

House&Home

Can I future-proof my home?

I've recently retired and downsized to a property that needs cosmetic work. I would like to be here for a while. What are the practical ways of future-proofing my new home for older age?

Focus on the following:

- **Connectivity.** You have already downsized, so hopefully you are close to amenities and transport links. Ensure that you have good-quality broadband as digital technologies such as a ride sharing app could be beneficial.
- **Space** Daylight and vertical connections can make a home feel more spacious. Can you introduce new windows, make double-height spaces, or combine rooms to make larger, flexible spaces — for friends, family or a carer?
- **Accessibility/adaptability** Are you in a position to widen doors and hallways or convert your bathroom to be wheelchair-friendly? Can you extend or remodel to accommodate live-in carers?
- **Being green** Reduce your energy bills and increase access to nature. Improve the thermal performance and air quality by adding insulation, increasing air tightness, using non-toxic products and having indoor planting/window boxes.
- **Comfort/pleasure** Make sure that your home is comfortable. Ensure rooms are well-lit and echo-free. Fittings and fixtures should be at heights that are easily reachable, and doors/windows should not require too much strength to open.
- **Manageability** You do not need to relinquish control of the management of your home, but you can change some aspects so that they are easier to maintain, for example, by having potted plants rather than a flower bed.
- **Being social** Contact with people is good for health, so make sure you are set up for hosting people. Do you have a porch area where you often bump into your neighbour? If so, spend time here and make it pleasant.

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