



THE GUIDE TO RESEARCHING RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES



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A wide variety of retirement communities exist throughout the country and each one offers different choices in lifestyle, health care, services and amenities. Where do you begin your search? How can you make an informed decision? Use this guide as a tool to help you find the best retirement community for you!

START YOUR RESEARCH EARLY.

Deciding where you are going to live is no easy task! Take the time to compare the different retirement communities in your area so you will feel confident you've made the right choice.

THINK GEOGRAPHICALLY.

Try to narrow down where you want to live. Is it important to you to live in a warm weather climate? To be near your children? To go back to the area where you grew up? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the locations you are considering?

DON'T WAIT TOO LONG.

Many retirement communities have medical criteria that prospective residents must meet in order to be accepted into the community. If you postpone your decision to move and you develop health problems, you run the risk of not being accepted. Retirement communities promote an active lifestyle. Why wait to enjoy all of the programs and amenities they have to offer?

REVIEW PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS.

A brochure will tell you a lot about a retirement community. Not only will it provide you with useful data, but the impressions you get from the brochure will also give you insight into the community. Does the brochure answer important questions or is it vague? Do the people in the brochure seem active? Is the brochure dull and plain or is it vibrant? Are there typographical or grammatical errors in the brochure or is it well-written?

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT.

Take the time to visit all of the retirement communities in your area. Schedule an appointment with the marketing staff, and make sure you leave ample time to see everything you want to see. A complete tour should take about one to two hours, so start early and try not to see more than two places in a day.

WHEN VISITING, NOTICE EVERYTHING.

How do the grounds look? Is the staff friendly? Do residents seem active?

Is the community clean and well-maintained? Are the apartments nicely appointed? Could you see yourself living at this community?

ASK QUESTIONS.

If you don't ask questions, you won't be able to make an informed decision. Communication is key--you should feel certain that the staff of a retirement community is answering all of your questions and addressing any concerns you may have. Take notes so you can refer to them later.

DECIDE WHAT AMENITIES ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

Make a list of amenities and features that are important to you. Do you enjoy high-rise living or prefer garden-style apartments? Are you interested in a villa? Big closets? Guest suites? A lap pool? Fitness Center? Are you interested in fitness or cultural activities? Is a full continuum of care important to you?

TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THE HEALTH CARE FACILITY.

What levels of care are available? Does the staff seem caring and professional? Do the residents seem well cared for? How is the atmosphere at the care center? Are there activities for the residents who are receiving care? Every health care center must be routinely examined by the Florida Department of Health Care Services--what is the rating of the health care?

GET DETAILED ANSWERS TO HEALTH-RELATED QUESTIONS.

What can and cannot be provided medically? What type of licensing does the community have? What services is the community contractually obligated to provide? What services cost extra? Go through many "what if..." scenarios to make sure all of your concerns are addressed.

REVIEW DOCUMENTS.

State examination reports, community financial reports, contracts and other types of agreements should be available for you to review.

FIND OUT WHO OWNS AND MANAGES THE COMMUNITY.

Do the owner and management company have a long-term commitment to the community? Are they financially stable? Do the owner and management company have experience providing quality service? What is the relationship between the owner, manager and residents?

DETERMINE HOW MUCH VOICE YOU HAVE AS A RESIDENT.

Is there a Resident Council and what does it do? How is the Council elected? Do residents serve on the community's Board of Directors? How are the

residents kept informed?

MEET THE RESIDENTS.

Find out if the residents are your kind of people. Ask if they did a lot of research before deciding. See if they are happy with their decision. Would you like having them as your neighbors?

HAVE DINNER AT THE COMMUNITY.

The more you can experience the lifestyle the better. How is the atmosphere in the dining room? Are the dining hours flexible? Is there a dress code for dinner? Does the menu offer good variety? Is the service attentive? Can the chef accommodate specific dietary requirements?

REVIEW PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.

Ask for an event calendar to see if there are programs and activities of interest to you. Are there a variety of educational, social, cultural and fitness programs available? Bridge groups? Lectures? Theme parties? Can residents volunteer within the community? Are special travel opportunities available to residents? Ask if you may attend one or more resident activities.

GET YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS INVOLVED.

Determine whether your family or friends can aid you in making a decision. Ask them to take a look at a few of the places you are considering--they may raise questions you haven't considered.

RESEARCH REPUTATION.

Call the Chamber of Commerce, talk with your friends, talk with your physician, attorney, clergy, trust officer or anyone else you can think of to find out about the community's reputation.

MAKE A GOOD DECISION.

Don't feel rushed, but don't procrastinate, either. Do your research, narrow down your choices, and decide. Determine the kind of lifestyle you want for yourself and make the decision to enjoy it! Don't be one of those people who ends up saying, "I wish I hadn't waited so long!"

