Berkshire County

Residential Aging in Place

Workbook

A guide to plan for residential renovations to allow you to age idependently, safely, and comfortably in your own home

What is Aging In Place?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define aging in place as "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level"

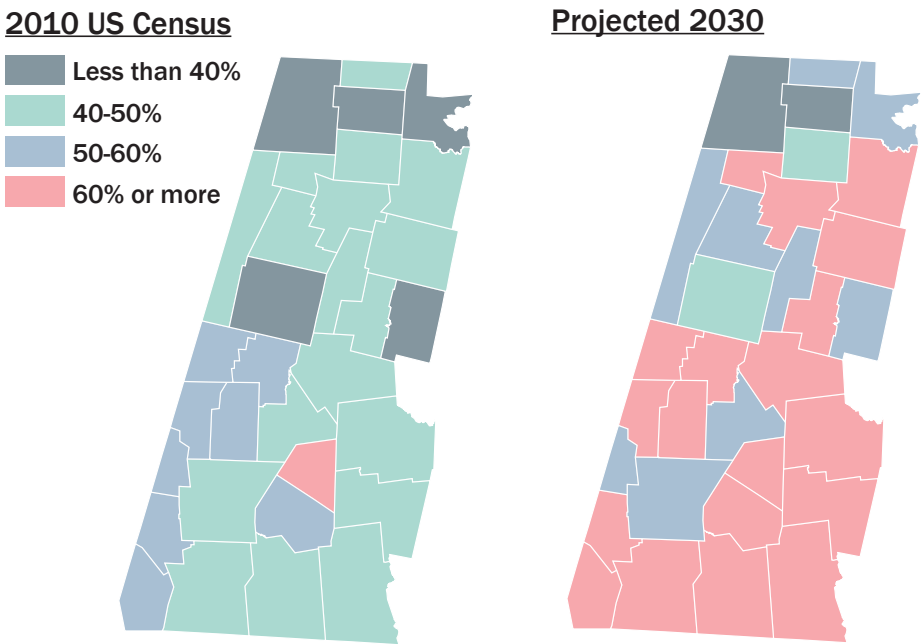
Did you Know?

Population projections indicate that by the year 2030, less than 15 years from now, most communities in the Berkshires will have populations comprised of 60% or more residents aged 50 and older.

In Massachusetts, Berkshire County is second only to Cape Cod (Barnstable County) in the age of its residents.

A 2015 survey of over 2400 adults aged 50 and older in the Berkshires found that **98%** thought it was important to age independently in their own homes.

Berkshire County Population - Age 50 and Over



How to Use this Workbook

This workbook is intended as a tool and resource to empower homeowners to identify, plan, and implement home renovations to allow them to age safely, independently, and comfortably in their own homes for as long as they wish. Follow the instructions listed in each section. The final section of the workbook includes other resources available to help complete your project.

To view a training video that accompanies this workbook visit: http://goo.gl/UTyyDO

1

Conduct a Home Audit

Walk through each room of your home and note any issues. Follow the audit instructions

Page 4

2

Identify Renovation Options

Use the checklist provided to identify potential renovation options to help you as you age, reduce maintenance, and increase safety in your home

Page 8

3

Select a Contractor

Once you have identified your home renovation options, select a contractor who can complete the work

Page 18

4

Review Other Resources

This section of the workbook includes resources and other information available to help you complete your aging in place renovation goals

Page 22

1 General Home Audit

Identify problem areas in your home

COMMON FALL HAZARDS

Falls are the leading cause of injury for older adults. Many homes have fall or tripping hazards that can be fixed without the need for major home renovations.

Check the boxes if any of these common fall hazards are found in your home. Consider addressing these issues before investing in more extensive and costly renovations.

☐ Path through rooms blocked by furniture

☐ Rugs and carpets loose, folded, or have curled edges

☐ Rugs and carpets slip on floors

☐ Books, boxes, and other clutter on floor or stairs

☐ Telephone, extension, and other cords across floors

☐ Inadequate lighting in rooms or on stairs, unlit corners

☐ Lamps and switches difficult to reach, especially when seated or in bed

☐ Loose or slippery stairs, broken stairs, loose carpet on stairs

☐ Loose or broken handrails on stairs, handrail on only one side of stairs

☐ High or difficult to reach shelves or cabinets

☐ Lack of grab bars in shower, tub, or near toilet

☐ Lack of night lighting, particularly from bedroom to bathroom

☐ Broken or uneven floors/ thresholds at doors or between rooms are uneven or high

OTHER HOME ISSUES

The following checklists are provided to identify general home issues. There is additional space on pages 6-7 for your notes.

Check the boxes to identify problems in your home or areas where you have difficulty. Remember these as you select future renovation options.

All Rooms

☐ Inadequate lighting

☐ Using lights/switches/outlets

☐ Using blinds/shades/curtains

☐ Using doors/door handles/locks

☐ Doors block hallways, hit furniture, etc.

☐ Broken furniture

☐ Loose flooring

☐ Broken, loose or stuck windows

☐ Tight spaces or clearances make moving around rooms difficult

Entrances and Exits

☐ Using stairs to the front door

☐ Using the mailbox

☐ Slippery or broken walkway to entrance of home

Stairs

☐ Distinguishing stair thresholds and edges

☐ Support or balancing when using the stairs

Bedroom

☐ Opening or using closets

☐ Getting in or out of bed

☐ Using furniture, such as bedside table, dresser or vanity

☐ Inadequate storage space

Kitchen

☐ Using or reaching items in cabinets, pantry, etc.

☐ Using refrigerator

☐ Using counter space

☐ Using oven, stove, toaster, or other appliances

☐ Using the sink

☐ Using the ventilation system or inadequate ventilation

Bathroom

☐ Using the sink

☐ Using medicine cabinet or mirror

☐ Using the toilet

☐ Getting into or out of the shower or bath

☐ Floor of bathtub or shower slippery

Living Room

☐ Getting in or out of sofas, chairs, or other furniture

☐ Using TV, radio, computer or other appliances

☐ Using thermostat

Garage

☐ Using/lifting garage door

☐ Inadequate storage space

Adapted from:

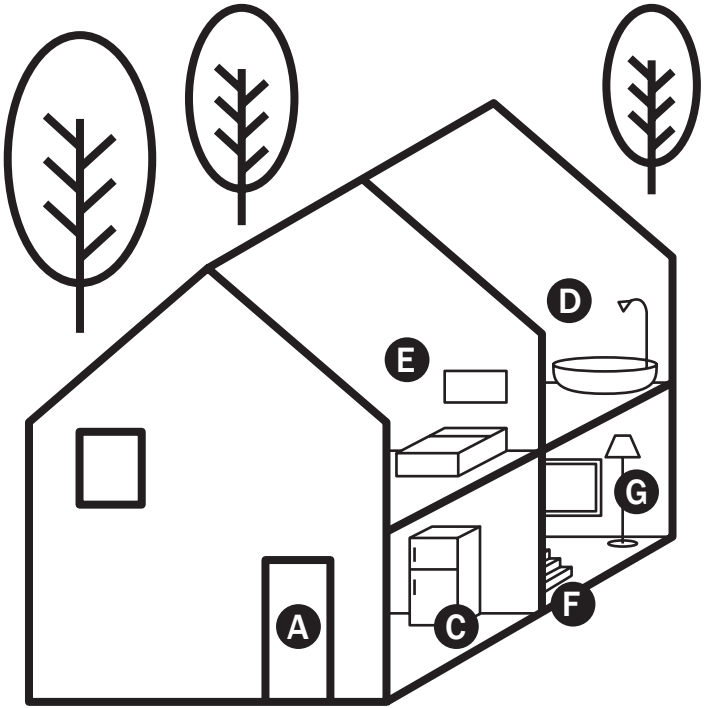
- *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Check for Safety. 2005. A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults.*
- *Remodeling.hw.net Comprehensive Universal Design Checklist. Available from www.remodeling.hw.net/business/design/problem-solver-comprehensive-universal-design-checklist*

1a Audit Summary

Summarize issues identified in your home audit

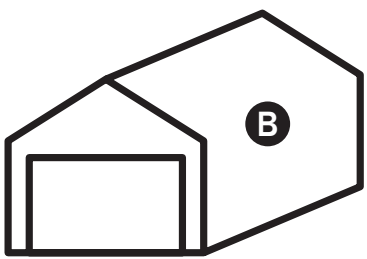
2 Identify Renovation Options

Check items that you would like to include in your renovation



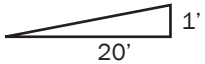
Use the checklists on the following pages to identify potential renovation options, reduce maintenance, increase accessibility (particularly if you need a wheelchair or walker), and increase safety in your home. These items are included as a general reference, some may not be buildable or practical for your home. It is up to you to work with a contractor to determine what is achievable based on your budget and what can realistically be built.

- **A ENTRANCES AND EXITS**
- **B GARAGE**
- **C KITCHEN AND LAUNDRY**
- **D BATHROOM**
- **E BEDROOM**
- **F STAIRS, ELEVATORS & LIFTS**
- **G MISCELLANEOUS**



A ENTRANCES AND EXITS

☐ Accessible path of travel to the home, gentle grade of 5% grade or less. This equates to a rise or drop of one foot over a length of 20 feet



☐ At least one covered no-step (flush) entry into the house

☐ Motion activated sensor light focused on the entry

☐ Motion activated doorbell or chime

☐ 32 inches of clear door width, which requires a 36 inch door

☐ Non-slip flooring in entry area

☐ Entry door peephole

☐ Surface or table to place items on when opening door

B GARAGE

☐ Portable or "instant" garage canopy structure, if you lack a garage

☐ Wider than average space for vehicle to accommodate lift on accessible van

☐ Increased garage door height to accommodate raised roof van

☐ Minimum five foot wide access aisle between accessible van and other vehicles in garage

☐ Automatic garage door opener with safety sensor

☐ Intercom system between garage and house

C KITCHEN AND LAUNDRY

Counters

☐ Adjustable or varied height counters and removable base cabinets for seated or wheelchair access

☐ Upper wall cabinetry lower than conventional height (54 inches to bottom of cabinet) for easier access

☐ Accented stripes on edge of countertops to provide visual orientation to the workspace

☐ Counter space for placing dishes next to all appliances

☐ Base cabinet with roll out tray and lazy susan

☐ Pull down shelving

☐ Glass cabinet doors to more easily find items

☐ Open shelving for easy access to frequently used items

Faucets

☐ Lever handle, pedal controlled, or touchless faucets

☐ Anti-scald controls

☐ Pressure balanced faucets to protect against sudden temperature changes

☐ Pull-out spray faucet; levered handles if use of your hands is

Appliances

☐ Front loading washer and dryer-raised 12-15 inches above floor

☐ Microwave oven at counter height or in wall

☐ Side-by-side refrigerator/freezer

☐ Side-swing or wall oven

☐ Raised dishwasher with push-button controls

☐ Drawer type microwave, refrigerators, and dishwashers (can be placed at different heights to reduce the need for bending or if you use a wheelchair)

☐ Electric or induction cook top with level burners for safety in transferring between the burners, front controls and downdraft feature to pull heat away from user; light to show when surface is hot

Miscellaneous Kitchen and Laundry

☐ 30 inch by 48 inch clear space at appliances or 60 inch diameter clear space for turning with a wheelchair

☐ Open under-counter work areas for wheelchair or seated access

☐ Task lighting in work areas

☐ Laundry chute or laundry facilities in bedroom or bathroom

D BATHROOM

☐ Adjustable or varied height counters or removable base cabinets for seated or wheelchair access

☐ Contrasting color edge border at countertops

☐ At least one wheelchair maneuverable bath on first floor

☐ Bracing in walls around tub, shower, shower seat, and toilet for installation of grab bars

☐ Walk-in bath tub with door

☐ Curbless shower, minimum of 36-inches wide

☐ Fold down seat in the shower

☐ Adjustable/handheld showerhead with hose

☐ Light in shower stall

☐ Anti-scald controls

☐ Toilet two and half inches higher than standard toilet (17-19 inches) or height-adjustable

☐ Toilet paper holder that allows roll to be changed with one hand

☐ Wall-hung sink with knee space for seated or wheelchair access

☐ Slip-resistant flooring in bathroom and shower

E BEDROOM

☐ Grab bars near bed

☐ Phone accessible from bed

☐ Light switches accessible from bed

☐ Vanity or mirror with seat

☐ 60-inch diameter clear space for

turning with a wheelchair

☐ Walk-in closet

F STAIRS, LIFTS, & ELEVATORS

☐ Hand rails on both sides of stairway, one and a quarter inch diameter

☐ Increased visibility of stairs through contrast strip on top and bottom stairs, color contrast between treads and risers on stairs and adequate lighting

☐ Multi-story homes may provide either pre-framed shaft (i.e., stacked closets) for future elevator, or stairway width must be minimum of four feet to allow space for lift

☐ Residential elevator

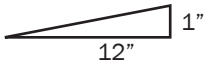
☐ Stair lift or glide

☐ Adequate lighting, with switch at top and bottom of stairway

G MISCELLANEOUS

Ramps

☐ Slope no greater than one inch rise for each 12 inches in length



(May be steeper for shorter distances)

☐ Five foot landing provided at entrance

☐ Two inch curbs on ramp edge for safety

☐ Portable or modular ramp for short sections of steps or for outdoor/landscape stairs

Storage

☐ Adjustable closet rods and shelves

☐ Motion activated or automatic lighting in closets, pantry, or cabinets

☐ Easy open doors that do not obstruct access

Electrical, Lighting, Safety, and Security

☐ Light switches by each entrance to halls and rooms

☐ Light fixtures with at least two bulbs in vital places (entrance/exits, bathroom, stairs)

☐ Light switches, thermostats, and other controls placed in accessible locations no higher than 48 inches from floor

☐ Electrical outlets at least 15-inches on center from floor; may need to be closer than 12 feet apart

☐ Electrical outlets with USB port

☐ Additional light switches and electrical outlets to reduce need for extension cords and permit easier use

☐ Clear access space in front of switches and controls, especially if you use a wheelchair or walker

☐ Rocker, paddle, or touch light switches

☐ Baseboard lighting system

☐ Audible and visual strobe light system to indicate when the doorbell, telephone or smoke or CO_2 detectors have been activated

☐ Security and intercom system that can be monitored through the internet or smartphone, along with heating, air conditioning, lighting, and door locks

☐ Remote monitoring and care system, such as GrandCare

☐ Security cameras focused on home entrances or driveway

☐ Large number, touch screen thermostats

☐ Flashing porch light or 911 locater switch

☐ All rooms wired for computer and internet or whole home wireless internet

☐ Personal Emergency Response System (PERS), such as LifeAlert or Medical Guardian, that lets you call for help by pushing a button

Exterior

☐ Low maintenance exterior siding (vinyl, brick, metal)

☐ Low maintenance plantings

☐ Fully accessible walkways and pathways around home

☐ Exterior lighting, particularly near driveway, pathways, and outdoor stairs and steps

☐ Radiant heat system in driveways or walkways to melt snow and ice

☐ Raised vegetable or flower garden beds at table or counter height

Overall Floor Plan (Visitability Concept)

☐ Main living on a single story, including full bath and master bedroom

☐ Flush transitions (no steps or gaps) between rooms/areas on the same floor

☐ Hallways and doors a minimum of 36 inches wide for wheelchair access

☐ At least one no-step (flush) entrance to home

☐ 5-foot by 5-foot clear/turn space in living area, kitchen, a bedroom, and a bathroom

Hallways

☐ Minimum of 36 inches wide for wheelchair access, wider preferred

☐ Well lit

Interior Doors

☐ Provide 32 inches of clear width at doorways, which requires a 36-inch door

☐ Levered door hardware to replace existing doorknobs

☐ Replace existing doors with pocket doors or reverse door swing

direction as needed to reduce mobility isues

☐ Swing away door hinges for increased mobility with a walker or wheelchair

Windows

☐ Additional windows for natural light

☐ Lowered windows or taller windows with lower sill height for easier access

☐ Simple to use hardware

Flooring

☐ Smooth, non-glare, slip-resistant surfaces

☐ Low (less than a half inch high pile) carpeting or rugs, with firm pad underneath

☐ Color/texture contrast to indicate change in surface levels

Convenience Features and Other Ideas

☐ Easy to clean surfaces, such as tile, linoleum, or wood

☐ Central vacuum system

☐ Built-in/automatic pet feeding system

☐ Built-in recycling system

☐ Intercom system between rooms or between garage and house

☐ Whole home air conditioning or humidification system

☐ Home video conferencing system

☐ Separate apartment for rental income or future caregiver (accessory or in-law apartment)

☐ Spare room that can used by children and as an office or den later; if combined with a full bath, the room could also be used for an aging parent/aging in place in the future

Adapted from:

- *Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. 2014. Healthy Community Design Toolkit - Leveraging Positive Change. 2nd Edition.*
- *The National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB). No Date. Aging in Place Remodeling checklist. Available from: www.nahb.org/en/learn/designations/certified-aging-in-place-specialist/related-resources/aging-in-place-remodeling-checklist.aspx*
- *American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). 2014. Home Fit Guide. Available from: www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/documents-2014/AARP-Home-Fit-Guide-2014.pdf.*

2a Common Renovation Options

Lever type faucet and door handles are considered universally accessible and may help if you have arthritis or limited use of your hands and fingers.

Paddle or rocker type light switches may be easier to use if you have limited use of your hands. Additionally, some newer styles are illuminated, making them easier to locate in the dark.

Grab bars are a common bathroom renovation option, and are available in a variety of styles available to match your existing decor. They may also be useful in other rooms, such as if you have trouble lifting yourself out of bed, or your recliner.

A walk-in tub is a popular bathroom renovation option if you are mobility impaired or have trouble standing for long periods. Curbless showers provide access if you use a wheelchair or walker, and look great too.

Replacing appliances can help you to age in place. A wall mounted oven may help if you have trouble bending. There are now drawer type dishwasher, microwave & refrigerator models available that can help as well.

One-level living and "visitability", creating a master bedroom and full bathroom on the first floor, can help to alleviate many aging in place issues. Additionally, creating no-step or flush door thresholds and universally accessible doorways can help if you use a wheelchair or walker.

2b My Renovation Needs

Describe your aging in place renovation needs

3 Select a Contractor

Follow the checklists to work with a contractor to complete your renovation goals

SELECTING A CONTRACTOR

Depending on your home renovation needs you may choose to hire a general contractor, who manages all aspects of a project and may work with subcontractors to complete various aspects of your home renovation project. You may also choose a more specialized contractor, such as one focusing on cabinetry, kitchens, bathrooms, or weatherization to achieve your goals for your home. For larger projects, such as an extensive renovation, you may chose to work with a designer, such as an architect, who will help plan for renovations to your home. These designers will likely assist you with finding contractors who can complete your renovation project.

For additional information from the State of Massachusetts regarding home improvement contracting, please visit the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation website at: www.mass.gov/homeimprovement

RESEARCHING AND SCREENING POTENTIAL CONTRACTORS

☐ Check online review and rating sites, such as Yelp or Angie's List to identify potential contractors and verify reputations

☐ Check with the Better Business Bureau and Local Chamber of Commerce to see if there have been any complaints against contractors you are considering

☐ Ask friends and family members to recommend contractors and design professionals they have worked with

☐ Contact your local building inspector or building department for recommendations on contractors

When meeting with potential contractors:

☐ Ask for proof of insurance

☐ Ask for a list of references

☐ Ask for photos of previous work

☐ Ask for copies of licenses and certifications, and make sure they haven't expired

You can verify licenses using the Mass. Dept. of Public Safety Website at: http://elicense.chs.state.ma.us/Verification/Search.aspx

You can verify that a contractor is registered with the state of Mass. as a "Home Improvement Contractor" (HIC) at: **https://services.oca.state.ma.us/hic/licenseelist.aspx**

Once you have identified potential contractors you would like to work with:

☐ Ask for a free estimate. Most contractors will provide this. However, if diagnosis of problems or design work is involved, this may not be provided for free. You may wish to get estimates from multiple contractors (ideally three) to see the range of prices you could expect to pay for the work you want completed

REVIEWING COST ESTIMATES AND CONTRACTS

When reviewing an estimate, look for:

☐ An itemized price breakdown by task. If a cost estimate is provided to you as a lump sum, ask for a more detailed description of all work to occur with an individual cost listed for each item

Once you have selected a contractor to work with, ensure that a contract for work on your home is prepared and signed by both of you. The contract should include:

☐ The contractor's name, address and phone number

☐ an estimated start and completion date

☐ The payment schedule for the contractor, subcontractors, and suppliers

☐ The contractor's responsibility to get all necessary permits. A homeowner should never be responsible for obtaining a building permit

☐ How change orders are managed. A change order is a written authorization to the contractor to make a change or addition to the work described in the original contract, and could affect the project's cost and schedule

☐ A detailed list of all materials including each product's color, model, size, and brand. Include an allowance if materials will be selected later and say who is responsible for choosing them

☐ Information about warranties covering materials and workmanship, with names and addresses of who is

honoring these, be it the contractor, distributor, or manufacturer

☐ The length of the warranty period and any limitations

☐ What the contractor is responsible for. For example, ensure the contract makes the contractor responsible for all clean-up work, including spills, stains, and trash removal

☐ Ensure that any contract changes or promises made during conversations or phone calls are addressed in a revised written contract

☐ A written statement of your right to cancel the contract within three business days if you signed it in your home or at a location other than the seller's permanent place of business

In addition to these items, the State of Massachusetts requires that all contracts over $1,000 be in writing, and that fourteen specific items be included in any contract between a homeowner and a registered home improvement contractor for home improvement work.

The fourteen contract items can be reviewed at **www.mass.gov/ocabr/consumer-rights-and-resources/home-improvement-contract/required-contract-terms.html**

Keep in mind:

☐ Always ask the contractor to explain their bid if you have questions

☐ Never hire anyone with whom you feel uncomfortable

☐ Beware of estimates that seem too high or too low

☐ Ask a neighbor, friend, or family member to review the contract before signing

DURING CONSTRUCTION

Maintain a folder that contains all documentation related to your project including:

☐ Notes

☐ Phone conversations with dates

☐ Payment records

☐ Change orders

☐ Photographs

☐ All other communication

This documentation could be useful in dispute resolution. Always remember, if it isn't written down, it's your word against the contractor's. Document everything.

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG AND A DISPUTE ARISES

If you have a contract dispute or if you think that any work was performed in a poor or unworkmanlike manner, you have the following options:

☐ Speak directly with the contractor to resolve any problems

☐ Mediation - This allows both parties to reach resolution with the help of a facilitator. Mediation is voluntary, requiring both parties' consent. You may apply for mediation through your local consumer group, which is affiliated with the Attorney General's Office

☐ Arbitration - During arbitration, a neutral third party decides whether to order the contractor to provide a refund for any work. You may be eligible for state-approved arbitration under the Home Improvement Arbitration Program

☐ Court Action - You may also pursue your claim through the court system (small claims, district, or superior court).

☐ File a Complaint - If you believe that a contractor has violated the law, you should also consider filing a written complaint with the Mass. Attorney General's Office or the Better Business Bureau

☐ If you win your case in arbitration or in court and the contractor fails to pay the award or judgment, you can apply to the Home Improvement Contractor Guaranty Fund for up to $10,000 of your actual losses.

For more information about the guaranty fund, please visit: **www.mass.gov/ocabr/consumer-rights-and-resources/home-improvement-contract/guaranty-fund/**

IF YOU HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS

Mass. Office of the Attorney General Elder Hotline:
1-888-AG-ELDER
(1-888-243-5337)

Mass. Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation Hotline:
1-617-973-8787
1-888-283-3757 (toll free, in MA only)

To obtain a sample contract, applications for arbitration or the Guaranty Fund, or more information about the Mass. Home Improvement Law please visit the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation website at: **www.mass.gov/homeimprovement**

Adapted from:

- *Federal Trade Commission. Consumer information "hiring a contractor" website. 2016. Available from: www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0242-hiring-contractor*
- *Mass. Attorney General's Office Consumer Protection Divsision. 2016. Available from: www.mass.gov/ago/bureaus/public-protection-and-advocacy/the-consumer-protection-division/*
- *Mass. Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation. 2016. Available from: www.mass.gov/ocabr/consumer-rights-and-resources/home-improvement-contract/*

National Association of Home Builders

CERTIFIED AGING IN PLACE SPECIALISTS (CAPS)

CAPS is a certification program through the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). CAPS professionals are trained to engage in the growing field of residential remodeling for aging in place. CAPS professionals learn business management, customer service and technical skills unique to this field. They also sign a code of ethics pledge that affirms their commitment to sound business practices and professionalism.

A complete listing of CAPS professionals is maintained by the NAHB and can be found through their directory at: www.nahb.org/en/find/directory-designee.aspx

FUNDING AND OTHER ASSISTANCE FOR AGING IN PLACE RENOVATIONS

There are many organizations in the region that can assist you as you age, as well as potential funding opportunities for aging in place renovations and home rehabilitation. However, most of these funding programs have specific requirements based on age, income, status as a veteran, or disability level.

Mass. Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP)

The HMLP provides zero or low interest loans for modifications to the primary, permanent residences of elders, adults with disabilities, and families of children with disabilities. The proposed modifications must relate to the functional limitation of the beneficiary as documented by a professional. Some example modifications include ramps, hardwired alarm systems, as well as accessible kitchens and bathrooms.
Website: www.mass.gov/mrc/hmlp

Mass. Save Programs

Mass. Save provides free home energy audits and assessments for homeowners. These assessments

provide recommendations for energy saving retrofits that can save you money on your home heating and electrical bills. Mass. Saves also offers other rebates, discounts, incentives, and financing for home energy projects and appliance purchases.
Website: **www.masssave.com/residential/home-energy-assessments**
Phone: 1-844-887-1400 (Pittsfield) - Visit **www.masssave.com/contact** for more information about Mass Save programs.

Mass-Health Frail Elder Home and Community-Based Services Waiver (HCBS)
Mass-Health (Medicaid) may help pay for home and vehicle modifications and other services to allow you age in place. Applicants must have an intellectual disability and must be enrolled in Medicaid, in addition to other requirements.
Website: **www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/living-supports/independent-living/home-and-community/waivers/**
Email: adult-waiver.questions@state.ma.us
Phone: 1-888-367-4435

Department of Veteran's Affairs SAH, SHA & HISA Grants
The Department of Veteran's Affairs offers three grant programs that can provide home modifications. These include the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH), Special Home Adaptation (SHA), and the Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA) Grants. Applicants must be veterans. Specific eligibility requirements vary between the three programs.
Website: **www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/HISA2.asp**
www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp
Phone: 1-800-827-1000

Department of Housing and Urban Development(HUD) Property Improvement Loan
HUD Property Improvement loans are best suited for families that want to have an elderly relative move into their home instead of as a loan to the individual that requires care directly. These are also known as Federal Housing Authority (FHA) Loans or the Title 1 Insurance Program. In this program, HUD does not directly provide loans, but instead insures private lenders to allow them to provide lending services to those who might not otherwise qualify.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants
The USDA provides grants and loans for home modifications to improve safety and remove health hazards. Applicants must be at least 62 years old, live in rural areas, and must have very low income.
Contact: Hadley, MA USDA Office
Website: **www.rd.usda.gov/ma**
Phone: 1-413-253-4300

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Programs
Some Berkshire County municipalities have participated in Community Development Block Grant programs or may be currently participating in these programs. These programs can provide funding for home renovations in the form of deferred payment loans. Applicants must meet income and other eligibility requirements.
Contact: Your local municipality to see if it is participating in CDGB programs.

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
Also known as fuel assistance, LIHEAP provides eligible households with help in paying a portion of winter heating bills. Eligibility is based on household size and the gross annual income of every household member, 18 years of age or older.
Website: **http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/energy/low-income-home-energy-assistance-liheap.html**
Phone: Cold Relief Heatline 1-800-632-8175

Mass. Initiative to Maximize Assistive Technology in Consumer's Hands (MassMATCH)
The MassMATCH mission is to promote the use of assistive technology and services to enhance the independence of people with disabilities, enabling equal participation in all of life's activities. MassMATCH can provide short term or long term loan of equipment.
Website: **www.massmatch.org**
Email: ATRC@ucpberkshire.org
Phone: 1-413-442-1562 (United Cerebral Palsy of Berkshire County)

Senior Property Tax Work-Off Programs
Some municipalities offer reduced property taxes in exchange for volunteer work by seniors. The application process, benefits, and requirements vary from municipality to municipality.
Contact: Your local municipality, to see if they offer similar programs.

Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.
Elder Services is a non-profit organization providing a wide variety of services to the elders of Berkshire County and their families.
Website: **www.esbci.org**
Email: esbc@esbci.org
Phone: 1-413-499-0524

Municipal Councils on Aging (COA)
Nearly every community in Berkshire County has a Council on Aging group. The groups coordinate activities and services for seniors.
Contact: Your local municipality for further information.

RENOVATION OF HISTORIC HOMES - GRACEFULLY AGING OUR ARCHITECTURE

Provided by Susan Bachelder of the Egremont Historical Commission

Over 50% of the existing housing stock in Berkshire County was constructed pre-1940, meaning that many homes have significant historic value. The historic look and charm of homes and villages in the county is a major factor in historic tourism, and why so many visitors and new residents travel to and decide to live in our region. Additionally, maintaining historic appeal can be a major factor in a home's resale value and is a point of pride for many owners.

Protecting the history in every home and occupant contributes to the vibrancy of the community, the general economy, and also protects personal value in what is for many their largest asset, their home.

This section of the workbook provides some overarching concepts for renovating historic homes as well as other sources of information.

Concepts and Tips
1. Do only what you can also undo
Less permanent renovation options might help to better preserve the value and character of your historic home.
Example: Removable interior storm windows, such as Indow Windows
Example: Repainting a historic home (can always be painted again) vs. replacing siding (permanent solution)

2. Put it in the Back
Generators, solar panels,

ramps, etc. should, where possible be installed behind, not on, or in front of a structure. This is especially true of satellite dishes.

3. Pick Low Hanging Fruit
Prioritize and implement potential renovation options based on cost and overall effectiveness, before investing in expensive and permanent renovation options. Example: Insulating an attic can be done with minimal construction, at a reasonable cost and with high return on investment. Getting scatter rugs off the floor, or placing larger carpets over old floors can help with mobility issues.

4. It is Better to Add than to Subtract
Later additions can often become part of the historic fabric, but they can also be more easily removed. Be creative, add what you need without subtracting what is there. Keep it to scale and enjoy a creative expansion.

Before Beginning Construction on a Historic House
1. Photograph in detail any portions of your home that will be altered. Take measurements of rooms or features that will be changed. This documentation can aid a future owner in restoring the house to its original condition should they choose.

2. If features such as stained glass, uniquely framed windows, original woodwork trim, stair banisters, fireplace framing, pocket doors, or original doors and door knobs are removed during your renovation, store these in safe, dry place so future owners have the option of reinstalling them.

Resources for Aging your House Gracefully

Local Historical Commissions
Almost every municpality in the Berkshires has a Historical Commission. These organizations are great sources of information about local historic assets.
Contact: Your local municipality for further information.

Mass. Historical Commission (MHC)
The MHC is the state agency involved in historic preservation and protection. MHC offers a database of historic resources in Mass. and also provides a historic rehabilitation tax credit for owners of income generating historic properties (i.e. hotels, bed and breakfast, store)
Website: **www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcidx.htm**
Phone: 1-617-727-8470

Preservation Massachusetts
Preservation Mass. is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving historic and cultural heritage in the state. They maintain many resources for owners of historic homes.
Website: **www.preservationmass.org/**
Phone: 1-617-723-3383

Historic New England (HNE)
HNE has an Historic Homeowners program and for a membership fee will conduct an evaluation of your home.
Website: **www.historicnewengland.org**
Phone: 1-617-227-3956

National Park Service (NPS)
The NPS is the Federal resource for all National Register Historic Districts and has a Technical Preservation Services Department with many applicable briefs and booklets available at no cost for review.
Website: **www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm**

Reference Books
You may find the following reference books helpful:

Nash, G. 1992. *Renovating Old Houses*. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press.

Howard, J. M. 2007. *Buying time for heritage: How to Save an Endangered Historic Property*. Raleigh, NC: Preservation North Carolina.

Lubeck, A. 2010. *Green Restorations: Sustainable Building and Historic Homes*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society.

DISCLAIMER

This publication is presented in good faith and is intended for general guidance only. The material was drawn from many sources; every effort was made to cite the sources and any omissions are inadvertent. The contents of this publication are not intended to conflict with municipal zoning, state and local building codes and other regulations. Consult your local building department before undertaking any home renovation or building project for guidance on regulations and permitting. Users of these guidelines must make independent determinations as to the suitability or applicability of the information for their own situation or purposes. The information is not intended to be a substitute for specific technical or professional advice or services. Use of trade names and listing of professionals does not constitute endorsement or recommendation of use by the authors. In no event will the authors be responsible or liable for damages of any nature or kind whatsoever resulting from the distribution of, use of, or reliance on, the contents of this publication.

If you have questions about using this workbook, contact:

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC)
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201
Phone: 1-413-442-1521
Website: www.berkshireplanning.org

For questions about Age Friendly Berkshires and its initiatives, contact:

Erica Girgenti, Program Manager
Age Friendly Berkshires
Adams Council on Aging
3 Hoosac Street
Adams, MA 01220
Phone: 1-413-743-8333
egirgenti@town.adams.ma.us

Publication Date: June 2016

A collaboration between the City of Pittsfield, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Age Friendly Berkshires.
Funded through a mini-grant from the Mass. Department of Public Health and the Mass. Association of Health Boards.