

A Publication of *Life Care Services*™ **Transitions**®

Making the Most of Retirement Living

This article is a print friendly version of an article published in Transitions magazine, a publication of Life Care Services LLC. Please enjoy the article. However, no reproduction or use of this article for any purpose other than your reading pleasure is allowed.

A Place to Call Home

How to select a senior living community where you can live, love and laugh.

You've decided you are going to move to a senior living community. Where do you start? First of all, congratulate yourself if you've made that decision before you or your spouse has experienced major health problems. You've probably saved your family a lot of stress.

Donna Quinn Robbins, founder and president of Ultimate Moves, a San Francisco Bay area business, says seniors who plan ahead are well adjusted and happy. "On the other hand, those who avoid facing the inevitable aging process ... are often the most traumatized by a sudden move. This move is usually precipitated by a crisis," she said.

Robbins' business is dedicated to serving seniors in transition and helping them and their families with the process of moving into senior living communities.

As you're studying-up on the different types of communities, compare the pros and cons of each to your current preferences and the changes you anticipate in the future, although that is often difficult to predict. Are you (and your spouse) in good health? Were your parents healthy in their retirement years? Are there communities of the type you prefer near where you are living now? Is that important to you, or are you willing to move to a different city, or even state, to find the type of community you are looking for?

After narrowing down the types of communities you might consider, begin paring the list of available options by asking the big questions first:

- **Finances**—What can I afford? Am I on my own or are my children or other relatives going to chip in?
- **Location**—How close do I want or need to be to my family? Am I looking for a city or more of a rural setting? Is climate important? Do I want to be near centers of art and culture?
- **Atmosphere**—Do I want elegance or something that feels more casual?
- **Transportation**—Does the community offer transportation to the grocery store, shopping mall and activities? If not, is public transportation easily accessible, reliable and affordable?
- **Health Care**—Is it available on site? What are the costs?

After you've clarified your options by answering those questions, make a list of several communities you want to visit. If one of the communities you are considering is still in the development stages, you can get a good feel for it by examining scale models of the community

and any model homes the community may have available. Whether the community is in existence, or in model stage, take a camera so you can recall the details later while comparing and contrasting the options.

Take note of how you are treated by the staff at the communities you visit, Robbins says. Are they friendly and respectful to you? Are they friendly and respectful to the residents? Observe the people living there. Do they appear happy and healthy? Do they seem like the kind of people you would enjoy spending time with?

Ask to see a selection of menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Look for variety and nutritious choices. Discuss with the staff how they accommodate specific dietary needs. If you are touring an existing community, arrange for a meal.

It's important, perhaps not on the first visit, but before you make a final decision, to spend time with people who live in the community. You also should try to take part in community activities. If the community you are considering is still in development, you can get a good feel for the people who will live there by participating in events sponsored by the community's marketing professionals.

"Often the communities will sponsor seminars and events for people who are interested," Robbins says. "It's a good way to meet the staff and future residents."