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Elder Share: A New Spin on Aging in Place

We all want to stay independent as we get older. I am already thinking of my family's current home and how many adjustments we will need to make to stay there as we age.

Within 20 years, one in five Americans—almost 80 million people—will be older than 65 and, surveys indicate, they will want to remain in the current homes for as long as possible. Nearly half of these older adults live in rural areas much like the makeup of our Wildcat District communities. The years of building communities and homes a certain way doesn't necessarily fit this new reality.

These are the challenges our communities and populations will face:

1. Most U.S. homes are not accessible for older people with limited mobility
2. Many older Americans living at home will need long-term care, which is expensive
3. Millions of older adults cannot afford their current housing units
4. Older adults who live at home are often isolated

In response, share housing and co-housing are becoming more prevalent. What might come to mind with this is the classic Golden Girls home set up! This is an example of share housing where you actually have a home but it doesn't quite work for you, bringing in a roommate can help with some of those chores, some of those costs and maybe some of the social isolation as well.. Co-housing is a little bit deeper, it's more of a built community or neighborhood, providing support and companionship. The goal would be to age in place, bringing in some aid as needed.

What Else Can You Start to do Now?

Modifying your current home can be daunting, however, the cost of simple modifications do not normally add up to the cost of a month of assisted living or long-term care. The most recent assisted living average monthly cost was \$3,500.00, with the average nursing home cost is over \$6,000.00 per month.

Start by accessing your home room-by-room, recognizing, the less you have in a room, the safer your home environment will become. Here is just a few examples!

Kitchen:

- __Rearrange dishes for easier access and less reach.
- __Purchase easy grip utensils.

Living Room

- __Rearrange furniture to open walk area and remove the clutter.
- __Add risers to furniture.
- __Add power strips to raise electrical outlet heights.

All Areas:

- __Remove throw rugs.
- __Replace round door handles with lever handles.
- __Replace appliance knobs with easy grab knobs.
- __Add more handrails/grab bars

My husband and I will slowly be doing these assessments and adjustments to our home so that we can stay there as long as possible!

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