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HOUSING

Choosing a Retirement Community—This Time it's all About YOU.

Choosing your retirement home is a very different experience than any home you've chosen in the past.

By Scott Dixon



Choosing your retirement home is a very different experience than any home you've chosen in the past. Factors that influenced you before such as school districts and commuting time to work are less important.

Now is your time. You control your own destiny and your personal interests, climate preferences, recreational activities, and proximity

to the grandkids play a much larger role in your housing decision.

Over 80 million people in the U.S. are over 50 and starting to consider and plan for their retirement. There have never been so many great housing options for active adults. Whether your desire is a single family home, a maintenance free condo, or apartment for rent in an amenity rich community, the options have never been more appealing. And the best-laid plans will lead to the happiest retirement.

Your dream retirement

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Start by making a wish list of your retirement as you've dreamed of it in the past:

What specific types of activities did you see yourself doing every day? Playing golf? Boating? Volunteering? Gardening?

What climate or geographic area suits you best? Mountains? Beach? Desert? Would you want to live year round or part time?

Are there family or friends that you want to be near? Or close enough that they can visit often, but far away enough to call first?

And, if you have a spouse, do they share the same interests?

You should each make your own list. Prioritize each and compare. Even

if your lists don't exactly match, with today's many housing options, chances are you may find the home or homes that suit you both.

Your dream community

The type of community you choose is as important as the home itself. This is where your recreational and social activities take place. Some things to consider:

- Do you want to live in an age-restricted community (55+) or a mixed aged community?
- Do you want to care for the maintenance on your own home or live maintenance free?
- Had you planned to rent or buy?
- Do you want to consider a community in which you can receive increasing levels of care as you age?
- Do you want to consider a second home and spend a portion of each year in different areas or climates?

Your home and the current real estate market

If you are planning to sell your home, talk to a real estate professional and ask for a Comparative Market Analysis to determine what price you can expect to sell your home for and how long it will realistically take. Look

for a real estate professional with an SRES (Seniors Real Estate Specialist) designation, who has been specially trained to work with buyers and sellers looking to retire.

Depending on when you purchased your home, the equity gained may be sufficient for your plans. If you will be re-investing in another property, consider its potential for appreciation.

In many markets, inventories are sufficient, interest rates are low, housing prices have adjusted, and real estate continues to be a sound, long-term investment.

The thing to remember is that every local market is different. Many of the statistics quoted in the news are based on national figures. Your situation may vary based on the economics of the communities in which you sell and buy.

Start your research for your dream home. The information is certainly available. •

Mature Living Choices® magazine, a housing directory with active adults and seniors in mind, is available in many of the country's most popular retirement destinations and features every type of housing option—from new home communities, to active adult apartment communities, to service enriched communities and more.

Online, MatureLivingChoices.com offers detailed property descriptions, virtual tours, mapping, floor plans, community amenities and more. You can even order a magazine from another area. Additional content can be found on RetirementHomes.com.

Scott Dixon is president, Network Communications, Inc. Real Estate Division. Mr. Dixon earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Massachusetts and a Masters Degree in Urban Affairs from Boston University.