ROUND TABLE REALTY

GUIDE

Your Next Chapter: A Senior Homeowner's Complete Transition Guide

How to Recognize the Right Moment, Know Your Numbers, and Move with Confidence

Is It Time? The 7 Signs That Tell Senior Homeowners It's the Right Moment to Make a Move

Most senior homeowners will change housing types at least once between ages 65 and 84. The difference between a smooth transition and a stressful one almost always comes down to timing — and recognizing the signals early enough to act deliberately rather than reactively.

THE STATISTICS MAKE THE CASE FOR PLANNING NOW

According to CREDA Global, approximately 60% of all seniors will change housing types between ages 65 and 84. That means the question is not if a move will happen — it is whether it will be planned or forced by circumstance. Research from EP Wealth and Realtor.com adds urgency: selling before age 75 may create a strategic window to fund retirement needs, while sellers around age 80 may receive approximately 5% less than younger sellers on a comparable home. On a median-priced home near $405,400, that age-related discount translates to roughly $20,270 less at closing — simply for waiting too long.

SEVEN SIGNALS WORTH PAYING ATTENTION TO

Watch for these concrete indicators that the window for a well-planned move is open: (1) Home maintenance has become burdensome or is being deferred. (2) The layout no longer fits — stairs, narrow hallways, or no step-free entry are creating friction. (3) A health change has altered daily mobility or safety needs. (4) Monthly carrying costs are straining a fixed income. (5) The home's equity could better serve as income or care funding. (6) Family members live far away, creating isolation. (7) A desire for community, amenities, or lower-maintenance living has grown stronger.

REFRAME THE CONVERSATION: RIGHT-SIZING, NOT DOWNSIZING

The word 'downsizing' carries an unintentional weight — it implies subtraction, loss, and giving something up. Expert guidance consistently recommends replacing it with 'right-sizing': the process of finding a home that better fits your current lifestyle, mobility, finances, and support needs. This reframe is not semantic window-dressing. It shifts the decision from 'what am I losing?' to 'what does a home that truly fits me look like now?' For many senior homeowners, that means fewer stairs, lower utility bills, less yard work, and more time — not less of a life, but a better-structured one.

THE COST OF WAITING: WHY TIMING IS A FINANCIAL DECISION

Only about 10% of homes nationwide are fully prepared for senior living needs, according to NAR. Yet more than 70 million Americans are now aged 65 or older — a population that is simultaneously aging into greater care needs and competing for a shrinking pool of suitable housing. Senior housing occupancy reached 89.5% in Q1 2026, the 19th consecutive quarter of gains, with inventory growth at a record low of 0.4% year-over-year. Waiting for a health crisis to trigger the move doesn't just reduce your choices — it reduces your leverage, your proceeds, and your ability to select the community or home that best fits your goals.

~5% (~$20,270)

POTENTIAL PRICE DISCOUNT FOR SELLERS AROUND AGE 80 VS. YOUNGER SELLERS ON A COMPARABLE HOME

— *Realtor.com*

> *"The question is not whether a move will happen — research shows about 60% of seniors change housing types between ages 65 and 84. The only question is whether that move will be planned or forced."*
>
> — CREDA Global

Know Your Numbers Before You List: A Financial Snapshot Every Senior Seller Needs

A confident housing transition begins with a clear-eyed look at the numbers — not just the sale price, but tax exposure, true selling costs, and the full monthly cost of what comes next. These figures, assembled before you list, are what separate a well-planned move from a costly one.

WHAT THE CAPITAL GAINS EXCLUSION REALLY MEANS FOR SENIOR SELLERS

Under IRC Section 121, homeowners who have owned and lived in their primary residence for at least two of the past five years may exclude up to $250,000 in capital gains if filing single, or $500,000 if married and filing jointly. There is no special senior exemption or age-based provision — a misconception that catches many sellers off guard. If you have owned your home for decades and it has appreciated significantly, the gain above the exclusion threshold is taxable. This makes gathering your cost basis records — original purchase price plus the cost of qualifying improvements — one of the first financial steps in any planned sale.

THE TRUE COST OF SELLING: WHAT MOST SELLERS UNDERESTIMATE

The net proceeds from a home sale are rarely the same as the sale price. A complete financial snapshot must account for: realtor commissions, pre-sale repair and staging costs, moving and storage expenses, potential bridge housing during the transition, and HOA or condo fees at the new property. Underestimating this total — which can easily represent 8–12% of the sale price — leads to shortfalls in the retirement funding plan. The Brett Furman Group cautions that underestimating the scope of a downsizing move is one of the most common causes of sale delays, reduced net proceeds, and prolonged financial and emotional stress.

COMPARING THE TRUE COST OF STAYING VS. MOVING

Nearly 49% of seniors cite cost concerns as a major factor in housing decisions — yet aging in place is not always the less expensive option. A full financial comparison should weigh: current home carrying costs (mortgage, property taxes, insurance, maintenance, and any needed accessibility modifications) against net sale proceeds, projected monthly costs at the next destination, and the realistic trajectory of care costs over a 10–20 year horizon.

"Medicare does not cover assisted living room and board — and neither does Medicaid in most cases. For most seniors, home equity is the single largest resource available to fund quality care."

— s12

Preparing Your Home to Sell: A Room-by-Room Action Plan for Senior Homeowners

Preparing a longtime family home for sale is equal parts logistical challenge and emotional journey. Done well and started early, it can maximize your proceeds, reduce stress, and transform a daunting process into a meaningful one. Done late or reactively, it becomes one of the most common causes of rushed sales and reduced closing prices.

GATHER YOUR RECORDS BEFORE YOU TOUCH A SINGLE BOX

The first step in preparing to sell is not sorting belongings — it is locating and organizing your financial and legal records. Decluttering a room that contains important documents can result in them being lost or discarded unintentionally. Before any sorting begins, collect: your deed and original closing statement, current mortgage payoff information, property tax bills, records of major home improvements (which establish your cost basis for tax purposes), homeowner's insurance policies, wills, trusts, powers of attorney, healthcare proxy documents, and Medicare and Social Security cards.

START THREE MONTHS OUT — AND START SMALL

Sorting through decades of belongings consistently takes longer than homeowners anticipate. Beginning the process at least three months before the planned move date provides a realistic buffer for decisions, donations, family coordination, and emotional processing. Equally important: start with a single small space — a linen closet, a bathroom cabinet, a hallway shelf. Completing one contained area creates a tangible sense of accomplishment and builds momentum without the paralysis that comes from facing an entire home at once.

THE KEEP / DONATE / GIVE AWAY METHOD — WITH ONE ADDITION

Work room by room using a three-category sorting system: Keep, Donate, and Throw Away. Add a fourth category that transforms decluttering into something meaningful: Gift. Identifying sentimental items — furniture, artwork, heirlooms — and giving them directly to family members or close friends early in the process does two things at once. It reduces the volume of decisions you face and begins the estate distribution process naturally, with you present to share the story behind each piece.

THE COSMETIC REPAIRS THAT ACTUALLY PAY OFF AT CLOSING

Not all pre-sale improvements are created equal. For senior sellers, the highest-return preparations are almost always cosmetic: a fresh coat of paint on trim and interior walls, clean and decluttered living spaces, well-maintained landscaping and fresh flowers near the entry, and thorough cleaning throughout. Realtor.com research confirms that minor cosmetic updates offer outsized returns — and for older sellers, they can help close a measurable price gap. Sellers around age 80 may receive approximately 5% less than younger sellers on comparable homes.

~$20,270 less at closing

ESTIMATED PRICE GAP FOR SELLERS AROUND AGE 80 VS. YOUNGER SELLERS ON A MEDIAN-PRICED HOME

— *Realtor.com*

> *"Sorting through a lifetime of belongings takes longer than almost anyone expects. Starting three months out — and starting with one small space — is the single most effective way to protect both your timeline and your closing price."*
>
> — Brett Furman Group

YOU DESERVE A TRUSTED ADVISOR FOR LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT TRANSITION

Ready to Take the Next Step?

This guide was designed to give you a clear, confident starting point — whether you are just beginning to consider a move or are actively planning one. The decisions ahead are significant, and you don't have to navigate them alone.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

About 60% of seniors change housing types between ages 65 and 84 — the difference between a smooth transition and a stressful one is almost always timing. Selling before age 75 may create a strategic window to fund retirement; sellers around age 80 may receive approximately 5% less at closing than younger sellers. The federal capital gains exclusion under IRC Section 121 offers up to $500,000 in tax-free gains for married couples — but there is no age-based exemption, and cost basis records matter.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Kim Felix specializes in working with senior homeowners navigating one of life's most meaningful transitions. Whether you're right-sizing to a smaller home, exploring a 55+ community, or planning a thoughtful move toward assisted living, Kim brings the expertise, patience, and local market knowledge to guide you through every step — from your first conversation to closing day. You'll get a personalized home valuation, a clear picture of your net proceeds, and a trusted network of financial, legal, and senior transition professionals to support the full process.

Kim Felix

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