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Perfect Your Home
By Jeff Cooper

Planning for tomorrow is important when you're buying a house. Your space needs and neighborhood preferences probably will change over time.

Growing older also creates new requirements. Someone buying a house now with upstairs bedrooms and stairs leading from the main entrance to the great room or kitchen could find it harder to navigate when they're retired.

Here are features to look for in a home to insure it's user-friendly for persons of all ages:

* Light switches should be easy to find at the door of each room. Closets, halls, outdoor walkways, and stairs also need adequate lighting.

* All essential rooms are on the first floor – at least one bedroom and full bathroom, laundry room, and kitchen. Also make sure it's easy to bring groceries from the garage into the kitchen.

* Landscaping should be low-maintenance, and not steeply sloped. Make sure there's a handrail on the front steps.

* Flooring should be slip-resistant throughout the house, and carpets should have a low pile. Make sure your patio surfaces also don't become slick when they're wet.

* Lever handles insure that doors are easy to open and close. Doorways should be at least 32 inches wide, and hallways need 36 inches of space.

* Stairways should have a landing every ten steps, railings on both sides, and light switches at the top and bottom of each staircase.

* Bathrooms need grab bars, tub seats, hand-held showers, elevated toilet seats, and a telephone.

* Kitchens should have a wall-mounted oven that doesn't require bending over to open. Also make sure a fire extinguisher is handy.

Fortunately, you can update your home to fit your current and future living needs. Obtaining funds from your built-up home equity allows you to make certain your house is always safe and enjoyable.