

## Accessibility on a Different Level

New lower-level in-law suite becomes primary living space.

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The curbless roll-in shower was designed for wheel-chair access. Photo courtesy of Glickman Design Build

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How can you tell when an in-law suite is outperforming the usual requirements?

Well, for starters, when the owners themselves decide to occupy the new accommodation as their primary living space.

Such was the recent choice of Gee and Aycha Saad, two Northern Virginia seniors who started investigating options for retrofitting their three-level home when the wife, Aycha Saad, transitioned from a walker to a wheelchair.

The idea was to improve everyday mobility and even incorporate equipment needed for physical therapy treatments while preserving the home's upper two levels should the couple later decide to sell the house and move to a retirement facility.

After weighing several scenarios, the couple summoned Russ Glickman, president of Glickman Design Build and an expert in aging-in-place, to explore options.

"We began by looking at ways to add an elevator, Glickman said. But the modifications required for the elevator would disrupt the existing second floor plan without fully solving the accessibility issues.

The home's mostly unfinished 2,000-square-foot lower level, however, provided opportunities, and the Glickman team proposed a plan for a largely self-sufficient suite complete with accessible bath, kitchenette and other amenities.

**CONFIGURED AS AN OPEN** floorplan that incorporates a sizable master suite, the new layout is differentiated into use zones that emphasize privacy.

Key components include:

- A 11-foot-by-13-foot kitchenette and dining zone finished with cherry Shaker-style cabinet facings, granite counter surfaces and ceramic tile flooring. Following local code requirements, the kitchen is equipped with a microwave rather than a full stove.
- A den/family room contiguous to the dining area that offers direct access to the rear yard. The space has been fitted with a large-scale plasma TV and a "Sensurround" sound system. This is the family's primary entertainment zone.
- A private master suite with spacious bedroom and a bath that includes a

5-foot-by-8-foot curbless "roll-in" shower with a pull-down seat. The bathroom connects to a fully-equipped laundry room.

**BEYOND THE FLOORPLAN**, the builder exercised every option to make the new suite both aesthetically-cohesive and directly responsive to the couple's needs.

To assure a suitable space for physical therapy treatments, Glickman custom-designed a wall cabinet in the dining area that contains a pull-down table. The casing has been reinforced with a steel frame that keeps the table firmly in place once it is in the upright position.

To accommodate a necessary incline wheelchair platform lift, the steps leading to the suite from the first floor were widened from 30 inches to 46 inches. The builder also enlarged the stairwell and rebuilt the staircase from scratch.

To make it easier for the Saads to identify visitors, the home's front door has been equipped with a security camera linked to a laptop. Glickman also introduced technologies that enable the couple to lock and unlock the front door from the lower level suite.

Aesthetically, the suite's carefully developed interior design details confer both warmth and spatial cohesion in all directions.

Mosaic tile flooring differentiates the kitchen/dining zone from the adjacent den and entertainment area. Typhoon green granite surfaces and lightly stained cabinet facings lend colors and textures to the kitchen area that easily integrate into a great room dominated by a large-double slider.

The master bathroom features porcelain flooring and walls accented with a decorative course of multi-colored mosaic tiles.

In short, it's a pretty, comfortable home that's also healing and supportive.

"Our goal was to satisfy immediate needs while implementing a makeover that will add re-sale value," Glickman said. "The house has simply been re-defined as a traditional single family home that includes a full-size in-law suite. It's a very marketable improvement, yet meets all the present requirements."



Photo courtesy of Glickman Design Build

The pull-down shower seat and grab bars make bathing easier.

### Details

Glickman Design Build periodically offers workshops on accessibility solutions for seniors. Visit <http://www.GlickmanDesignBuild.com>



Photo courtesy of Glickman Design Build

The bedroom, which accommodates a hospital bed, includes an en-suite bath. To increase natural light, the builder added two ground level windows.

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