

When making a move might improve your life

As people age, and especially if they have chronic health conditions, at some point they're likely to find that their current home no longer suits their lifestyle or their needs. It is worth considering a move if it might improve life in one or more of the following areas:

- **Freedom.** Reducing responsibilities associated with home ownership, particularly property maintenance. Also, allowing more time for recreation and leisure activities, such as engaging in a hobby, spending time with family, volunteering or travelling.
- **Independence.** Offloading as many responsibilities of daily living as possible, in order to continue to live independently in spite of decreased physical functioning. People in this situation may wish to eliminate not only property maintenance tasks but also housecleaning, laundering and meal preparation.
- **Climate.** Relocating to somewhere with a moderate climate (not too hot and not too cold), for health and safety reasons or for comfort and convenience – to be able to engage in favourite outdoor activities year-round, for example.
- **Home design.** Increasing the accessibility of one's home – specifically, making it easier and safer to enter and exit, access all areas and use rooms for their intended purpose. A one-floor, open concept plan is typically desirable. Some people (those who use a wheelchair, for example) may need a setting designed for the physically disabled.
- **Finances.** Reducing expenses associated with shelter, including mortgage or rent, property taxes, utilities and maintenance. Another reason some people move is that the cost of home adaptations to improve safety and accessibility is beyond their means or is not a wise investment from a real estate perspective.
- **Socializing.** Increasing opportunities for social contact. Specifically, the goal might be moving closer to family members, especially children and grandchildren, or relocating to a community of peers.
- **Security.** Reducing the risk of victimization. For example, those who are anxious about answering the door, leaving their home unattended or coming home to an empty house may experience increased peace of mind living in a gated community with security patrol or an apartment building with a security desk and locked mailboxes.
- **Community access.** Improving access to shopping and other businesses, medical resources, places of worship and other amenities such as parks and recreation centres. Those with a driver's license who live in the suburbs or a rural area may seek a more central location to reduce travel time. Those who don't drive – or who anticipate being unable to drive in the foreseeable future – may look for a home with easy access to public transit or within walking distance of various amenities.
- **Health.** Ensuring ongoing healthcare needs are met. Needs may include one or more of the following: medication management, medical monitoring, a special diet, skilled nursing care, personal care (assistance with washing, dressing and grooming) and supervision or assistance with mobilizing.

Residence options

There are many possibilities for alternate living arrangements, depending on a person's needs and preferences. Options include: moving in with a relative or friend for companionship and perhaps also practical assistance, and to share expenses; moving to a similar-sized home with a more suitable design; downsizing to a smaller house or a condominium or apartment (some seniors apartments may be geared to income and have disabled units); moving to an adult lifestyle community; and, moving to a long-term care setting such as a retirement home or nursing home.

If you are considering a long-term care residence, it's important to go beyond location, curb appeal and advertisements and take personal tours. Plan to visit several places, and take a relative or friend along for a second opinion.

Planning ahead

Because a move in later life usually involves downsizing, it's wise, if you anticipate changing residences in the next few years, to begin now to sort through your possessions and sell or give away unneeded items. Typically it takes much longer than expected to go through this tedious and emotion-laden process.

If you intend to relocate in the near future, consider hiring a professional organizer to assist with the paring-down process, or a senior move specialist who can help with everything from planning to setting up in your new residence.

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Courtesy:

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