

With careful planning, this home was created for aging in place



The exterior of the home built with the future in mind.

Joyce Roberts photo

By PATRICIA ROY

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HOLDEN — It's been said that aging is not for sissies. Physical changes such as decreased mobility, vision or hearing can mean that older people need corresponding changes in their living spaces.

In the past, that meant moving to elderly housing or assisted living.

These days, with some forethought, it's possible for people to stay in their homes well past those early years of retirement.

But the time to start thinking about those changes is sooner, rather than later.

Patrick Sarkisian of Sarkisian Builders has built a new ranch house on Winter Hill Road and while it's about the same size as the colonial he left behind in Rutland, it's designed

to take him from living with two young adult children to comfortably aging in place well into his senior years.

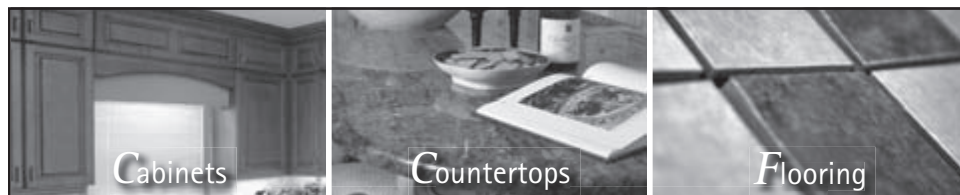
To that end, he decided to have all rooms on one floor. Yet, all the features that are designed to accommodate older inhabitants just seem to be a natural and charming part of the design. To that end, Sarkisian recommends hiring an architect early on, to help move your ideas from brain to blueprint.

For Sarkisian, the home's exterior was the first step to planning a senior-friendly living.

For the outside of the house, he used imitation cedar shakes called "cedar impressions" in a natural clay color.

It takes a knuckle rap on the siding to tell the difference from wood.

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Patrick Sarkisian with the gas fireplace, which eliminates the need for hauling firewood.

Sarkisian

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“It’s a one and done exterior,” Sarkisian said.

While the initial installation cost is steeper than some others, it will never need to be repainted, where traditional wood siding needs freshening up every four years. Sarkisian figured aging in place would be best approached with a worry-free exterior. A power wash every five years will keep it looking fresh, he said.

The rust-proof front door is fiberglass and can be repainted if the family wants to change their exterior color scheme. Frames around the maintenance-free windows are white, as is the skirt board that runs along the bottom of the house. It’s a thoughtful detail that adds visual interest.

Sarkisian was also insistent on another detail.

“I didn’t want anything to be more than one step up,” he said.

There is a single step from the front walkway to the bluestone floor of the front porch and another step up to the house’s foyer.

The attached garage has just one step into the mudroom with plenty of storage for coats, boots and umbrellas.

The house has an open concept design, with kitchen, dining and living room areas flowing

Joyce Roberts photo

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The open living room, above. Patrick Sarkisian demonstrates the ease of fold-out windows.

Joyce Roberts photos



Sarkisian

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into one another. The kitchen has enough room to accommodate several cooks, an advantage for the couple or family who likes to whip up meals together.

“Our goal was to have it be very workable. We wanted to have room for many people in it with no one bumping into each other,” he said. With the dining

and living room in view, everyone gets to be with each other when the family hosts guests, Sarkisian said.

Yet, appliances and sink are just a few convenient steps away from each other and a large pantry is in easy reach of the kitchen.

The quartz counter is stain-free, unlike granite, but it’s just as durable. It’s also treated with an antimicrobial agent for

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Sarkisian

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healthful food preparation. A deep stainless sink can accommodate large pans.

The kitchen cabinets are dark, but the house is airy due to the abundance of natural light and light bamboo flooring. The Harvey windows are energy conserving and their screens filter all the furniture-fading ultraviolet light and reduce summer heat. The windows also tilt in for easy cleaning and the glass is guaranteed for 20 years, he said. Sarkisian chose bamboo flooring because it is a renewable and sustainable wood product.

The living room also has a gas fireplace so there's no need to lug armloads of wood inside.

A large study is off the living room. Wide doors make it an adjunct to the living room space, or they can be closed when they room is in use.

The master bedroom has a 15-foot vaulted ceiling and has a feature that Sarkisian likes in hotel rooms, a comfortable sitting area.

"I just thought about what I like about the places we vacation," he said.

The master bath has a large tile shower with a ceiling mounted rain shower head. Italian marble floors and double sinks add to the hotel feel. A built-in bench is situated near the large walk-in closet that opens into the bathroom.

Sarkisian said placing the closet there is a step-saver since dressing usually takes place after the daily shower.

At the opposite end of the house are two bedrooms for his children, each with its own bath. Large pocket doors separate the this part of the house from the rest. As his daughter and son, a college student and a teen-ager, head out to live on their own, that wing of the house can be shut off, saving on heat, Sarkisian said.

The rooms can easily be re-opened for the children's visits home or for other guests. All the doorways in the house are designed to accommodate someone with limited mobility, perhaps in a wheelchair or using a walker.

There are two other heating zones for the main part of the house and the master bed room.

There's more energy saving in the home's lighting, with energy efficient dimmers that use a maximum of 13-watt bulbs.

"The light bill is incredible," he said.

Sarkisian also chose to heat with natural gas, as another way to keep utility bills down.

The laundry room is also upstairs, planned as part of one floor living.

The spacious basement has plenty of windows and a door that walks out to backyard, so the family can expand the living space if needed. Planning ahead for this, Sarkisian had plumbing already roughed in.

"It could be a nice bedroom and bathroom one day," he said.

For people planning to build or remodel their house for aging in place, Sarkisian recommends sitting down with an architect and reviewing what you want. He worked with an architect for a year before building.

"You should get exactly what you want and if you can't, you should wait and save until you can," he said.

Sarkisian's forethought has reached even to his yard. The house is located on a half-acre lot, considerable smaller than his home in Rutland.

"It used to take two and half hours just to mow the lawn," he said.

Now, as with so much of his home, yard work requires less effort and leaves more room to savor life.



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