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Recycling Renovations: Finding an Address With Access

You've seen your dream home. You can just imagine the front porch swing swaying in a summer breeze...the backyard patio is a perfect picture with your dog sleeping in the sun...the green fir tree out front is ideal for decorating at holiday time. Now, imagine being denied that dream because, while your dreams can access that home, your wheelchair cannot.

To help special needs buyers to find existing, modified homes means that we can help save time, money and resources and, best of all, help some buyers to access their dream home!

Let me share a couple of anecdotes from my own experience!

It's been eight years since a car crash left Michael a partial quadriplegic. Thankfully, his home was totally modified to suit his needs and paid for by insurance money. Now, his employer is closing down the local operation and moving the business to another city. Michael was asked to move with the company, but while he would like to accept, the costs of modifying his next home would be prohibitive since there would be no insurance money the second time around. His employer was eager to have Michael on board and agreed to pay for any modifications needed in a new house. So far, so good...things are looking very promising...but here is where the story changes. To his amazement, Michael was told by a real estate agent that it would be best to have all of the house modifications removed and the house 'put back to normal' before the house goes on the market. To pull the modifications out and patch and paint the rooms would be a lot of work and would be expensive...modifications can be expensive to put in and costly to take out. It would also mean that there would be renovation costs to two houses now in two different cities...rather like the old saying' "they getcha coming and going". There is even a more important fact ... somebody who has special needs but little funding to support the cost of the necessary renovations would not even have access to Michael's house. Just think...the types of home modifications that a quadriplegic requires may also be very useful to someone who has, for example, advancing Multiple Sclerosis.

Stephen has a totally modified house. After living there a few years, he bought some property, conditional on selling his house. The property was part of his plan to build his dream house, custom-built for his needs. Sadly, when his house was put on the market it was felt that to advertise it as a modified house could discourage a broader range of potential buyers from viewing it. Months passed but the house did not sell. Stephen lost the property and, with it, his dream of a new, purpose-built home. And somewhere, there is a person out there who lost the freedom of finding this modified house that could have been their dream home.



Through these stories, you can see that recycling modified houses could be a gift to those in need, saving a great deal of money, time and struggle. In addition to advertising the house in the usual ways, it could also be marketed directly to the special needs population and also indirectly through case managers, insurance professionals and specific social service organizations.

Now, I realise – given human nature – not everyone with similar needs will have similar tastes. We all have our own view of what is the ideal home. Just because certain modifications are available in a home does not mean that everyone who could benefit from them will love the house. For some people facing advancing medical problems or weakened physical conditions, the simple availability of a roll-in shower or other convenience may offer enough independence and freedom to far out-weigh some of the other considerations.

While not everyone needs a ramp or a lift, different modifications may be just as appreciated by another person...homes may be altered to accommodate the needs of a blind or a deaf person, or what about the needs of someone with severe allergies? The possibilities go on and on.

A modified house makes it a very special home to the owners and, when the time does come to move, imagine how much more satisfying it will be to sell to someone with similar needs, eager for that same degree of independence through accessibility. What a huge difference this increased freedom can make! I have a personal passion for people with special needs. I worked in the medical field for nearly 36 years and many of our patients and clients required modified housing. Given this professional background, it is a natural fit for me to now have a special interest in the modified housing niche in real estate sales.

My website has many resources and references to support this special interest. I want to help make it possible for my clients to feel at home in an address with access.

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