

Choosing the Right Retirement Home

By Rose Betit

Now that the decision has been made to find a retirement home for yourself or a loved one, it's important to make sure you're choosing the right place. How does one go about that? What are the questions that need to be asked and answered? Perhaps the process can be simplified through a checklist of the 10 steps below. Before you begin the steps, have a notebook ready to be your dedicated "Retirement Home Search Notebook". It might be handy to have one with pockets on the inside so you can tuck away various documents or brochures you find useful.

- **1. Assess what your current living situation for what is lacking.** Have household chores become too difficult? Are you experiencing isolation or loneliness? How safe are you at home? Maybe you can think of something else that you are missing by remaining in your own home. The answers to these questions will not only reinforce your decision to find a retirement community, but they will give you immediate insight into what services you will be looking for in a home.
- **2. Make a list of needs versus wants.** Consider the type of lifestyle you wish to lead. Are you looking for ample opportunities for social interaction? What will you do with your belongings, such as furniture items? Will you still need them once you have relocated?
- **3. Make a determination on the level of assistance that will be needed at the new residence.** Depending on the level of assistance needed, various types of housing are available. Also, you might want to pay a visit to the following web page to learn about the various housing types: <http://www.aplaceformom.com/canada/canada-seniors-housing-guide>
- **4. Consider your finances.** You will need to determine what is available with what you can afford. If need be, you may want to hire a financial planner.
- **5. Once you've checked off numbers 1-4, you are ready for the exciting part; looking at places!** Start by making a list of places you learn about from resources such as the Internet, publications geared toward seniors and, of course, word of mouth. Make phone calls and pay a visit to your top choices.
- **6. Never be afraid to ask questions.** As a matter of fact, write down your questions in your notebook and when you make your phone calls or visits, ask away. Do not let anyone make you feel as if you are bothering them by inquiring too much. (If they seem annoyed by that, I think you may have narrowed your search by one already.)
- **7. I've already mentioned visiting communities, but it can't really be stressed enough.** It's important to see a place in person to get a feel for it. Stick around for a bit. Schedule to stay for dinner or lunch, talk with current residents, or maybe even see if you can participate in an activity within the community. This way you will really get a sense of the surroundings. Finally, trust your feelings.

- **8. Enlist the help of trusted loved ones.** Do you have a friend or family member whose opinion you would value? Getting a second opinion add another level of assuredness that you are making a good decision. Be open to considering ideas that may be contrary to your own and discuss the reasons behind them.

- **9. Prepare to simplify your life!** This can sometimes be a difficult part. We all have emotional ties to our things and deciding what to get rid of and how to get rid of it can be daunting. It's a good idea, if you can, to involve family members and/or close friends in this process. You could even have a gathering to go through your things and reminisce while you distribute your belongings you'd like to give away. If you have furniture that you still need to get rid of, consider donating it to charities who will often come pick it up so you don't have to worry about hauling it anywhere.

- **10. Begin your new adventure in your new community!** Make of it whatever you would like to make of it. Revel in not having so many demands on your time. Relax and enjoy activities you didn't have time for before. Maybe even try out new things or find a new hobby or two.