

IRENE WINIFRED ENO GRANT

RESEARCH PROJECT

AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF
INTERIOR
DESIGNERS



FOUNDATION

Title: Developing a Cost Comparison Tool for Planning Ahead to Age in a Home Designed to the Standards of Universal Design and Accessibility vs. Moving Into an Assisted Living Facility

Researcher:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABSTRACT

As the last of the population segment known as the Baby Boomers reaches retirement age, increased attention has been directed to the choices people make about lifestyle, about comfortable, healthy, and safe environments in which to live their lives to the fullest, and about financing those choices through an unpredictable life span. Coupled with a rise in multi-generational households, it becomes increasingly necessary for designers to lead the movement toward new thinking on the part of homeowners by providing hard data to the financial decision-makers that highlights the cost comparisons between aging at home and relocating to a facility designed for the elderly.

What is missing is a tool that analyzes the full spectrum of financial considerations between remaining in a home that has been designed to the standards of Universal Design and moving into a for-profit segregated facility where the household tasks of daily living are removed, personal space for artifacts is limited, and personal lifestyle is revised to group lifestyle. Creating a tool that establishes cost comparisons, through research and inquiry, of the same personal services, the same attributes of the physical environment, the same social interaction, and the same independence will establish an analytical argument for the value of residential interior design services that enable the choice to “just stay at home.”

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this project was to:

1. Introduce an evidence-based protocol that informs interior designers as they assist clients in taking a closer look at the real cost comparisons between aging at home and aging at an assisted living facility; and
2. Provide a worksheet that helps clarify, in simple-to-understand terms, the price implicit in these two living choices.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the cost comparisons was gathered and assembled through:

- A series of interviews with: 1) Construction team members experienced in remodeling homes to the standards of Universal Design and accessibility; 2) Product suppliers, vendors, and fabricators; 3) City and neighborhood planners and community social services providers; and 4) Assisted living facilities and home healthcare providers, and
- The Assisted Living Association membership directory (available upon request in any state) for individual facility locations and rental fees.

*Note: All data is specific to Massachusetts and computed into average costs to be updated periodically.

COST COMPARISON TOOL: A WORKSHEET

The worksheet is a tool to help homeowners organize their thinking about the costs of living into the future and in advance of need. This tool comprises a series of worksheets that can be completed by individual homeowners and used to communicate a financial overview of how proposed remodeling costs can be amortized into a cost comparison between aging at home vs. moving into an assisted living facility. The cost comparison worksheets are presented in four tabs and designed to enable users to customize the costs of these two living alternatives in their own geographic location.

- **Tab 1: Preparing Your Home**
Consists of one-time costs of remodeling to prepared to age at home
- **Tab 2: Revenue Sources**
Includes on-going monthly revenue sources that may complete an analysis of cash flow
- **Tab 3: Ongoing Cost Scenarios**
Includes the one-time and ongoing monthly costs based on four scenarios representing an incremental increase in personal care
- **Tab 4: Calculating Cost Benefit**
Calculates the number of months it will take to amortize remodeling costs to the costs of living in an assisted living facility

FINDINGS

The calculations made from the “sample” confirm that the dollars invested in preparing ahead by remodeling a home to the standards of Universal Design and accessibility (described as “one-time” costs) can be paid for within a relatively short period of time when compared to the monthly costs of assisted living.

IMPLICATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Apply Universal Design standards for a sustainable home. Designers should encourage clients, at any age, to incorporate the standards of Universal Design and handicap accessibility into the remodeling

process, as it does not add significantly to the costs of spatial edits and could add to the home value.

- Empower homeowners through the freedom of choice. Understanding the cost implications of preparing to age at home compared to living in an assisted living facility later in life allows people to determine their own lives through informed decisions.

RESEARCHER BIO

Lisa Bonneville, FASID, NCIDQ, is an award winning interior designer who has created lifelong living environments for hundreds of clients on residential, corporate, healthcare, and retail projects for over 30 years. Through her work, she applies the standards of accessibility and Universal Design and fervently believes that incorporating connections to nature in living environments is life affirming and sustains good health. She has long served her profession and her community with a passion for improving lives through the power of design. She serves on the Advisory Board of the Massachusetts Interior Design Coalition (MIDC), is a charter member of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Advisory Committee for her town of Manchester, Massachusetts, served for seven years on the National Fire Protection Assoc. (NFPA) Technical Committee for Furnishings and Contents, held the office of president of the New England ASID chapter board, served as a member of the ASID National Board of Directors, and chaired numerous national committees. She chaired the board of trustees of the Boston Architectural College as the first woman and non-architect in its 120-year history, was named a 2006 Small Business Person of the Year by the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, and was inducted that same year in the ASID College of Fellows. She was inducted into the 2008 New England Design Hall of Fame, has employed and mentored numerous interior design students, and delivered Meals on Wheels to shut-ins for 18 years while becoming acutely aware of the housing needs of the elderly. Today, Ms. Bonneville directs her organizational and design expertise toward creating an accessible world for all people.