public assistance programs and cannot afford senior living communities.

Once again, it is important to weigh the options available to you. There are various senior villages and naturally occurring retirement communities available to fit into your financial situation. Like picking your house, selecting a senior community involves your comfort level with the layout, the neighbors and your budget. As opposed to living alone, these communities are better equipped to provide care in a coordinated and efficient manner.

As in many of the matters that we face as we age, discussing your options with loved ones tends to lead to the best options becoming clear. A frank and honest assessment of your current situation will result in your happiness for years to come, whether it involves remaining in your current residence or not.

Staying at home tends to be the easiest option available to us as we age. With serious consideration and thought put into it, you can also make it a safer option than it may otherwise be.