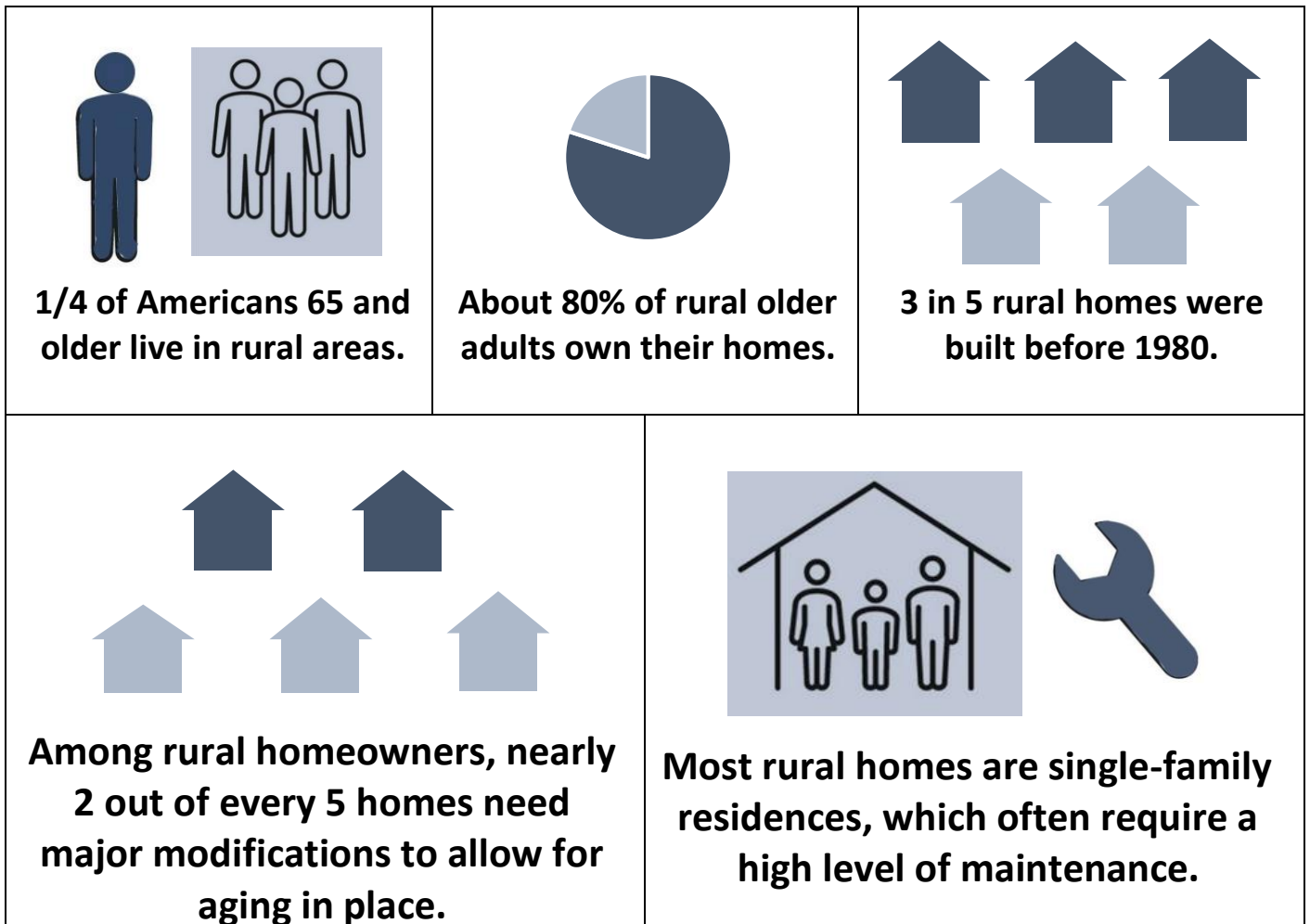


# Home Modifications for Older Adults in Rural Areas: Special Considerations



Most older adults prefer to remain in their homes as long as possible. To do so, it is essential that their home environment supports them to do daily activities safely. **Home Modification** - making changes to the home environment to support a person's changing needs - can promote health, safety, and independence.

## Why are Home Modifications Important for Rural Older Adults?



# Checklist of Home Modifications for Rural Older Adults

## Low-Cost Home Modifications

People often delay making modifications due to cost and difficulty performing the work. **This checklist contains inexpensive and easy tips that can help individuals REMAIN at home independently: Remove, Enhance, Modify, Accessorize, Install, and Notice.**

<p><b>Remove:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Clutter</u> on floors for clear pathways</li><li>• <u>Electrical cords</u> from pathways by tacking them to the walls</li><li>• <u>Tripping hazards</u> such as throw rugs, loose carpeting or uneven areas on floors</li><li>• <u>Heavier and frequently used items</u> from out of reach locations and place within easy reach</li><li>• <u>Furniture</u> from walking pathways</li></ul>	<p><b>Enhance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Safety at night</u> with night lights to mark the path between the bedroom and bathroom and a lamp by the bed</li><li>• <u>Navigation</u> by marking uneven thresholds with contrasting tape or paint or remove thresholds entirely</li><li>• <u>Bathing safety</u> with non-skid strips on tub or shower floors, secured bathmats, and shower chairs for sitting while bathing</li></ul>
<p><b>Modify:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Toilet seats</u> to make them higher so that it is easier to sit down and stand up</li><li>• <u>Light switches</u> to rocker switches and change <u>round door handles</u> to levers for easier use</li><li>• <u>Shower head</u> to be adjustable height and/or a hand-held shower head to improve reach</li><li>• <u>Doorways</u> to 32" through offset hinges</li></ul>	<p><b>Accessorize:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Use an emergency alert system</u> if a fall or urgent need takes place</li><li>• <u>Add a bell to small pet collars</u> - small pets can be obstacles when not seen or heard</li><li>• <u>Place gripper rug pads</u> under throw rugs</li><li>• <u>Add seating</u> for dressing or cooking prep</li><li>• <u>A simple Smart Home Device</u> that provides interaction may reduce loneliness</li></ul>
<p><b>Install:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Soft corners and edges</u> to sharp furniture</li><li>• <u>Grab bars</u> for support in and around tubs, showers, and toilets with wall reinforcement and anchored to studs</li><li>• <u>Anti-scald</u> water devices to keep the temperature below 120 degrees</li></ul>	<p><b>Notice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>After modifications are made</u>, are they used, and if so, used correctly? Awareness is key to continued use; if not, it is important to determine why</li><li>• <u>Needs change over time</u> - new circumstances may merit different modifications</li></ul>

# How to Get Home Modifications

Making needed changes is often more cost effective and realistic than moving to a more accessible residence. Use a home assessment to check for hazards that could lead to injuries such as falls, and identify areas where supportive features could help.

## 1. Funding

Depending on income, abilities, and age, people may qualify for financial support to make the changes. For information on home modification funding sources by state, visit [www.homemods.org/hmin](http://www.homemods.org/hmin)



## 2. Finding A Professional

When a professional is needed to check the home and/or make the modifications, a home modification program or specialist can be located through:

- The [Local area agency on aging](#): Call the Eldercare Locator at: 800-677-1116
- An [Independent Living Center](#)
- The [National Directory of Home Modification and Repair Resources](#) lists providers by city

## 3. More Information

The **Fall Prevention Center of Excellence** at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology offers information on how to make homes safe and where to find services, programs, and funding support: [www.homemods.org](http://www.homemods.org)

### References:

AARP Rural Livability Report, 2020. <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2020/rural-livability-workshop-report.html>



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