Boomers Not Considering Health And Aging As They Plan To Remodel, The Hartford Study Finds

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Joint study with University of Southern California explores Boomers' interest in universal design for home renovation projects

HARTFORD, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--While 40 percent of Boomers expect to remodel their homes sometime in the future, few do so with their own health and aging in mind, according to a new study from The Hartford and the University of Southern California (USC).

When planning to remodel, Boomers indicated they will focus primarily on updating “dated” rooms – kitchens and bathrooms top the list – and making their homes more attractive, with only 21 percent considering their own health and aging. But Jodi Olshevski, gerontologist and executive director of The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence®, advises that people can do both with universal design – an approach to design that’s easy for everyone to use, regardless of age, size, or ability.

“Often referred to as ‘livable design,’ universal design is visually attractive,” said Olshevski. “If Boomers are willing to incorporate livable design when they remodel, they’ll enjoy immediate benefits – as will small children or older relatives who visit – and find their homes easier to live in as they age.”

In fact, when Boomers were shown photos of livable design features for the kitchen, many respondents agreed they would consider the following:

- Pullout drawers in base cabinets (75%)
- Lighting from multiple sources (61%)
- Level thresholds between kitchen and adjacent rooms (61%)
- D- or U-shaped handles, rather than knobs (59%)
- Countertops at different heights (42%)

Kerrie Kelly, an award-winning interior designer who incorporates livable design into her work, says her clients are starting to express more interest in these types of features. “Livable design is contemporary and stylish and my clients love the open, flexible living space,” she said. “It works for everybody, and universal design elements are increasingly common in new home construction.”

In The Hartford and USC study, when Boomers were shown photos of universal design ideas for the bathroom, the most common features in which they expressed interest include:

- Single lever faucet handle (56%)
- Comfort height toilet (56%)
- Grab bars in tub and shower (53%)
- Adjustable-height, hand-held shower hose (49%)
- Walk-in shower with little or no threshold (47%)

Olshevski noted that these findings are consistent with previous research from The Hartford and the USC Davis School of Gerontology that studied the impact of universal design education on customer repair decisions following a homeowners’ insurance claim.

“While most of us remain healthy and active as we age, we may still experience changes in strength, flexibility, balance and reach,” said Olshevski. “Universal design makes it easier to adjust to these changes and live comfortably and safely at home for a lifetime.”

As part of its commitment to helping Boomers make their house a home for a lifetime, The Hartford developed several resources for livable design ideas including a free guide, “Remodeling Today for a Better Tomorrow,” and an interactive home universal design quiz. These resources and more are available at www.thehartfordmile.com/remodel [3].

Methodology

The Hartford and the USC Davis School of Gerontology conducted an online survey fielded by TNS from April 23 through 26, 2015. The survey was completed by 1,096 adults between the ages of 51 and 69 (Boomers) and is representative of the U.S. household population.

About The Hartford

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About The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence

The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence creates innovative business solutions for the mature market. Staffed by gerontologists, the
center is uniquely positioned to apply knowledge of aging to develop one-of-a-kind products and services for The Hartford's customers, and specialized training for The Hartford's employees. The center conducts original research in partnership with academic institutions and produces public education programs on safety, mobility and independence. The Hartford has had this in-house expertise since 1984, guiding The Hartford to unparalleled success in understanding and serving the mature market.

About University of Southern California Leonard Davis School of Gerontology

The mission of the University of Southern California Leonard Davis School of Gerontology is to improve the lives of older persons through education and research. It houses research centers including the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence, which offers resources for consumers, as well as an online Executive Certificate in Home Modification Program for professionals. For more information, visit www.stopfalls.org [7] and www.homemods.org [8].

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