



UNDERSTANDING SENIOR LIVING OPTIONS

How to make the best choice for your retirement.

A study at Yale University found that people with more positive perceptions of aging lived 7.5 years longer than those whose perceptions were less positive.

Being optimistic — especially about aging — doesn't just make you more enjoyable to be around, it may keep you around longer, because what goes on in your brain influences what goes on in the rest of your body. Many studies connect a positive outlook to emotional, physical, and cognitive health, and even longevity.

EMBRACE WHAT'S GOOD

- Find a strong, positive social network
- Make physical activity a habit
- Be part of a community
- Practice gratitude
- Spend more time doing what you love



GREAT TIMES ARE AHEAD. DON'T MISS OUT!

You spent your lifetime planning for your future, and here you are. You saved the money you needed so that in your retirement you could maintain your lifestyle and not have to worry about unexpected expenses, or becoming a burden to your family. You did the hard work.

Now what?

How are you going to spend your retirement? And where? Just like with all of life's big decisions, you need to know what's out there. Senior living is full of choices. So how do you know which one is best for you? We created this guide to walk you through the options, decode the industry jargon, and explain how the right choice can give you freedom and peace of mind to enjoy every day.



THE COST OF RETIREMENT

You already know that retirement is a significant expense. You planned for it. The financial part of your decision is really about comfort level. Do you want to pay more now or later? Plan for predictable costs or see what your health and the market give you? What is flexibility worth to you? And remember, it's not just what you have to pay for today, but what you won't have to pay for tomorrow.

WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE ABOUT COMMUNITY?

- An environment that encourages being active
- Maintenance-free living
- Services and amenities to support your lifestyle
- Access to activities and opportunities to get out and enjoy life
- A built-in support network for friendship and engagement
- Assurance and peace of mind for life's necessities
- Freedom to enjoy life the way you choose

WHY MOVE?

Think your house is the least expensive choice with the most freedom? It might not be. Comparatively, people who live in senior communities spend more time socializing and learning, and only a third as much time doing chores. Plus, even if your mortgage is paid off, you still have living expenses like taxes, insurance, food, utilities, housekeeping, gardening, fitness, and entertainment. And then there's the stress and cost of the unexpected, like when you need a new roof or HVAC system. Maybe the obvious choice isn't what it seems.

NOT ALL COMMUNITIES ARE THE SAME

Senior living communities describe themselves in similar ways, but it's important to notice their differences.

ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

In stand-alone assisted living facilities you get a home-like setting that prioritizes independence while offering personal and medical assistance. Services range from senior housing to personal care and skilled nursing. More than 80 percent of these communities are for-profit — either privately owned or part of a national chain — so while they may provide high-quality services and amenities, their primary function is to earn a profit from rent and fees.

RENTAL COMMUNITIES

Some rental communities just cover rent, while others include meals, and possibly housekeeping and a few services and amenities. The flexibility means you don't pay for care unless you need it. However, if you do need care years down the road, a rental community may not have it, since skilled nursing is not typically offered. Will you be able to afford the care you might need one day and will you need to move again to get it? Also, be sure to check age restrictions. Many are 55+ communities, but not all.

CONTINUING CARE RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

In a CCRC, you live in your own apartment, maintenance-free and with dining options, services, and amenities included. CCRCs also offer multiple levels of care, from independent living (which most residents initially move into), through assisted-living arrangements, as well as 24-hour skilled nursing and memory care settings. By having all these services available on campus, residents never need to move away to receive the care that they, or their loved one, need.

CCRC VS. ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Sometimes information about senior living communities is like alphabet soup. The terms sound similar, but they have different meanings in different communities. The biggest culprit? The term "assisted living."

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Properties called assisted living communities are popping up all over. These stand-alone facilities are designed to help people with basic needs like dressing and bathing. You can live independently in your own apartment and don't have to use care services if you don't need them, but most people are there because they do.

This is very different from a CCRC like Acacia Creek. A CCRC focuses on active adults who live their lives with complete independence. You can take advantage of services like maintenance-free living, and still enjoy a life where you travel, go out with friends, and do all the other things you love — on or off campus. But here's where you see the term again in a different context. In addition to supporting active independent lifestyles, as part of the community's continuum of care, a CCRC includes other levels of care, like assisted living, if you ever need it.

WAIT, ISN'T MY HEALTHCARE ALREADY COVERED?

Don't assume your healthcare will be covered by government programs like Social Security, Medicaid, or Medicare. Unfortunately, there is a lot of confusion around what these programs really cover, and they aren't the safety net that many people think they are.



SOCIAL SECURITY

While it does provide monthly income you can use however you like, it typically won't be high enough to cover a chronic condition or major health expense.



MEDICAID

It does cover some health costs, but as a means-tested program, it's only available to people with low incomes and few assets besides their home.



MEDICARE

It's not comprehensive coverage. It mainly helps with short-term needs, and is broken into parts — like hospital, medical, and prescription drug coverage. You need to know which parts you're covered for. Plus, Medicare has gaps, like vision and dental, hearing aids, assisted living, and long-term care.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF SENIOR LIVING CONTRACTS

Like choosing a vacation package, CCRCs offer many financial options, based on what you'd like included.

When you choose a specific CCRC, one of the first things you need to decide is which contract or financial model will work best for you. Acacia Creek, like most CCRCs, offers more than one type. The contract determines how much you pay up front in your one-time entrance fee, the size of your monthly fee, and how much healthcare is included.

RENTAL CONTRACT

A rental contract is usually the least expensive path to senior living. The residents sign a lease for an agreed-upon time — often a year. There's no entrance fee, but there will likely be a security deposit. You can expect various services and amenities built into your monthly rent payments. These can include meals, housekeeping, maintenance, transportation, and on-site events and activities. These will vary by community. Some rental communities provide independent senior living only. Others include assisted living services with your monthly fee, either in residence or in a different area of the community. The main advantages of a rental contract are cost and adaptability. You save on your initial investment with no entrance fee. Also, you won't pay upfront for future care; you'll only pay for what you need and use. You'll pay the rates for care at the time of need. Therefore, there are no qualification requirements regarding preexisting conditions that can be required with an entrance fee.

FEE-FOR-SERVICE CONTRACT

Like its name implies, in a fee-for-service contract you only pay for the services you use. This means you pay less than an entrance-fee contract up front, partly because you're not prepaying for health services you might want in the future. In a fee-for-service contract, you are responsible for the full cost of higher levels of care, should you ever need them, along with services and any amenities like housekeeping, additional meals, and parking.

ENTRANCE-FEE CONTRACT

Expect an up-front fee to move in with an entrance-fee contract. This amount you pay to secure your residence can reduce your monthly fees and make your costs more predictable in the future, should you ever need the community's continuum of care, like assisted living or skilled nursing. Contract variables include the number of healthcare days and discounted rates for any health services you'll pay for above your monthly fees.

Life care is a specific type of entrance-fee contract that guarantees financial predictability. Entrance fees and monthly service packages are typically higher, but it means little or no increase in monthly fees, and you get priority access to the care you need so you don't have to worry about unexpected health events or the increasing costs of healthcare down the road. Entrance fees also range in the amount they refund. Some offer the ability to recover as much as 90 percent, while with others the balance declines over time.



WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU? ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS.

How important is predictability in your living expenses?

Do you prefer all-inclusive living or pay-as-you-go?

How comfortable are you with the uncertainty of the future?

Are you financially prepared for the full cost of health care down the road?



DON'T JUST LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR FUTURE. MAKE IT YOUR REALITY.

A great retirement starts with a great plan. Choosing a CCRC — where you'll have access to a continuum of care, should you ever need it — is a great way to hold onto your independence and protect your family from having to step in. Plus, making the decision today keeps your family from having to guess what you want in the future.



Make it official. Documentation is essential. For all your plans and decisions — financial and medical, retirement to end-of-life — be sure you have the legal forms you need, that they're all signed, organized, and available to the people who will need them. Review them each year to make sure it's still what you want.

Talk about it. Let your family know your wishes to make sure you get exactly what you want. Talking to your children about how and where you want to live the rest of your life may be the most important lesson — and gift — you ever give them.

PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Consider all financial, health, and lifestyle uncertainties
- Make a plan for how you'd like unexpected situations to be handled
- Determine the best place to live in order to stay independent and not burden family
- Prepare and organize documents to make sure your plans are followed
- Talk to your family members about your wishes

IT'S TIME TO TALK

Thinking about retirement is an ongoing activity—for years, or even decades. But talking about it as a family, well, somehow there are always reasons to put it off. That ends now.

Nothing could be more important—or timely—than making sure everyone feels heard and knows the plan. No matter which side of the coffee table you sit on, this conversation applies to you. It may seem awkward or uncomfortable in the moment, but you'll all feel better when you all know the plan. And it will be one less stress if a crisis ever arises.

WHAT TO COVER

Finances

Balancing a parent's desire for privacy with an adult child's ability to help out can be precarious, but it's essential. Start with documentation of all accounts and what they're used for. Talk about the value of financial power of attorney and adding other family members onto some or all of the accounts. Discuss any existing plans to budget for future needs and how certain types of communities, like CCRCs, can keep costs predictable, even if healthcare needs change.

Living arrangements

How viable is the current living arrangement for the long term? What about other options where independence is maintained but maintenance, housekeeping, and other chores go away? How else might a community make day-to-day living more fun and enjoyable? What are the pros and cons of staying put and having someone come in to help?

Medical care

What is the plan for the unexpected — a possible accident or sickness? Discuss wishes, concerns, and who will be responsible for medical decisions.

End of life

This topic may feel like the most difficult, and it may be, but the relief of having discussed it is a gift to everyone. A tough conversation today removes doubt about doing the right thing and worries about wishes being followed. Consider decisions that may arise and how they should be handled. Write them down and put them somewhere safe.



PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Consider topics, concerns, and wishes in advance
- Allow time for a relaxed discussion—this may not be quick
- Make a list of what you want to cover so you don't forget anything
- Remind everyone that the point is to empower, comfort, and give peace of mind
- Fill out, certify where necessary, and file or distribute key forms



MAKE YOUR LIFE A MASTERPIECE

Established in 1999, Masterpiece is a national organization devoted to defying negative preconceptions around aging and inspiring older adults to harness their capacity for lifelong development.

Masterpiece principles are rooted in research conducted by the MacArthur Foundation over three decades, which demonstrates that people of all ages can continue to learn and grow. Accredited Masterpiece Communities like Acacia Creek champion a holistic approach to healthy longevity, driven by research and confirmed by results—proving that high levels of health, functionality, and life satisfaction are possible for all at every stage of life.

HAPPINESS, QUANTIFIED

Acacia Creek is the only certified Center for Successful Aging (CSA) in Northern California. CSAs are regional centers of excellence that demonstrate best practices in successful aging and benefit residents, team members, and the local community through a culture of progression, social connection, purpose, and resilience. The CSA designation is a point of pride and given only to organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to principals of successful aging across a range of criteria, including purposeful programming, team-member participation, and community culture. The rigorous certification process, which takes place every three years and takes six months to complete, requires administrators to compile detailed scores on resident health, safety, and wellness outcomes.

THE ACACIA CREEK DIFFERENCE

- **95%** of Acacia Creek residents socialize with others regularly.
- **83%** of Acacia Creek residents feel they receive social support from others.
- **78%** of residents volunteer their time to causes they value.
- **78%** of residents engage in weekly aerobic activity.



ACACIA CREEK
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Acacia Creek's sense of home expands far beyond the comfort of your condo-style apartment. One of our favorite features is our location in the Mission Hills of Union City overlooking the San Francisco Bay. Our 305-acre campus is an oasis that encapsulates Northern California's natural beauty—sun-drenched open fields dotted with fragrant eucalyptus trees, an abundance of wild birds and deer, and numerous wildflower-filled walking trails.

We welcome you to a culture of successful aging, where you can continue to grow with purpose and meaning for greater longevity.



SEE FOR YOURSELF

Explore your retirement options at Acacia Creek.

Call (877) 902-7555 or visit AcaciaCreek.org to learn more.



WHERE YOU LIVE MATTERS.

Research shows that people who actively plan for the future are more prepared and less stressed. While it's no guarantee about how many years you'll have, conscientiousness gives you a better shot at getting and enjoying more of them.

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