



Retiring in San Diego

Relocation & Aging-in-Place Guidebook



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Introduction

Preparing for retirement brings a lot of questions... *where?... when?... how?... what if this? ... what if that??* And if you're reading this... it's likely retirement is only a few years away, or less.

Maybe you're already looking for the perfect home for retirement... *while gently letting go of your existing home? Or maybe your budget... resources... or market prices aren't quite where you expected them to be?*

And for some people, retirement isn't even a physical relocation at all. *Instead, just a few home modifications and adopting a new lifestyle and mindset will do!*

And in San Diego, for many this means finding peace and relaxation... or exploring new adventures and opportunities. And for others, perhaps the pace remains the same. Either way... it's important to see your goals clearly... evaluate your options... and prepare for the years ahead.

Regardless of your path... it's crucial to find the right help for each step of your journey!

Like a roadmap or GPS device... this guide simplifies your search for the ideal retirement home and lifestyle in San Diego... and helps you feel comfortable in your "relocation." Not just finding a new home... but also for aging-in-place, *or preparing your house to fit your needs in the upcoming years.*

Yes, there's work involved, which takes time and shouldn't be rushed. *After all, retiring in San Diego is a reward well worth the effort!* Think of carving a masterpiece out of stone... and as you chip away... the beauty gradually reveals itself.

Aim for steady progress. You have a lot of time-sensitive decisions to make, so don't delay. *Start early, do the research, ask the right questions and ponder the advice.*

Remember, you're not alone... so don't feel overwhelmed!

There's a well-developed framework of services, information and qualified professionals to help with all the heavy lifting. You'll find everything you need to narrow down or expand your options... relieve stress... and make the best decisions.

This guide covers all the *where, when, why, what, who and how... use it as a preparation tool.* Each chapter gives short, concise info to get you started and build your confidence as you ease into the process. You'll find professional recommendations and contact information... commonly asked questions... mistakes to avoid... and much more.

Our goal is to help you find clarity and sidestep problems, confusion and delays... no matter what stage you're at!

Section 1 – “The Why” for Moving in Retirement

Chapter 1 – Understanding the “How, Where, When & Why” for Your Move

“A man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder.” - Thomas Carlyle

1- How Exactly Are You Going to Make Your Retirement Dreams Come True?

First off, don't wait until you're retired, or just before to start making serious plans. Think about it while you're still working and earning. Once the details are clear in your mind, go talk with a local Real Estate agent and get their input.

2- Where Do You Want to Be?

Is it San Diego... North County Inland... Coastal? How far from downtown, shopping or the doctor? This could very well be the place where you live the rest of your life! *It should also be where you are most happy!*

You'll likely be dedicating more time to scoping out towns and communities... and we have a lot of specific info in the next few chapters.

3- When Do You Want to Be There?

How old will you be... or in what year do you want to move? Having a realistic timeframe, without rushing the planning and decisions, *helps you avoid skipping important steps.*

4- Why Do You Want This?

Help motivate yourself with what's important to you. Don't just settle for something that sounds nice. Be sure of your decision... that it makes sense for you, and not just to please others or because everyone else is doing it.

An Exercise to Help You Get Started

1. **Make a List** - write down all the things you want to do in your life. Consider what activities interest you... travel, new business, tennis, golf, hiking, biking and visiting/hosting family, etc.
2. *Research and rank several different communities that seem interesting and fit your interests.*
3. List the features important to you in the community and in the home itself.
 - a. Include price, community rules and restrictions, locations and proximity to shopping, entertainment, attractions and medical care.
 - b. Include anything useful you learn about the neighbors and members.

4. **Use a ranking scale of 1-10** - assign a level of importance to each feature. Add up the scores to see which are the best communities.

Create a Master List

Important note... do this with your spouse, so that you each create your own separate lists of rankings.

Then compare the two and combine your lists. Narrow down the best options and eliminate the communities with a low score. Combine the lists based on the highest rankings to create a master list to work off.



Be sure to do this research in person as you visit potential homes, and when you talk to realtors and other residents. As a starting point, use internet websites and read comments from other retirees and residents.

Chapter 2 – Emotions of Selling the Family Home

Emotionally detaching from your home could be one of the biggest challenges of your life... fueled with both positive and negative emotions. Many carry sadness, anger or regret preventing them from fully enjoying the next phase in life.

Logic vs. Emotion - Setting Them Straight

Emotions can prevent you from seeing things as they truly are. Experienced real estate professionals easily recognize the signs and symptoms. After all, much of the real estate industry projects feel-good images in ads... glossy photos of homes... and professionally staged homes... *all designed to appeal to your subconscious and manipulate your emotions.*

The logic side of our brain needs to enter the picture before emotions ruin the day and prevent making a smart decision.

Establish If You Truly Need to Make a Move

Go back and double-check your situation, highlighting all the compelling reasons to move. Evaluating facts, features and benefits is important. *Be sure the decision is in the best interest of your family and have concrete proof to back your decision. Otherwise, it's just emotions pushing you.*

Talk to friends, family or professionals - get feedback and let family members in on the conversation. Understand their emotions and feelings... *clear the air and get their support before you move forward.*

Real Estate specialists working with pre-retirees and seniors can help you ponder these questions and make the best decision. They've seen it all before and will present options and explain details you probably haven't considered.

It takes time to prepare emotionally -recognize that it takes time to come to grips with letting go of all the memories and comforts built up over the years. Start early and ease into the process, *well before moving day comes.*

Questions to Address

Do you truly have to sell? Is there a reasonable way to stay in your home... making necessary renovations... having family members or children move in to help out?

Who is it that wants you to make a move? Do your kids want you to move closer to them... so they can visit you more? Will they take care of you as you age?

A nice idea, but don't get uprooted from a comfortable home and community.... losing independence and self-esteem. *Try not to compromise all the things you personally enjoy.*

Downsizing for “breathing room” financially - To stretch savings and live comfortably, the lower costs and manageable size of a smaller home can bring many benefits... *just verify any future costs and expenses before deciding.*

Lessening the Sting of Leaving

Envision yourself in your new home, with all your belongings. Make sure you take something special from your old home with you. Place it prominently in your new home to keep your connection alive!

Make sure the home falls into good hands - maybe you won't have much control over this, but you might feel much better about your home passing to a new family, like yours once was. Ask your agent to help you screen potential buyers for people you're comfortable with.

Making a business decision - it's hard to think of your home as a product, but it may come down to just that... marketing your home correctly to catch the right buyer and get the right price for your home.

Be sure not to overprice your home – unfortunately the personal emotional value of your home carries no weight with a buyer. Also, if you bought the home at a market peak, you could have to sell for less than what you expect.

Brighthouse.com offers [5 great tips for transitioning to your new home](#)

Chapter 3 - Why Making a Move in Advance is Smarter Than Being Forced to

Moving to your ideal retirement home... *even before retiring...* it's not a such a radical concept. In fact, it's some of the best advice you could follow for *creating more freedom and flexibility on the road ahead.*

Why You Should Move Early

Start the transition as soon as possible and give yourself enough time to consider more options... or soften the blow that might come with such a move.

Facing the difficulties of walking away from a lifetime of memories

Moving at this stage in life can feel overwhelming. Not only because of the complications of home buying and selling, but the many deep rooted emotions, family relationships and history also bring additional stress.

Limited financial resources

Especially if your financial resources are tight, and will only become smaller as you approach retirement. Downsizing and finding a more economical, better-fit home is a huge advantage in building savings.

Your physical or mental health

If your health should decline in the future... you'd be wise to take advantage earlier... to be sure you're fully involved in the decision-making process.

Those who can't make decisions on their own behalf are far less likely to enjoy their new living situation.

Renting first

Before you settle on a new home or location - renting gives you a way to "dip your toes" in a new community, home or lifestyle. This way, nothing is final... and you can always try new options until you find something just right.

Of course, this process might be more energy intensive... *hence you should get going while you still have the zeal!*

Some other benefits to moving early include:

- Getting to *call the shots* and deciding the non-negotiables for your new home... things you're not willing to compromise on.
- Not being forced or pressured into any recommendation... take your time to decide.
- Considering multiple housing alternatives, including remaining in your home and aging in place.

- Feeling comfortable in the transition process and having necessary time to understand every detail.
- Helping reduce emotional burdens, knowing very well how emotions can influence a sale or purchase... preventing you from making the best, logical decision.
- Taking the time to find the right real estate agent - a specialist who works with people in similar situations.
- Enjoy San Diego more... spending more time living a fun active lifestyle

“Retire from work, but not from life.”

M. K. Soni

Chapter 4 – Enjoy an Active, Healthy Lifestyle... While You Can

Living well in San Diego is easier... but it's not without work! Preparation and getting involved early is the key... before disability sets in or becomes overwhelming.

Independent Living is on the Decline

A 2012 U.S. Census Bureau report, shows almost 40% of people age 65 and older had at least one disability (15.7 million Americans). Among them, *2/3 report difficulty in walking or climbing.*

Poor mobility (going shopping, to the doctor, moving around the house) was the 2nd most cited disability, followed by serious hearing difficulties, cognitive difficulty, trouble bathing or getting dressed, and serious difficulty seeing.

Mobility Difficulties Lead to Serious Health Problems

The Society of General Internal Medicine links mobility problems to higher rates of depression, fear, anxiety, confusion, obesity, poor vision, dizziness, imbalance, an increased risk of falls and a higher need for support.

Also, the number of San Diegans with Alzheimer's growing...already 62,000. Their suffering, and the burden on their families, health providers and taxpayers is growing along with it.

It's not inevitable you'll experience these conditions yourself... or that they can't be reversed or improved. However, you'll certainly need to act while you can!

Getting on the Right Track

It can be as simple as establishing regular exercise routines and hobbies like: *swimming, biking, hiking, running, jogging... or brisk walks around the neighborhoods, local parks and beaches... yoga, tai chi & qi jong... or regular golf outings.* Such simple activities in the tranquil San Diego backdrop offer a much higher quality of life.

Modifying Homes to Accommodate Future Needs - potentially expensive, *but it doesn't have to be done all at once!* Changes made gradually over time... will ease the financial burden and prevent risks of falls and injuries.

Nutrition Programs for Seniors in San Diego

"Let food be thy Medicine" - Take it upon yourself to eat healthy and let your body heal itself. For those struggling with nutrition, San Diego County partners with local nutrition centers to provide nutritious lunches for seniors 60 and older.

At least 27 providers offer home-delivered meals and nutrition, health & wellness training. [Click here for more details.](#)

The San Diego Food Bank provides monthly food packages to eligible seniors 60 and over... and *San Diego Farmers' Markets* offer fresh, affordable choices. With dozens of locations, it's a great way to interact with the community too.

Social Participation

"When people are in their Element, they connect with something fundamental to their sense of identity, purpose, and well-being." - Ken Robinson, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*

Volunteer Programs in San Diego - Narrow down your interests and follow your passions! *Live Well San Diego* has compiled a [list of over 30 volunteer programs](#) and databases across the region.

Continuing Education Opportunities - Staying sharp mentally and pursuing new interests are a cornerstone of happy retirement. There are over [20 higher learning institutions in San Diego](#) - offering specialized courses and programs, along with the [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute](#) designed for those 50 and older.

Prevention Is the Best Advice

With all the possibilities and preparation, it makes sense to get started as early as possible and enjoy the journey to its fullest!

Chapter 5 - Why Choose San Diego?

We're talking about the next 20, 30, 40 years of your life. And 1.3 million residents already know what we're talking about... with a little research, you'll quickly see why countless retirees choose San Diego.

Deciding to Move Here is Easier Than You Think!

San Diegans enjoy a rich and diverse lifestyle... they're active, feel at home on the beach... *and love to be outdoors.*

Legendary San Diego Weather - with temperatures averaging 72° F, low humidity, very little rain and lots of sun... wearing shorts and sandals all year round is no problem!

Diverse People Living Here - with a diverse and varied mix of backgrounds and nationalities among San Diegans, most are transplants from someplace else. There's a strong influence from the U.S. Military and the mix of over 20 universities and community colleges brings an influx of youth, culture and learning opportunities open to all ages.

Beaches – the centerpiece of the local culture...you can't talk about San Diego without mentioning beaches. With over 70 miles of beautiful and diverse beaches, the beach-life mentality is reflected by the laid-back attitudes of San Diegans.

More Than Just Beaches & Sunshine

This paradise is sprouting with activities... especially for active adults with no plans to slow down in retirement. The community is generally a happy, enthusiastic and healthy bunch of people who love running, cycling & biking activities.

Golf Digest named San Diego "one of the top 50 golf destinations in the world." And *Field & Stream Magazine* ranked San Diego as #2 on its "America's Best Fishing Cities" list.

An Ocean Playground - Surfing, Kayaking, Scuba Diving are huge, with activities like boat rentals & private charters... scheduled excursions... dinner cruises... whale watching... boating & sailing classes... sport fishing, kayaking and more.

Continuing Education – a great way to reinvent yourself with over 20 universities and colleges. Keep up mental and physical health, and make social connections with diverse age groups, cultures and personalities.

Food Scene - food culture is always evolving thanks to creative culinary minds, world famous chefs and literally thousands of restaurant choices, with limitless varieties of food. *"The craft beer capital of America"* - San Diego also has a reputation for beer with more than 90 micro-breweries.

Wine Country - the region's bio-diversity, elevation and diverse geography provides the perfect growing environment for wine, with over 100 wineries in the region.

Parks & Gardens- diverse landscape and biodiversity across ocean habitats, marshes, deserts, mountains and canyons, including: *Balboa Park, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, San Diego Botanical Gardens, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, Mission Trails Regional Park, Torrey Pines Natural Reserve, Cabrillo National Historic Park, Mission Bay Aquatic Park.*

Attractions - *San Diego Zoo, SeaWorld, Aquatica (SeaWorld's water park), LEGOLAND California, Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institute, Living Coast Discovery Center*

Del Mar Fairgrounds – Horse Racing and home to the 4th largest fair in the U.S. from mid-June through July 4th, *Summer Concert Series*, with wagering and off-track betting in the Las Vegas-style race book.

Casino Resorts - *11 Las Vegas-style casinos* with full service hotels and resorts.... just a 30 to 45-minute drive from downtown, in the East County and North Inland County regions.

The Best Hospitals and Medical Centers - as leader and innovator in healthcare with 25 hospitals and over 26,000 health and social assistance facilities, many San Diego hospitals are consistently ranked among the best in the nation.



Chapter 6 - Misunderstanding San Diego

"If only I would've known that before..." a common phrase you don't want to repeat.

Missing the Big Picture

Don't be put off by the median home prices in San Diego. Anyone with a budget of \$300,000 or less can start getting discouraged by real estate listings... seeing many properties out of their price range. While instead places like Arizona, Nevada and Florida offer newer, more spacious homes for under \$300k.

A Practical Fit for Retirement

In San Diego, the majority of homes in this price range are condos and manufactured homes. Some people hesitate if they're not familiar with these styles. But these communities and homes are the most practical fit for retirement... and not to mention, *the perfect way to downsize to a less expensive home.*

When you do your homework, you'll understand exactly why the housing market is priced this way... *the San Diego lifestyle and climate are simply spectacular!*

No other location offers such natural beauty and an active, outdoor lifestyle... *all year round.*

Once you understand this, it's easy to let go of the stigma of living in manufactured homes or condos... which are quite spacious and beautiful.

Watch out for Desert or Tropical Areas for Retirement

Another potentially big mistake with settling in areas with bigger, newer homes... *don't ignore the desert heat!* Especially in the off-season... this can be a huge mistake.

In fact, we hear from retirees who've settled in desert areas, and many have expressed a desire to sell and move to San Diego for the mild climate.

How to Survive the Summers?

Desert environments have brutal summers. Except for staying indoors, you'll find little relief from scorching temperatures. The trend seems to be getting worse every year. Summer temps are often over 100°F, while desert winds blow sand everywhere - into your eyes, car and home, etc.

Once the nice winter conditions fade, how do you survive the brutal summers? Florida summers can have over 100% humidity, multiple hurricanes and frequent rain. Allergies and mosquitoes are no fun either.

You're Getting a Much Better Value in San Diego.

Especially in San Diego, with so many things to do... and many year-round outdoor activities to keep you busy, *you'll likely be spending less time inside your home.*

Even if you're settling for a smaller home, with a few years on it, the rewards of living in San Diego will win out every time over the allure of cheaper priced homes in seasonal locations.



Chapter 7 - Common Retirement Mistakes to Avoid

We fully believe you will love the San Diego retirement lifestyle. However, *don't rush the decision, or move here without carefully considering your own circumstances*. Here are some of the most common mistakes retirees make...

Not Fully Understanding Community Rules and Regulations - Get enough due diligence from your agent before considering homes in communities. Know all the financial or legal issues affecting you and investigate the regulations in advance. Some 55+ retirement communities may be more laid-back or too conservative for your liking.

Moving Too Far Away from Family and Friends - If you're not close enough, how often will they come to visit you? If not... are you willing to go visit them for holidays and events? Easy access to airports is important.

Moving to an Active Adult Community, and Not Being Social - If you're not comfortable with this, then *consider options with more privacy*. On the flip-side, moving into a socially closed environment, with small cliques and unwelcoming people is another problem. If your neighbors seem uninterested or insincere you could regret your decision. *Renting first gives you a chance to avoid this*.

Moving Closer To Family, Children & Grandchildren - [retirees like Sharon Roberts warn...](#) *be careful not to rush in and find yourself in a place where you don't like the weather, the political or social scene, geography and environment. Factor in what you enjoy personally and give yourself the chance to reinvent yourself and explore life*.

Assuming Children Will Have Time for You - Many retirees realize there's no room in their children's lives for them. Depending on your relationship, if you're not necessarily on the best of terms, then don't expect all that to change when you move nearby.

Working - If A Younger Spouse Is Still in the Workforce - Changing jobs and locations is a whole new dilemma at this age. *How likely is your spouse to find a comparable job in terms of pay and experience?* San Diego's economy is strong, but you're not guaranteed to quickly find work in-line with your skills and salary expectations.

Retiring Too Soon - Realizing you're not ready to stop working can be emotionally difficult. The feeling of something missing is natural at first. Financially it's also a potential disaster. And many retirees find themselves short on funds and realize it's too hard to find any meaningful work, or get back in the job market.

Planning Retirement Too Late – Avoid rushed decisions. Start early to develop a plan with a few fallback options. *Neglecting details brings fear and worry, instead of looking forward with joyful anticipation*.

Not Knowing the Area Well Enough - Besides researching the off-season climate and getting a feel for neighbors and the location, *know your potential taxes and the cost of living, especially for items and services you depend on.*

Proximity to Medical Care - Are there nearby options, or how far away is your doctor? Research doctors, especially for specific health issues. Find one you like and verify your insurance coverage. Even if you're healthy before entering retirement, things could change quickly as you approach your 70's and 80's.

Maintaining Two Homes in Retirement - Especially for snowbirds, a second home could be costlier than you think. Even with low home prices and mortgage rates... hidden costs and expenses for two homes add up quickly.

Living Too Lavishly, Not Being Frugal - *"Keeping up with the Jones's"* could put a big dent in your retirement planning. Curb your lifestyle to build up savings. Get advice, stick to a budget, and use good judgment on spending.

Carrying a Mortgage into Retirement - Will it be feasible to pay a mortgage into your 70's, 80's and 90's? Will Social Security, IRA distributions and other savings last you long enough with a mortgage still in place? If possible, do everything you can to avoid it.

Section 2 – “The Where” – Physical & Tangible Considerations

Chapter 1 - Types of Communities & Housing Styles

Land Ownership Community

Communities where you own the housing and the land which the home sits on. The ownership structures include:

1. **Own both the home and land** - very common, you pay monthly (HOA fees) for upkeep of amenities and community areas. You don't own common areas, like in a co-op, but HOA fees can be much lower.
2. **Co-op parks** - the park is completely owned by residents, who each own their home, the land, and a percentage of the entire community. HOA fees are due for your portion of the upkeep and management.
3. **Gated Community** - a residential community or housing development with controlled entrances for pedestrians, bicycles, and cars. It usually includes closed outer walls and fences. Gated communities typically have small residential streets with various common amenities.

Land Lease Community

Homeowners lease the land their home sits on (called “space rent”), even though they own the home. Leases are renewed on a yearly, or monthly basis. An external management company usually handles the operations.

Condominium Ownership (condo)

Owning the unit itself and the interior while owning only a small percentage of the community and its amenities. Common elements can include: *walls, roof, floors, ceilings, windows, doors, outdoor fixtures and shared systems like plumbing, electric, a/c units, etc., and common areas like decks, balconies, patios.*

The HOA or condominium association owns most the exterior, the land and common areas and is responsible for the maintenance of all exterior areas.

Typical Homes within San Diego Communities:

Custom Homes - The design is usually planned around lifestyle, capturing views or enhancing privacy, allowing the greatest diversity vs. other homes in the neighborhood. Specific finishes create a unique home. If part of a community, there can be a monthly HOA fee for common area maintenance and the gated community feature.

Manufactured Homes – a prefabricated home, built in a factory and transported to the home site. A requirement is a wheeled-chassis permanently attached... the main distinction between manufactured homes and modular homes.

Mobile Homes – the term for prefabricated homes built before 1976, when the building code of the *Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)* went into effect... governing standards for factory-built homes and improving quality.

Modular Homes - a home built off-site, comprised of multiple sections called modules. A module is six-sided box constructed in a factory, and delivered to the home site. Each module is set onto the building's foundation and combined to make a single structure. They do not have axles or a frame, and are transported using flat-bed trucks.

Twin Homes (duplex style or attached homes) - consisting of two attached housing units on two separate properties that share a common wall. They are even called “semi-detached”.

Townhome (townhouse) - full-sized, individual homes, built side-by-side in gated communities of tree-lined streets, sharing 1 or 2 walls with the neighboring unit, with amenities like pools, hot tubs and secure parking.

Tract Homes - housing developments with similar style homes subdivided into individual lots, but with variations in size, style and floor plans, roofing, materials and garage size. *These are massed produced, saving money on cost and therefore usually offering more attractive pricing.*

Chapter 2 - Learning About San Diego Communities

North County San Diego is generally the most desirable location, with ideal and affordable retirement communities:

Carlsbad - “the village by the sea,” has an estimated population of 113,000 and is known as a great place for families. Very safe, Carlsbad has a small town feel even with many attractions, large employers, plenty of parks... public recreational activities.... busy libraries... cultural arts programs... and senior centers with active programs for the young at heart. *Price ranges for 55+ communities are from \$80K to \$300k... however homes in non-age restricted communities go for much higher and are rarely on the market.*

Encinitas - just south of Carlsbad, Encinitas is another beautiful seaside city along the *Pacific Coast Highway* - “the PCH.” The average daily temperature is very mild at 72°F. A relaxed vibe, world-class surfing conditions and over 6 miles of coastline lead to a great quality of life. *Home prices in 55+ Communities range from \$100k to \$500K... and other non-age restricted properties are in high demand, anywhere from \$400K to upwards of \$2 million.*

Oceanside - north of Carlsbad, the 3rd largest city in the region has a population of roughly 175,000. *Oceanside is pure California beach culture... flip-flops and shorts are more common than professional attire, and there’s a middle, working class feel. There are over 3.5 miles of sandy beaches, excellent surfing conditions and a beautiful harbor and pier. A great place to live, cheapest prices near the beach, many gated 55+ communities range from under \$100k to \$650K.*

Fallbrook - is an elevated, inland community in a rural location with plenty of open spaces, rolling hills and a charming downtown. It enjoys the same Mediterranean climate of the coastal cities, but is a little warmer in summer and cooler at night. Not at all your average rural town, Fallbrook is a lively, artistic and friendly community. *The price range of 55+ communities start from the low \$100k’s to the high \$500k’s.*

Escondido - the heart of North County, 30 miles north of Downtown, and a gateway to diverse landscapes - high desert, low desert, mountains, coastal, and downtown areas... *all within an hour drive.* The Mediterranean climate, rich history, attractive downtown and wide range of shopping, attractions and recreations make Escondido a desirable place to live. *Prices in gated golf course communities and 55 + go from \$40K to the mid \$200k’s and up to the high \$600k’s.*

Rancho Bernardo - a master planned community in hills and canyons 20 miles northeast of Downtown. An upper middle class - middle aged community, with 7 distinct communities, each with their own style and character - including shopping, boutiques, crafts and great dining options. It’s also home to Sony’s headquarters and a major business park. *Prices in gated golf course communities start from \$60K to the mid \$200k’s, up to the high \$600k’s.*

San Marcos - an inland city with a suburban feel, known for open spaces and more than 18 parks. The prestigious Lake San Marcos (LSM) area features 60+ miles of hiking and biking trails. Central to all North County and the beach, San Marcos has a strong educational reputation as home 4 colleges and universities. Bus service and light-rail lines run to the universities and connect to Oceanside and Escondido. *Many 55 + communities go from \$40K to the high \$400k's.*

Vista - a hillside city 7 miles northwest from the coast. With many recreations and amenities, 27 golf courses within 10 miles...13 public parks, a dog park... several sports parks... and the *Wave Waterpark*. The Vista Village area is the main entertainment district, home to regular festivals and events. *Prices in 55+ Gated Communities range from \$40k to - high \$200k's.... while homes in non-aged restricted – gated communities range from \$700K to \$1.6 million and up.*

Del Sur - an all-new 55+ gated community offering resort-style amenities. *Located in the city of San Diego* and built with environmentally friendly design, Del Sur is modelled after several historic city neighborhoods. This is a tight knit community with top schools, natural settings and parks with an authentic feel. The peaceful setting is surrounded by nature and open-spaces, with nearby mountains. With a central location and easy highway access, every recreation in San Diego is just a short drive...including 32 golf courses within 10 miles. *Prices range from \$500K to \$1million +.*

Chapter 3 - 55+ Retirement Communities - Types of Homes, Amenities and Ownership

San Diego is filled with active retirement communities. Known as *age-restricted communities*, in general these are gated communities that restrict residency to people over a minimum age... usually 50 or 55 years, but even as old as 60. They usually have restrictions for under-age visitors, spouses, or caretakers.

Built for Active Retirement Living

Designed for active seniors looking to enjoy different weekly activities, these make an ideal retirement environment. Most are located near shopping, restaurants, other business services with easy access to freeways.

Most communities offer a nice selection of amenities including a *clubhouse with exercise room, a pool, spa, tennis courts, bocce courts, shuffleboards, horseshoe pits, BBQs and picnic area, and RV parking*.

Many also include golf courses and putting greens covered in the monthly HOA fees. Some offer parks, nice greenbelts and walking paths winding through the neighborhood.

Residents can easily get to know each other and participate in many associations, clubs and games... and enjoy things like weekly movie nights, holiday parties and social events.

Types of Homes and Ownership

Typical 55+ communities consist of *manufactured homes built on permanent foundations*. Most are gated communities of detached, single-story homes on private lots... with a land ownership or co-op structure... (you own the land the home sits on).

They usually have 2-3 bedrooms, 2 baths and up to 2,100 sq. feet on average.

Land Lease Ownership

Residents do not own the land under the homes in these manufactured home communities or parks. There are no monthly HOA fees, however residents pay a monthly *lot rent*. This makes home prices much lower and amenities are generally covered as well.

Other 55+ communities have condominium ownership structures and HOA fees, (no space rent as you own the land).

Communities of stick-built, semi-custom or production homes

Found in mostly non-gated communities, they're usually not as large as pre-made, manufactured homes. These are massed produced using the same general plans... *but are built on-site*. Some homes have features like a living room fireplace, covered patios and granite countertops.

These communities include:

Single level attached homes (or duplex) - smaller units with 1-2 bedrooms, 1 bath... or 2-3 bed, 2 bath units of around 800 to 1350 sq. feet. They can have 1 parking space with a detached single-car garage, or an attached 1-car garage where the garage wall is shared with a neighboring unit, along with a shared driveway.

Attached home communities can also include triplex, quadplex and even multi-story condominium buildings.

Single family, detached homes - up to 1,620 sq. feet with 1-3 bedrooms, 1 to 2 bathrooms, and a nearby carport or an attached two-car garage. These homes can have outdoor patios or atriiums for entertaining or for private gardens. Most are not in a gated community.

Map of San Diego 55 + Communities

See a map of the actual San Diego 55+ Community locations, names, prices, requirements and video tours....

[Click here to see the map!](#)

Chapter 4 - Retirement Villages

For seniors wanting no part in a retirement home, *Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities* (“NORCs”) are great options. Not specifically built for seniors, these are basically regular neighborhoods of senior residents, among other age groups... *who are determined to age in place, in their own homes.*

Residents live by a “*neighbors helping neighbors*” mentality... responding with their time and energy to each other’s needs and working together to build independent and active lifestyles. A big part focuses on providing affordable alternatives to high cost, home care services.

Some are informal, however in formal models of senior villages, residents pay membership fees and volunteer their time.

Recreating a Mentality from the Past

Throughout the history of mankind, local townsfolk were likely to be skilled in many different disciplines and used to handling multiple tasks... including supporting each other as they age. Unlike today, they had no other choice. And although nursing homes and specialized care options haven’t been around very long... modern living has erased much of this village-style mentality.

Today’s villages aren’t restricted to only senior residents, nor to just a single neighborhood or town. They’re support networks spanning generations and local geographical borders... *this the heart of the modern village concept.*

Trading Favors and Offering Support

It’s the social connection that matters most. Whether it’s social events, learning activities, dance classes... or helping each other with gardening, cleaning, transportation... or finding ways to stay independent while getting proper physical care... the village model fits many definitions.

Imagine in your neighborhood... having a retired dentist, mechanic, handyman, computer expert, golf pro, retired chef... or just a lot of friendly people with free time and a car.

A little collaboration and a social network like this could help brighten anyone’s life!

Networks of Support and Care in San Diego

Tierrasanta Village - an example of a retirement village with 3 levels of membership based on needs. These can include: *providing social and educational opportunities with a member volunteer program... full concierge services, with things like weekly transportation to shopping, exercise classes, and more... and even professional in-home health care and oversight.* [You can learn more here.](#)

Other San Diego Area Villages

A village doesn't have to officially be labeled a "senior village" to be a network of support and care. Here are other villages, NORC's and groups offering various support and services:

Town Park Villas (NORC) - 6316 Gullstrand Street, San Diego, CA 92122 Phone: (858) 453-0182

CO-OP Creekside Meadows (NORC) - 1750 Arnold Way, Alpine, CA 91901 Phone: (619) 445-2480

Santee Village - Santee, CA - Phone 619-663-9448 -Email maryo.santeevillage@gmail.com

Serra Mesa Village - San Diego, CA -Phone 858-292-0812 - Email a-jblevins@sbcglobal.net

MySeenager.com – Not a village or community itself, but in the spirit of retirement villages, *Seenager* offers a comprehensive platform to help seniors establish connections in their local communities. Sign up and completing a profile is free.

Chapter 5 - How to Narrow Down Your Choices

Make it easy and to find your next home, using your time efficiently... *without getting stretched thin.*

You'll **visit and evaluate many candidate homes** with your agent. So be sure to understand *all* the aspects of the homes that best fit your needs. And with your agent's help, **rank each home** you visit to find your best choice.

But even before beginning your search, the first, crucial step in selecting a home is creating *a list of essential features for the community and home itself...*

The Non-Negotiables List

What do you need to be happy in your future home or community?

How many levels, bedrooms, bathrooms, garage/parking, patio/pool, storage, kitchen style, and proximity to shopping, parks, beach, medical, appearance, etc.?



List out all the “must have” items you won’t compromise on. Just be thorough and realistic, *always keeping your budget in mind.*

With this in hand, you’ll do a better job evaluating homes and will save time in the long run, helping to clarify in your mind what your next home looks like.

Share the non-negotiable list with your agent

An agent who specializes in the area is likely to have already seen, or will likely preview the homes you’re investigating. By sharing your list, they’ll likely save you time, telling you in advance if a potential home is a good fit or not.

Evaluating Homes - the Pros & Cons List

Once you find and start viewing good candidate homes, **write a list of pros and cons** for each home you view and compare it to your list of “non-negotiables.” This is a great visual exercise to see which items, might be on your non-negotiable list. If any of the “cons” of a potential home are on the non-negotiable list, then move on to the next home and keep searching.

If none of your non-negotiable items appear on the con’s list, *you might just have found your next home!*

Ideas for Pros & Cons List

If the home includes items that are already upgraded, this should be in the “pros” column. Or if it needs upgrades, these should go in the “cons” column. Either way, pro or con, *attach dollar amounts to both lists of items.*

If an item was already upgraded, consider this as money that you won't have to spend. But if it still needs to be upgraded, this money will come out of your pocket. Both will likely factor in your calculations when it comes time to make an offer on the property.

Keep track of all the details like: *Price, community rules and restrictions, locations and proximity to shopping, entertainment, attractions and medical care and useful info about the neighbors and members.*

Use a Ranking Scale

Use a scale of 1-10 to give a total score to interesting homes. *As you list the pros & cons, assign a level of importance to each feature by giving higher scores to features already on your "non-negotiable" list.*

Add up the scores and use the point totals to see which are the best homes and communities for you.

Chapter 6 - Start Your Search... Using the Right Tools

When you start visiting homes and neighborhoods, you need to identify the potential fits from a *vast sea of housing options in San Diego*. Luckily, you have a huge toolbox of resources at your fingertips!

Your agent will be a huge asset in this stage... doing many things on your behalf like: *searching for homes matching your criteria, previewing potential homes for you, arranging viewings for you, and conducting market analysis on comparable homes... all this for many homes that you will never even buy.*

Receive Regular Updates on Real Estate Listings

Buyers can view all *publicly* available real estate listing information on useful websites like:

- www.Trulia.com
- www.Zillow.com
- www.Realtor.com
- www.Redfin.com
- www.DreamwellHomes.com

Sign-up for auto-alerts - get detailed information on open houses within a specified price range, size and location, including daily updates anytime new properties hit the market, even when the price drops on a home you're following.

MLS (Multiple Listing Service)- at the heart of many of the online search engines, the MLS tool helps the listing brokers find agents working with buyers, to help sell their clients' homes. This is a great benefit for buyers and your agent can send you regular lists of updates on available properties.

However, your agent has even greater access compared to what is available to the public. Not all sites link to MLS and sellers have the option to restrict their listings from the search engines.

MLS listings withhold sensitive info for privacy or safety reasons, such as seller contact information and times for home showings. *Therefore, work with your agent to set up viewing times and contact the seller.*

Info you'll receive includes:

- Home details with photos, price, size, construction date and all features and amenities
- How long the property has been on the market and how recently the information has been updated

- Official property, sales, and tax information from county (public) records
- Information about local businesses, schools and crime rates near the property
- Affordability – general monthly mortgage estimates

***Tip:** Be sure to set up alerts through *several search engines* with specific parameters. You can be as specific or as vague as you want, but it should fit all your requirements.

Not all sites receive the same listing information directly from MLS... and the speed with which each site is updated can vary. This could make a difference in a competitive market.

And remember... always prioritize the list of homes you receive directly from your agent!

Chapter 7 - Viewing homes - Best Practices

When shopping for homes, even the internet has limitations... especially in *evaluating the neighborhood*. Be sure to get out there and see any candidate home and the neighborhood in person *before scheduling any showings with your agent*.

The Drive-By

Drive around the neighborhood and take some notes. This does 3 things:

1. Gives an idea of whether you like the property, the home's orientation and surrounding neighborhood.
2. Exposes you to new areas and other potential candidate homes you haven't considered yet. You'll likely eliminate some that don't appeal to you, but you might also see a few surprises that fit your goals.
3. Saves you from wasting time on homes that seem desirable, *but where the neighborhoods fall short*.

Walkability

Are there worthwhile places within walking distance? Are sidewalks in good condition...wide enough for wheelchairs, strollers, bicycles or tricycles? Are there busy streets with crosswalks... clearly marked? If you have kids or grandkids, consider parks and playgrounds. Also, notice coffee shops, grocery stores, libraries, bars, fitness venues, movie theaters, bus stops, or banks/ATMs.

Find the Walkscore - a numerical score used to measure a home's proximity to shops, restaurants, transit, schools, etc. *The higher the score, the better an area is considered in terms of walkability.*

Homes for Sale

How many homes are for sale? Too many can be a sign of a neighborhood in hard times. You may find good deals, but there may also be crime, neglect or unfriendly neighbors. Large numbers of "short-sale" homes can be a signal of a distressed area.

Homes for Rent

Many homes for rent can be a signal of would-be sellers who've given up selling their homes and are just looking to cover the mortgage. It might also be an area with a high student population. Either way, more rentals means more turnover and you'll see more people come and go over the years.

Commute Times

Is it easy to access highways during high-traffic hours? How about mass-transit... or major construction projects that could cause delays? Are there bike lanes?

Atmosphere

What is the feel of neighborhood like? Are the homes well maintained with nice landscaping and lawns? Are the public areas clean? Are there nice views... local parks? Do the neighbors seem friendly?

Dining & Nightlife

How far to the nearest restaurants, bars and cafes? Does the neighborhood go dark by 9pm, or does it get lively later at night? Nearby bars and restaurants can be convenient, but can also be a source of late-night noise.

Schools

How close are schools? Are they well-kept? Are there graffiti, barbed-wire fences, or broken windows?

Quality of Life Factors

Is the neighborhood on the up and up, or on the decline? Are new stores, restaurants and business opening, or closing down? A drive through of the neighborhood should give you a good idea of the economic status.

All the Above Are Totally Personal to You

You'll need to experience this in person to know for sure whether you like it or not. *As you experience different neighborhoods during your drive-bys, give your agent some feedback so they can know the additional areas to focus on.*

Chapter 8 - Viewing Homes in Person

After you've done your drive-bys and researched the communities first hand, you'll be ready to start viewing potential homes with your agent.

Be Prepared and Keep an Open Mind

As you already know, homes will look much different in person from what you've seen online. Many buyers experience at least some small idea changes after viewing a home in person. This can be both positive or negative.

You might see a different kitchen configuration that suits you better, or get new ideas for outdoor living arrangements that spark your imagination.



On the other hand, you could feel disappointment about a home that didn't live up to your expectations, or from what you felt as you saw it online. You might even be surprised about a home that you weren't previously so keen on.

Ideas & Feelings Can Change

Don't feel badly about shifting in your new home's criteria. You should expect to have slight changes in desires as the home search evolves.

But above all, the critical thing to do when your ideas do shift is to share them with your agent so that they can adjust the home search and include this new desire.

Remember... finding the right home is a team effort. You're the key member of the team. Keep the communication open, and your home search will result in a great property that you can grow in and enjoy for many years to come!

Finding a Potential Home

When you find a good candidate for your future home, *don't plan on making an offer immediately*. See the home a second time and at a different time of day. There's just too much to absorb when looking at a home, and you'll have numerous questions after the first viewing.

Sit down with your agent to go over those questions. Then visit the home for a second time after you've received some answers... this time you could walk in with a new perspective.

Use Imagination When Viewing Homes

Smart sellers prepare and stage their homes to gain an advantage and top dollar offers. Other sellers aren't quite so prepared, so their homes appear more lived-in or plain.

Using a little imagination in considering these lesser prepared homes can save you money in many cases. An ordinary house could be considered a blank canvas to transform into anything at all suits your taste and needs.

If you're interested in a home needing some cosmetic work, then focus on the "bones" of the property... understanding and getting comfortable with the layout, lot size and neighborhood. It could be a place where you add your own personal touches to really make it your home... with new paint... flooring/carpet... landscaping...etc.

Don't be put off by any of this type of work, your agent can put you in touch with a trustworthy contractor or handyman to do the work or give you an idea of the time and costs.

Section 3 - “The What” Getting Professional Help

Chapter 1 - Understanding the Buying process

After deciding on homeownership in San Diego... prepare yourself for the requirements and nuances of buying.

Check Your Credit

If you need financing, be aware of your credit score. Rating range from 350 to 850. A higher score = lower risk to a lender... and you're likely to get better financing terms.

Annualcreditreport.com provides credit reports to the public.

Know How Much Can You Afford

Use an online mortgage calculator to figure out how much you can afford for monthly mortgage payments. Two good options are: <http://www.mortgagecalculator.org/> or <https://www.zillow.com/mortgagecalculator/>

Factor in the following expenses:

- **Down payment** (20% is not always the rule and loans are available with little or no down payment)
- **Closing costs** (attorney fees, appraisal, inspections, etc.)
- **Remodeling costs**
- **Furniture**

Find the Best Real Estate Agent for You

Only once you're truly ready to buy, should you search for the best agent for you. This means choosing a home buyer specialist or “buyer's agent.” Focus on a Realtor® who works with people like you and always puts their clients first!

Searching for The Perfect Home

First, do your homework and know what you want. Analyze your needs together with your agent. Prepare your list of “non-negotiables” - *the must-have* features in the community and in the home itself.

Visit and evaluate the candidate homes together with your agent. Examine the aspects that fit *and don't fit* your needs. *With the help of the agent, rank each of the homes you visit to find the best choice.*

Making an Offer

Prepare a fair offer by evaluating comparable properties (“comps”) and include key elements of the offer including: *price, deposit amount, closing dates and subject clauses or contingencies to be met.*

The agent should do all the research, preparing the formal offer (legal contract of purchase & sale) and presenting or even negotiating the offer on your behalf.

Plan for Home Inspections

Now's the time for deeper due diligence on the home – a detailed examination of the safety, defects and potential repairs. Your agent will help you make all arrangements for any necessary inspections.

Confirm Your Financing *(if needed)*

You can get loan approval before you even start your home search. This helps the sale go through quickly after making an offer... *and you'll be more appealing to home sellers since the financing is already guaranteed!*

Closing the Deal

After home inspections are finished... financing is in place... and any contingencies are met, the closing documents are then completed. From here is the closing date is set and money and title are exchanged.

Moving Day

The buying process is officially finished – the day you've been waiting for...*Take possession...enjoy making it your home!*

Chapter 2 - Real Estate Professional Guidance - What to Expect

There are 3 core standards a great real estate agent should live up to:

1. **Loyalty** - always acting in the best interest of the buyer.
2. **Confidentiality** - any discussions, facts or personal information is never revealed to others.
3. **Reasonable Skill and Care** - arriving at and advising the buyer of a reasonable purchase price, discovering material facts and advising the buyer, and investigating all relevant facts to the sale.

An Agent's Experience... Client Testimonials, Qualifications and Licensing

Important criteria to check into... ask them directly about their training and for client feedback. Make sure your agent is independent and has no interests with sellers... and doesn't accept sales commissions from vendors or developers.

Taking the Stress Off Your Shoulders and Preparing You for The Road Ahead

Your agent helps you manage the emotions affecting your decision making and will be well versed in the psychology of home buying. They help you create or refine a strategy or plan based on your needs... help you determine how realistic your plan is... and help you know how much you can afford and get the best financing.

Ultimately, you should count on your agent to guide and assist you through the entire process. Before your agent finally hands you the keys to your new home, they will have helped you avoid many potential hazards and roadblocks.

Your Agent Should Have a Deep Working Knowledge of the Local Market

They have their finger on the pulse of current market conditions and will tell you what to expect as you shop for a home, including... staying on top of price trends, neighborhood conditions and features, real estate law, zoning issues, financing, taxes, insurance and negotiating prices.

They can show you available properties and discuss countless details, including *a home's major selling points, floor plans, the neighborhood's crime rate and proximity to schools, shopping centers, attractions, cultural activities, local employers, medical facilities, etc.*

Bringing It All Together

The agent directs the entire process and is responsible for obtaining disclosures, making sure home inspections and repairs are completed. They coordinate the activities of your lender, attorney, roof inspector and other professionals engaged in your purchase. If necessary, they'll

negotiate the purchase price, and accompany you when signing the final closing documents to make sure everything goes smoothly. The best real estate agents will also:

- Educate you about the current conditions of the market.
- Analyze and understand what you want and need in your next home.
- Guide you to homes that fit your criteria.
- Help you determine the right offering price for a home.
- Coordinate the work of other needed professionals throughout the process.
- Negotiate with the seller on your behalf.
- Check and double-check paperwork, disclosures, clauses and deadlines.
- Solve any problems that may arise

Communication is a Two-Way Street

Beware of communication breakdowns. If you're not getting what you want from an agent... be sure to tell them! And after you've told them *and you're still not getting what you want... then it's time to find a new agent.*

Remember... you're the boss... and your agent is ultimately your employee. If you see signals that this isn't the case, or you feel like you are nothing more than just a "commission check," then you haven't found the best Realtor® yet.



Chapter 3 - Understanding Real Estate Services... from an Agent's Perspective.

Now that you know what's involved, you need a San Diego Realtor® who's not only highly professional and competent, *but who is genuinely dedicated to helping you.* Not all agents are the same... and some specialize in specific services.

What Is Dual Agency?

This is where one real estate brokerage company, or the same agent, represents both the seller and buyer on the same transaction. *This causes a dilemma where the agent cannot possibly negotiate the best price and terms for both parties.*

Know the Difference Between Buyer's Agents and Seller's Agents

Different kinds of agents serve the specific needs of buyers or sellers... and an agent may work in more than 1 capacity.

Listing Agent/Seller's Agent

"Listing agent" or "seller's agent," refer to the same thing... *the agent representing the seller of a property.*

A seller's agent is obligated to represent the best interests of the seller. As a buyer, the seller's agent does not represent your best interests, nor will they protect your confidentiality or try to negotiate with the owner on your behalf.

Buyer's Agent

Buyer's agents, or "home buyer specialists," are *obligated* to negotiate the best terms and price for a homebuyer. When you hire a buyer's agent, you'll have full assurance the agent is working solely for your best interests. The buyer's agent has a fiduciary duty only to the home buyer, which is **a legal obligation to always to act in your best interest and help you determine if purchasing the home at the agreed-price is in your best interest.**

Buyer's agents are also referred to as "co-operating agents." And because they cooperate with a listing agent to help sell a listing, they are paid a portion of the commission (paid only from the home seller).

***Some buyer's agents represent buyers in buying a home, and also serve as a listing agent to help people to sell their homes on separate transactions. This is not dual agency, or representing the buyer and seller on the same property.*

EBA – Exclusive Buyer's Agent - an agent who only works with buyers on the purchase of a home. *They do not offer services as a listing agent or work with sellers. This eliminates any potential conflict of interest.*

Going it Alone

Of course, you can work *without* a buyer's agent, and look for homes and handle everything on your own. But consider this... when the time comes to make an offer, *if you do it on your own... it will be the seller's agent who writes up the contract for the seller and you. Are you OK with that?*

Wouldn't you rather have a buyer's agent, *representing your best interests*, to help you write up the offer and guide you through each step of the process?

Make sure you work with a Buyer's agent or an Exclusive Buyer's Agent if possible.

Signing a Buyer's Agency Agreement

The buyer's agent usually receives a commission from the seller when you buy a home. *But despite the commission, the buyer's agent has a fiduciary duty only to the home buyer.*

Once you're comfortable with an agent, you sign and enter an exclusive "Buyer's Agency Agreement". *Without this agreement in place, the agent has no fiduciary duties to the buyer.*

This means you agree to let one, and only one agent represent you through the buying process. It includes all the terms and specifies things like the duration of the agreement, the commission to be paid, and the various rights, duties and obligations of the parties.

Chapter 4 - Choosing the Best Real Estate Agents...

A buyer's agent is usually the best option for home buyers. But find one who specializes in what you are looking for....

Local Real Estate Agents... Who Truly Know San Diego

This separates the best real estate agents from all the rest! The right agent knows the neighborhoods, the streets, the local businesses, services and attractions. They'll know all the laws, ordinances and the local culture. Recommendations for a doctor, lawyer, hair stylist, pet groomer or a good Sushi restaurant? *They can help here too!*

Advice & Expertise in 55+ San Diego Retirement Communities

Find experts in the retirement communities. *Seek out agents with proven track records of satisfied buyers in the specific neighborhoods that interest you.* They'll help you develop clear expectations and understand the particulars like...

- Investigating the financial records of the homeowner associations
- Explaining the approval process and requirements for new residents
- Researching and clarifying community restrictions and rules, membership options and costs
- Clarifying services provided – details for caretakers, maintenance, repairs, security services, etc.
- Showing you the local area and proximity to medical care, shopping, entertainment, etc.

Find and Interview at least 3 different "buyer's agents

Start searching at sites like [http www.zillow.com](http://www.zillow.com) , www.realtor.com , www.trulia.com and www.yelp.com.

Many agents have different niches based on the price point. Agents focused on high price ranges won't offer the same personalized services to lower end buyers. *Always look for an agent who specializes in helping buyers just like you.*

Be Sure to Evaluate the Following Criteria...

Professionalism- Remember that Realtors® provide professional services. Just like doctors, lawyers, accountants or any other professional... you should be impressed by their professionalism and confident in their abilities.

Only Work with a Full-Time Realtor®- Many agents work part-time while working another full-time job. A busy, full-time Realtor® stays connected to industry professionals daily. This constant exposure enhances their expertise... benefiting you as a homebuyer.

Qualifications and Licensing - View their credentials and professional status. The State Licensing Board provides their real estate license status and name of their real estate agency... see continuing education progress and any complaints or disciplinary actions issued.

An Agent's Experience & Client Testimonials - How long have they been in the business? How many clients have they worked with? And what are clients saying? From an agent's standpoint, building a great reputation for excellent service is the most important thing for their business.

Find Out How Many Sales They've Completed in Your Target Area -The best agents have helped home buyers in the same communities, neighborhoods and streets you're looking at.

Make Appointments - Compile a list of agents, and contact 3 or 4 to schedule a consultation. Approach each interview with a simple question:

"How do you work with your buyers?"

Soon you'll start to see the differences. If you get a positive response and feel like, *"wow, this person gets it!"* ... then move on to asking specific questions to your situation. Once you're comfortable, open up and don't hold back any details.

In many cases, even if they are not a fit for you, good agents will refer you the best real estate agent for your specific needs... and this is a free service.

Remember... good agents put clients first!

Chapter 5 - Specialized Real Estate Guidance for Seniors

A 2014 Harvard study titled, “Housing America’s Older Adults,” cites housing as the #1 factor influencing seniors’ overall wellbeing in the U.S.

- The 50 and over population will increase by 20%, to 132 million people by 2030.
- Housing affects financial security and is the *single largest expense* for most households.
- *Accessibility* in the home is a major concern for older residents, presenting a huge safety risk.

Senior Real Estate Specialist (SRES®)

For seniors nearing retirement, or with specific healthcare needs, a *Seniors Real Estate Specialist* is aware of these needs and has unique qualifications for *helping find the most appropriate housing and completing the real estate transaction*.

When you find a Realtor® who specializes in helping seniors with home sales and purchases, you’ll quickly notice a big difference from most other agents.

The *SRES®* designation is given to Realtors® who have completed educational courses and training focused on helping seniors and their families with buying and selling a home.

A Priority on Getting to Know You

You likely notice it in their personality, most *SRES®* agents genuinely enjoy working with seniors. *SRES®* agents have a deep respect for seniors and their families.

Not only do they ask the right questions, but they are excellent listeners too.

They’re aware of the stress from deep rooted emotions, family relationships and history, and will devote all the time necessary to fully understand your situation. Putting a priority on knowing you, your family situation and all the factors weighing on your decision is one of main differences you’ll see with a *SRES®* certified agent.

An *SRES®* agent customizes and presents information so you can absorb it at your own pace... allowing you to take the time to feel comfortable and prepare for each decision throughout. In addition, expect an a *SRES®* agent to...

- Have knowledge, experience and genuine concern in dealing with your issues.
- Always keep your best interests in mind.
- Suggest multiple housing alternatives, including options to allow aging or sick people to remain in the home instead of selling it.
- Never force or pressure any recommendation.
- Have a strong service orientation.

- Simplify the complicated process and take the necessary time to explain every detail.
- Understand and help reduce your emotional burdens, knowing very well how emotions can influence a sale or purchase... preventing you from making the best, logical decision.
- Interact easily with all family members, including seniors, adult children and caretakers.
- Be knowledgeable about local senior housing options and elder support services.
- Work with a wide network of other senior-focused professionals who can help with tax advice, financial and estate planning, and other aspects of the sale and move.

These are expert communicators... and on top this they know the local retirement communities as well.

Chapter 6 - Senior care - Independent and Assisted Care Facilities in San Diego

According to the CDC, the number of people receiving care in the home, and in nursing, assisted living, and similar facilities will grow from 15 million in 2000 to 27 million in 2050 (jumping by 12 million). Unfortunately, these people are also at greater risk of financial fraud and physical and emotional abuse from caregivers... especially those with dementia.

As the aging population grows, attention to this problem is extremely urgent.

Local governments, businesses and communities are responding... making changes to regulations and building codes to address the problems and expand suitable housing options.

This includes improving residential care options and revising the model of assisted living and nursing homes, including continuing care retirement communities.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC)

Or “life care communities,” are an environment for active living, where all aging care needs can be met in a single residence. *An ideal solution in the event your health deteriorates as you age.*

These are beautiful homes in resort-like communities. *You do not own these homes. Instead, you pay monthly fees to include all bills, utilities, services and activities.* Skilled nursing or specialized care is available *if needed*. CCRC’s offer 1, 2, or 3 bedroom units with services and amenities like:

- On-site assisted living
- Skilled nursing care
- Memory support services
- Well-equipped medical and nursing care facilities
- Fully staffed including 24-hour emergency responders
- Restaurants
- Pools & whirlpool spas
- Fitness centers
- Hair salons & spa
- Business centers
- Valet parking
- Workshops & recreation programs
- TV/Internet
- Courtyards & landscaped gardens
- Pets allowed

There are 6 CCRC facilities in San Diego, [click here for the list and contact details.](#)

Assisted Living Communities

Offer 24-hour, trained and caring staff to adapt to all types of dementia care, respite care, short-term stay and individual needs. Services include personal assistance with daily activities, such as bathing, hygiene, dressing, eating, and medication management.

Chateau Lake in San Marcos is an example of 55+ gated independent, luxury condos with *optional* assisted living services. This resort-style community offers senior homeowners full service dining, home cleaning services and transportation. It's an all-inclusive community where all services and amenities are included in the HOA payment of \$1,700 - \$2,000 per month. *This is one of the best options for assisted living in San Diego.*

Various floor plans include 1 bedroom, 1 bath, 660 Sq. foot and 2 bedroom, 2 bath, 1,034 sq. foot condos, with vaulted ceiling, patios and decks available in some units.

There are over 100 Assisted Living facilities in the San Diego area, [you can see the full listings – click here.](#)

Chapter 7 - Getting Help at Home - Daily Activities

Age-friendly homes and communities are the pathway to letting more seniors live independently and age-in-place. *Making homes safer and age-friendly greatly depends on finding the right help within the home.*

Mobility and Help at Home

From volunteer programs to paid caregiver services, these programs help seniors with a variety of daily tasks and chores around the house. *Preventing* potential dangers is a major focus, and they also help seniors get stronger and better prepared for the future, while promoting self-sufficiency and awareness.

Fall Prevention in San Diego - Falls at home are a serious risk for seniors. *The leading causes of falls are balance and mobility problems... medical conditions and medications... vision problems and environmental hazards.*

The goal is to help people with mobility problems to raise physical function and make up for the loss of movement... while identifying and addressing the underlying physical and mental health issues.

The San Diego Fall Prevention Task Force - provides fall prevention services, guidance and information including exercise programs, home safety modifications, and home health services. See more: <http://sandiegofallprevention.org/>.

The Alzheimer's Project - helping families and caregivers while seeking a cure to this growing epidemic. Alzheimer's experts answer questions and provide support programs and free services for local families:

- **UC San Diego School of Medicine** - provides *Quality of Life* programs and care provider support groups and more. For specific information and resources – [click here](#).
- **Alz.org** – San Diego Chapter - [click here](#).
- **Alzheimer's San Diego** – [click here](#).

ElderHelp Concierge Club - coordinates programs and services to lighten the load of family and other caregivers, helping with basics like: *grocery shopping, friendly visits, check-in calls, escorted transportation, minor home repairs, home safety inspections, mail sorting and organization, gardening, pet care and more.* [Click here to learn more about ElderHelp Concierge Club.](#)

Seniors Helping Seniors – Certified Senior Advisors (CSA), dedicated to providing in-home services to seniors who need any kind *non-medical help* for to seniors live independently in their own homes. [Click here for information.](#)

Aging and Independence Services (AIS) has over 30 programs centered on home based services:

In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) - Providing personal help and help with tasks around the house, IHSS provides independent homemakers and providers. Available to low-income and individuals who need help to remain independent... the care recipient is actually the employer, responsible for hiring and supervising the care provider. [See more details and the various eligibility requirements here.](#)

Project C.A.R.E. - designed to keep seniors living alone from being totally isolated, providing a *welfare-check system* of daily phone calls, and training postal and utility employees to spot seniors in need. [Click here to see the many services.](#)

List of In-Home Care Service Providers – Reviews and Feedback

You can find a huge list of services in San Diego... providing flexible, responsive and provide customized plans for each person's need and a high level of care with very experienced and qualified care.

[Click here to see a list of in-home care providers in San Diego.](#)

Chapter 8 - Senior Move Specialists

Preparing for a move in retirement or just preparing to age-in-place, trained specialists are working to make any transition gentle and easier.

Certified Senior Move Managers® are trained to assist you with numerous downsizing tasks to simplify and modify your current home!

The National Association of Senior Move Managers (NASMM) is the best place to find a qualified specialist. Among the many tasks and responsibilities, they work to...

- Help older adults and their families with downsizing and moving to a new home.
- Offer integrity and a commitment to safety and ethics, continuing professional development.
- Bring expertise and compassion with an eye towards affordability.

There are 10 NASMM Senior Move Managers in San Diego - [click here for a full list of contacts and more information.](#)

The Certified Senior Advisor (CSA)® certified professionals who work with seniors, these professionals demonstrate competence and knowledge of working with older adults into their professional practices.

CSA's are specializing in helping pre-retirees, active retirees and seniors with any major transaction or transition and specialists are available across a wide range of industries, including Real Estate, Home Modifications, Insurance, Financial Services, Senior Housing, Senior Placement and much more. [Click here to find a CSA near you.](#)

"Household Guardians" has CSA certification and offers home assessments and consulting for seniors looking to modify their homes and make them more age-friendly. Learn more at www.householdguardians.com

Certified Relocation & Transition Specialists (CRTS) - professionals who demonstrate the highest standards in relocations, home downsizing and remodeling for aging-in-place. [Find local San Diego CRTS professionals here.](#)

"Caring Transitions" in Carlsbad, CA, carries a CRTS certification and offers help with relocation, decluttering and downsizing and estate sales. They are available for [free consultations - click here.](#)

SRES®, Senior Real Estate Specialists - specialize in specific needs as a senior. The SRES® designation is given to Realtors® who have completed educational courses and training focused on helping seniors and their families with buying and selling a home.

Expect an a SRES® agent to...

- Always have knowledge, experience and genuine concern in helping you through major lifestyle changes, transitions and difficult moments like selling the longtime family home.
- And always keep your best interests in mind and will suggest multiple housing alternatives, including aging in place or ways to avoid selling your home.

The Dreamwell Homes team of Real Estate Professionals offers SRES® agents and [you can find other SRES® in San Diego by clicking here.](#)

Section 4 - How Much? Financial Aspects & Considerations

Chapter 1 - How to Finance a Purchase When Buying and Selling at the Same Time

In buying a potential home you want to be able to make your "highest and best" offer. *But how will you fund this offer & purchase... especially when you still need to sell your existing home?*

Get an Estimate of your Home's Value

Knowing how much you can expect from the sale gives you a ballpark idea what you can afford.

Your agent will provide an estimate, *or you can find free home value reports at sites like* <http://www.realtor.com/sell>.

From here, you can choose from 2 paths to take:

#1 -BUY THE NEW HOME FIRST

Consider these 4 options:

1. **Pay for the new home in cash**, with savings built-up or liquidate assets from retirement funds.
2. **Get lending pre-approval** to purchase the new home and pay off the mortgage as soon as your current house sells (*with minimum down payment of 3.5% of the purchase price*).
3. **Borrow from family members or temporary loans from a 401K or IRA...** to be paid back immediately after the existing house is sold.
4. **Negotiating financing from the owner of the home** – see if the seller is willing to carry a note on the home you're purchasing, which you will pay off immediately after your existing home is sold.

#2 -SELL YOUR EXISTING HOME FIRST

This also means lining up a listing agent to sell your current home. A few points to keep in mind here:

1. Choose a listing agent with care and interview at least 3 before choosing.
2. Prepare your house to sell and make it presentable before it goes on the market.



3. Be ready to negotiate each offer based on timing and the terms, as well as the price. Your agent will provide invaluable advice, not only for strategy but also negotiating on your behalf.

ARRANGE TEMPORARY HOUSING - RENTALS

Renting after you sell lessens the pressure to buy any homes you're not completely comfortable with.

- **Line up a short-term rental.** It could be pricy, but hopefully no more than 1 to 3 months.
- **Negotiate a “rent back”** period of on the sale of your home, to stay in your home a few extra weeks. This means paying rent to the new homeowner (the buyer), enough to cover the new homeowner's mortgage, insurance, taxes or HOA fees.

Remember, expect an expert real estate team to coordinate the necessary people and processes involved. They'll present multiple options and provide a main point of contact so you're not stressed by every detail.

Chapter 2 - How to Get Financing to Purchase a New Home

Need a loan? You can approach many different lenders, but just consider what kind of lender you want. It's important you find someone you can trust, whether that person is a mortgage broker, banker or direct lender.

Questions to Help You Choose a Lender:

- Who do you bank with, and do you have a relationship with someone there? Start there.
- Are you a member of a credit union? You can often find the best loans with easier qualifications.
- Are you a veteran? Veterans shouldn't forget about the VA loan.

Conventional vs Government Backed Mortgages

Conventional mortgages, typically offer lower rates but perhaps a higher down payment. Otherwise you can look towards government mortgages, backed by the Federal Housing Administration.

Although interest rates are typically higher than conventional mortgages, the down payment required is usually very low, and in some cases even zero. [See this article from Trulia.com for more details.](#)

Working with a Team

The best Realtors®, who do many transactions, work with the best lenders who get the job done efficiently and close the deal on time. Your agent will present to you at least one trusted Mortgage Broker.

However, there should be no obligation to use an agent's recommendation. Always feel free to shop around and go with whoever you feel will best serve you. *It's important to interview lenders carefully and ask them about their existing relationship with a real estate agent before you decide who to hire... and always check their credentials and references.*

Why Choose a Mortgage Broker?

Many times, home buyers look to local bank branches or credit unions, where a representative who sells home loans, auto loans, and checking accounts sits behind a desk waiting for clients to walk in. Big banks are a great for refinances, *when there is no close date to worry about.*

But for home purchases, a professional mortgage broker makes his or her living doing exactly this kind of business.

Simply put, **a mortgage broker is the middleman between borrowers (homebuyers) and the lenders** who actually fund and service the loan. *Many homebuyers prefer a mortgage broker because a broker can search for loans from multiple lenders.*

Making the Process Easier

A mortgage broker explains all your loan options and presents the most beneficial programs, and the financial education you need. Most lenders do this too, *but they can only talk about the limited programs they offer directly, rather than the full range of loan products that a mortgage broker has access to.*

The mortgage broker communicates with the lender directly and follows through with the application process. If any issues come up during the loan underwriting, the broker works directly with the lender to resolve and coordinate every detail, *including your closing.*

The mortgage process can be quite lengthy, taking a significant amount of effort for borrowers, but a good mortgage broker will make the process much smoother.

Chapter 3 - Moving for Financial Reasons

Your Reasons for Moving?

Here are a few financial ideas that should be considered in determining whether you *really need to make a move or not*.

Downsizing... or Rightsizing Your Home to Build Savings

The lower costs and manageable size of a smaller home can bring many benefits and conveniences. Downsizing to a small home, one that's less expensive and a better-fit, is a huge way to build retirement savings.

If your large family home is mostly vacant, then the higher bills, maintenance costs and taxes, will quickly eat up savings. If you don't need all that space and the children, relatives, or even a spouse have moved out or passed away, then downsizing could make sense for you.

Or instead, perhaps you would simply benefit from "downsizing" from a \$2,500 per month mortgage payment, and moving to a home the same size or larger *but with a lower payment*.

Many retirees are happy with 1-story homes with 2 bedrooms/2 baths of roughly 1,200 – 1,500 sq. feet. And they find this is plenty for their needs and in line with their budgets.

Timing Your Move

According to marketwatch.com, many retirees wait far too long before downsizing their homes... until after their children have finished college and moved out... or even after retirement.

But this should be done even before you retire or while the kids are still at home. The difference in retirement savings could be big enough to give you a wider range of choices and flexibility.

Investing the Home Equity

Downsizing almost always creates some "breathing room" financially, allowing many to stretch their retirement income a lot further.

But after downsizing, not everyone buys a smaller home, or a home that's actually less expensive. This can be a missed opportunity. If downsizing does bring a big payout... be sure to spend it wisely.

A Well-Planned Investment Strategy is Important

This includes choosing appropriate investments for your risk-tolerance, but also knowing how to spend your savings and when.

It also means always being aware of potential future costs and expenses. Solid financial planning will help you consider tax liabilities associated with various savings and retirement funds (IRA, ROTH IRA, 401K, pensions, etc.) and help you stretch your assets as far as possible.

Your Real Estate Agent will also recommend a trust-worthy investment planner should you need one.

Chapter 4 - How to be Creative and Stretch Retirement Dollars

Some pre-retirees are disappointed with high market prices and not having enough retirement savings as they would've liked.

If that's you... don't fret. It's likely you have options within your budget to still find a better quality of life, location and amenities... and still not have a mortgage!

Reverse Mortgages – Using Your Existing Home Equity

Opening a whole new world to seniors when considering which community to retire in... by using a reverse mortgage, you might be able to purchase a larger, much nicer home, and never make another mortgage payment again.

For example, you could take a budget of \$300,000 and turn it into \$600,000 in purchasing power...

Reverse mortgages can be used to convert a portion of your home's value into immediate income. You have the option to take either a lump sum payment or arrange a line of credit...

Reverse mortgages are useful for:

- Paying one-time, high-cost expenses like home modifications or improvements.
- Have a monthly income stream to help with property taxes and insurance payments.
- Covering the costs of supportive care, and other medical expenses.
- Eliminating your monthly HOA dues.
- Boosting your retirement income.

Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM)

The HECM is a reverse mortgage allowing principal, interest, and other loan costs to accrue against the value of the home.

Another benefit is that the HECM doesn't require out-of-pocket payments. *These loans allow homeowners to tap their home equity without having to make monthly mortgage payments or sell their homes.*

HECM loans are insured by the Federal Housing Administration and issued by local private lenders. *James Stanko, a Reverse Mortgage Specialist in San Diego [provides a full description here.](#)*

Using a Reverse Mortgage

Reverse Mortgages are available for anyone over 62 years of age. And you typically need to make a down payment roughly equal to 45-55% of the value of the home, and occupy the property within 60 days.

You are still required to make payments for homeowner's insurance, property taxes and maintenance. But unlike with traditional mortgages, there are no monthly interest or principal payments, as long as you live in the home as a primary residence.

Your Real Estate Agent can recommend a Reverse Mortgage Specialist to provide precise guidance and advice.



Chapter 5 - How to Finance a Remodel of Your Current Home that Needs to Sell

To quickly spruce up your home to sell for top dollar you have many potential sources of funding. And other times home inspectors or appraisers *will require* you to make repairs before completing the sale of your home.

Home Improvement Loans and Personal Loans

Banks offer fixed or adjustable rate options even to those with little to no home equity, and interest payments may be tax deductible.

These are usually versatile loans with no minimum requirements, *but are limited to renovation and remodeling, not structural repairs (which fall under remodeling construction loans, for major projects).*

Secured mortgage and home equity loan options

- *Refinance your mortgage and make renovations.* Loan amount is based on home value after the improvement and *requires hiring a contractor.*
- *Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC)* – ongoing access to funds as many times as you need over a fixed period of time, up to 10 years, using your home as a source of collateral.

Unsecured, personal credit options

- *Credit cards* – ongoing access to funding for small or large purchases.
- *Personal loans* – with fixed rates, terms and payments – usually quick credit approval and access to funds.
- *Personal line of credit* – line amounts at variable rates, quick approvals and immediate access to funds

Renovation Loans - Government Insured

Renovations loans are designed to take the value of the purchase or refinance and add in the funds need for the repairs *and create one single loan.* This way you can avoid having 2 mortgages... paying two sets of closing costs... and avoid high interest rates of short-term loans.

You end up with one loan amount, one interest rate, one monthly payment and one set of closing costs.

Fannie Mae HomeStyle Loan

The HomeStyle mortgage requires a credit score of at least 740, but will generally offer cheaper rates. It can be used for large repairs and luxury upgrades and will only include appliances if they are part of a *full kitchen renovation.*

EZ "C"onventional loan – covering smaller repairs fixed in 60 days or less, \$35,000 max.

FHA Streamlined 203k Construction Loan

The [203k Rehab Loan](#) is a government insured loan for *less than \$35,000 to repair, improve, or upgrade a home. The lender requires you to hire a consultant to inspect and verify the renovation work.*

Those who don't have great credit scores are better off with the 203k loan. The FHA doesn't set a credit requirement, but lenders require a score anywhere from 600 to 640.

[For a full list of home improvement and renovation loan types click here.](#)

Chapter 6 - Understanding California Property taxes

A major source of state revenue, property taxes stay local and fund the budget of most local governments. As residents, a California Property Tax bill includes different taxes and charges based on your situation.

Proposition 13 - the 1% Rate

Established in 1978, it was designed to limit property taxes and increases in the assessment of property values... *preventing older homeowners from being “priced-out” of their homes* due to excessive property taxes.

Under Prop 13... a 1% tax is levied on a property’s assessed value, which will always be reestablished to market value when it is sold... based on what the buyer actually pays for it. Otherwise, the assessed value of the property steadily increases by a maximum of 2% per year.

The annual 1% tax is assessed on the value of all “real” property... including:

- Owner-occupied residences - homeowners get a \$7,000 exemption from the assessed value of their primary residence each year.
- Investment and vacation residential properties other than a primary residence, including *multifamily apartments, rental condominiums, rental homes, vacant residential land, and vacation homes.*
- Commercial retail properties, industrial plants, farms, and other income-producing properties.

Determining Your Overall Property Tax Bill

Other property taxes use the same method for assessing the value of a home or “real” property, however, different rates are used. These include:

Local voter-approved debt

Mostly used to fund local infrastructure projects, like new construction and rehabilitation of schools, most local governments need to obtain 2/3 of local voter approval to issue general obligation bonds. The rates are a very small percentage of assessed property value, about one-tenth of 1% of assessed value (or 0.1%).

Other non-ad valorem taxes - taxes and charges based on factors other than the assessed value of the property

ASSESSMENTS

Local governments impose assessments to fund improvements providing direct benefits to property owners, and not public benefits. Examples would be construction and operating street lighting in a particular neighborhood.

The local government needs to a majority approval of the affected property owners... and each property owner's vote is weighted equally in proportion to the amount they would pay for the proposed improvements.

PARCEL TAXES

Parcel tax rates are set by local governments based on fixed amounts of parcels of land, or per room or even per sq. foot per parcel. The proceeds can only be used on public programs, services or projects, even those which do not directly benefit the land. Two-thirds approval of all voters is required.

MELLO-ROOS TAXES

Taxes collected in a specific geographical area determined by local officials and often in new communities. These are a flexible source of revenue used to fund infrastructure projects or services, and can be levied in proportion to the benefit a property receives in 2 ways:

1. Equally across all parcels receiving the benefit
2. Proportionally by square footage of the property

These taxes fund commercial and residential development. After the land is developed and sold, the new owners are responsible for the tax which is then used for schools, libraries, police and fire stations, or other necessary public facilities and services. These are subject to two-thirds voter approval when 12 or more voters reside in the area.

Chapter 7 - Transferring Low Tax Basis

California Property Taxes are a major source of state revenue, funding the budget of most local governments. As residents, a California Property Tax bill will include different taxes and charges based on your situation.

However, the bulk of your property taxes are determined by Proposition 13... where a 1% tax is levied on a property's assessed value, which is reestablished to market value when it is sold... based on what the buyer actually pays for it.

Otherwise, the assessed value of the property steadily increases by a maximum of 2 % per year.

Helping Seniors Cut Their Tax Bill

To avoid high taxes there are 2 propositions specifically designed for seniors under the tax code.

Both Proposition 60 & Proposition 90 allow senior homebuyers to continue at their existing home's assessed value, potentially bringing a huge savings on annual property taxes.

Proposition 60

Passed in 1986, allows homeowners over the age of 55 to *transfer their existing assessed value of their current home* to a new home.

However, the new home must be of equal or lesser market value, and within the same county.

Proposition 90

Passed in 1988, this bill extended the same allowance for homeowners as Prop 60... to transfer their existing assessed value to a new home with the same or lesser value, *to includes homes in different counties which also participate in Prop 60 and Prop 90.*

Proposition 110

Extends the allowances of prop 60 & 90s to *permanently disabled homeowners* within the participating counties.

Participating Counties

As of June 5, 2015, the following 11 counties participate: *Alameda... Orange... San Diego... Tuolumne... El Dorado... Riverside... San Mateo... Ventura... Los Angeles... San Bernardino... Santa Clara.*

Here's an example of how it works:

You sell your home for \$400,000 and buy a new one for \$320,000.

The assessed value on the old home at the time of sale was \$250,000. Under the guidelines of Prop. 60/90, the assessed value would transfer, \$250,000 *plus* 2% (\$5,000) to the new residence.

Hence, the new taxable value on the new home would be *\$255,000 instead of \$320,000*.

Eligibility

This is a one-time only opportunity, available only for 1 sale and purchase. To qualify:

- You or your spouse must be at least 55 years of age at the time your property is sold
- The new home must be a primary residence of equal or lesser value of the original property.
- Also, the new property must be purchased within two years (either before or after) of the sale of your home. Claims can also be filed up to 3 years retroactive to the purchase of the new home.

Also, you can still receive the benefit of Prop. 60/90/110, and still qualify for a Homeowner's or Disabled Veteran's Exemption, (which you will need to file separately).

To see a more complete guide and a full set of Q&A, [click here](#).

Chapter 8 - Insurance Coverage Beyond the Norm

How much and for what should you have coverage? Especially with wildfire and earthquake risks, consider how much insurance you need, above and beyond typical homeowner's insurance.

You Need Homeowners Insurance to Close on a New Home

When buying a home and securing a mortgage, lenders and closing agents require a proof of Homeowner's Insurance with adequate coverage against loss, property damage and liability in case of injuries on your property. This is *regardless of any HOA fees you pay*.

HOA Insurance Coverage

Home Owners Association fees cover insurance on your property, including the buildings, exteriors and community property, and covers basic damage like vandalism, theft and limited damage from fires, storms and natural disasters.

HOA policies DO NOT protect the interior your home, or any of your personal property... *hence another need for your own homeowner's policy.* [Check out this article for more details on what HOA Insurance actually covers.](#)

Homeowner's Insurance for Disasters

Your own Homeowner's insurance is limited... but does cover fires resulting from earthquakes... which is mandated by California law. Most policies cover your home and attached structures along with...

- **Personal property:** furniture, clothing and electronics... usually covered in a standard homeowner's policy.
- **Additional living expenses:** covering the cost of renting of a home while your home is repaired.
- **Landscaping:** offering limited coverage for damaged plants, shrubs, trees or lawns.

Earthquake Insurance

Not mandatory in California, nor is earthquake damage included in homeowner's insurance policies. It can be added, but [many don't have it because premiums and deductibles are very costly](#)... and definitely worth it if you can afford it.

Earthquake insurance has basic coverage for 3 areas:

1. Coverage of the home or dwelling, usually with a 15% deductible
2. Personal property coverage - usually very low or 10% of the value of the home
3. Additional living expenses (ALE) - for temporary & extra costs of living elsewhere while your home is repaired.

[See here for more details on purchasing earthquake insurance and coverage options.](#)

[“Earthquake, Brace & Bolt”](#) - **Alternatively**, you can brace your home to withstand quakes. Programs like this offer seismic retrofitting and provide up to \$3,000 (50% of likely costs), to strengthen homes and lessen potential damage.

Fire & Wildfire Coverage

Generally covered under homeowner’s insurance, however it’s important to verify your policy. Coverage can vary by location, and some insurers don’t offer homeowners coverage in areas where wildfires are common.

According to the *California Insurance Institute*, the average fire insurance deductible in California is from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Areas with significant fire damage and losses might cause insurers to raise rates, but the [California Department of Insurance](#) must approve. Expensive homes in high-risk areas pay around \$5,000, says spokesperson Janet Ruiz.

[Insurers look at variety of factors when considering a rate hikes](#), like whether homes have sprinkler systems and if homeowners clear hazards and brush away from the house.

Renter’s Insurance

If you decide to rent, *consider having “renter’s insurance” to cover your personal belongs in event of a loss*. The landlord’s homeowner’s policy does not cover your personal items... *and renter’s policies are very low cost with the ability to add on extra coverage as needed*. [See this article at Trulia.com for more details](#).

Chapter 9 - Renting vs. Buying in San Diego

Ask yourself... how well do you know your future living environment? If you're eager to get into this retirement paradise, be sure to first review every option. *It's essential not get overwhelmed or become too impatient.*

Financially Speaking... Buying Opportunities Still Good

Interest rates have been low recently. But when they start to rise, *buyers will come into the market to capitalize on the opportunity... and we're starting to see that now!*

Building Home Equity and Price Appreciation

As the market continues to strengthen, buying soon could lead to nice capital gains from selling your home down the road. Also, over the long run, *owning your home allows you to build up home-equity and has proven to be cheaper than renting in San Diego.*

[According to Trulia.com](#), depending on interest rates, your tax bracket and how long you stay in your home, it can be anywhere from 10% to 31% cheaper to buy a home vs. renting. And in addition,

- Rental prices in San Diego are the 11th highest in the U.S.
- Homeownership levels in San Diego are the lowest in the past 25 years.
- San Diego is still the most affordable of the top 3 California markets.

Renting - Try Before You Buy!

Overall, renting in San Diego is a wise thing to do... *especially for 55+ manufactured home communities.* See if you like your future neighbors, if the activities and recreations are to your liking... and get used to a manufactured home.

Even though it's more expensive than buying in the long-run, *it's a great temporary option to minimize your risk.* It could be your best way to determine if a style of home, or a community, is a good fit without making a big mistake.

In your planning, study several different options and take your time. *Your agent will help line up potential homes and communities fit to your needs.*

Sample a few different neighborhoods and communities.

Get a taste of the community before you buy a home there. Then see if you're ready for a long-term commitment.

Consider new housing options

Try a new style of home you've never seen considered... from detached houses, luxury apartments, cozy studios, townhouses, high-rise apartments and 1-level apartments, to condos, guest houses and manufactured homes.

Nice option for snowbirds

Spend the winter months in San Diego while maintaining the current family home. Eventually you might decide on a full-time move, after you give yourself enough time to prepare and sell your home.

The last thing you want to do is sell your long-time home and regret your decision. Especially if the timing isn't right and you're not getting good offers on your current home. Renting helps avoid pressure to buy or sell your home too quickly.

See for yourself... financially

Trulia.com offers a [free "Rent vs Buy Calculator"](#) to help you get a better idea.

Chapter 10 – Understanding Real Estate Commissions

Real Estate Commissions rates are used to entice agents, both seller's and buyer's agents, to help sell a property. The commission itself is paid out of the proceeds from the sale of the property.

Even though a buyer's agent has a fiduciary duty to the buyer, the buyer's agent receives a commission paid by the seller.

The amount of the commission is also set by the seller... rate applies to *any buyer's agent* who helps a buyer purchase that property. *Therefore, there is no negotiation between a buyer's agent and the seller for the commission paid.*

Commissions Are Negotiable Between You and Your Agent

This could surely lower the cost of your home. *The California Bureau of Real Estate and California Law mandates that all agents must inform clients that real estate commissions are negotiable, and consumers must know this upfront.*

If a buyer's agent works with you on the deal, they'll split the commission 50/50 with the listing agent (3% or 2.5%).

Here's an example:

- A seller lists a home at \$300,000 and decides to pay a 6% commission. *The commission stands to be \$18,000.*
- If no buyer's agent is involved in the transaction, then the seller's agent stands to pocket the entire \$18,000.
- Otherwise, *if he is involved...* your buyer's agent earns 50%, or \$9,000 on the purchase.

Out of this \$9,000, the agent could offer you two options:

1. **REBATE ON THE COMMISSION** - A rebate that you apply to the cost of the home. You can negotiate a reasonable figure to be returned to you, out of this \$9,000 commission.
2. **REDUCED COMMISSION** - You can negotiate a cut to their commission received from the seller. *Reducing the commission on their side of the deal allows the seller to lower the price on the home by the amount of the reduction.*

Keep in mind, agents in a brokerage firm split their fees with their firm, sometimes 50% or more. So, in the above example, your agent earns around \$4,500 *before considering any rebates/discounts and splits with their brokerage.*

This could make it difficult for agents to offer significant rebates or discounts and still get a reasonable payout for their time and services.

Recognize Conflicts of Interests - Be aware of situations that can work against you as a buyer.

Dual Agency - when the same agent represents both the buyer and the seller in a real estate transaction, the agent stands to earn a double commission on the deal. Or in other words, they get the full commission instead of splitting it with the buyer's agent.

The same agent can't negotiate the best terms and price for both parties. Nor can they devote their full attention to your best interests in this situation. This is legal in California, but law requires disclosures to be made to all home buyers.

Other Conflicts with Commissions - In some cases, sellers offer higher commissions to buyer's agents to sell their home quickly. This poses a potential conflict if a buyer's agent pushes a particular home by offering them higher payout.

Always be direct... ask the agent how much they stand to make on each home that you are interested in.

You Have the Right to Work with an Exclusive Buyer Agent

An exclusive buyer agency, or brokerage, *represents only buyers*. EBA (Exclusive Buyer's Agents) brokerages don't ever handle listings or work with sellers. They earn their commission when you purchase a home and *their goal is to get you the best price and terms on your purchase*.

Chapter 11 - How to Make an Offer on a Home

Making an Offer

Once you're certain about the home you want, it's time to make a strong offer. While emotions are running high at this point, *it's important to keep the proper perspective and view the purchase as an investment.*

Your agent's research includes similar local properties to determine the home's market value and fair price.

The 3 basic components of a purchase offer:

1. PRICE - The dollar amount you are approved for, willing and able to pay.
2. TERMS - Covering the other financial and timing factors to be included in the offer.
3. CONTINGENCIES – clauses that let you out of the deal if the home has problems that didn't exist or which you weren't aware of when you signed the contract. These specify actions needed for you to fulfill the contract.

The Basis of Your Offer

Your agent will perform a comprehensive *Comparative Market Analysis (CMA)*. This detailed report shows all similar homes in size and scope, nearby your potential home, that have sold in the past 90 days. The CMA's main purpose is to know the home's current fair market value and help you to arrive at the best offer price.

Offer Package

The agent needs certain documents from you to submit as part of the offer package. There are 3 main things:

1. A copy of an earnest money deposit check, which is typically 1%-3% of the total purchase price.
2. A copy of your loan pre-approval letter provided by your lender, in the amount of money to equal the offer.
3. Proof of funds to cover the earnest money deposit, down payment and closing costs

How to Make an Offer More Attractive - Other than raising the offer, your agent has several strategies to make your offer look more attractive to the seller.

A Bigger Earnest Money Deposit and Down Payment – The size of the earnest money deposit and down payment shows how serious you are to the seller. Raising both can make your offer stand out above any other.

A Shorter Contingency Period – a normal contingency period for buyer's due diligence, when all inspections are completed, *is around 17 days*. Your agent can shorten the contingency period to around 10 days, while still getting everything done.

Allocation of Costs - this basically specifies “who pays for what” in the transaction. Usually purchase offers are written so the allocation of costs falls largely on the seller... meaning more money out of the seller’s pocket.

To put your offer in a position of strength, your agent can write the offer so you take on some of the burden of the costs.

Performing Due Diligence - Consider what the home needs in advance... new appliances... repairs... cosmetic work...etc. Research and calculate these total costs to structure your offer to purchase the home. Here’s an example:

If repairs and upgrades add up to \$5,000, and your agent determined the home had a fair market value of \$500,000, then you should build the cost of \$5,000 into your offer by submitting it at \$495,000.

Making Your "Highest and Best" Offer - simply making an offer in the highest amount you would pay for a property. *Here you are clearly labeling the offer as your highest and best... a premium price you would pay... but you are also offering this price from the outset. You are sending the message that you will not consider any counter offers... or in other words... take it or leave it!*

The goal here is to stand out above any other offers and buyers who are “shopping” for a deal. So, this offer should always be near or above fair market value for a property of this type.

Chapter 12 - The Escrow Process

The “Closing”, “Settlement” or “Closing Escrow”

Closing on a home has different names. However you say it, the process isn’t fully completed until about 4 – 6 weeks after signing the contract with the seller. *No need to worry because your agent directs the entire process.*

If you are using financing and need a mortgage for the purchase, you will have 2 sets of “closings.” One is on the purchase of the home itself... and the other is the closing on your loan.

The Closing Agent

When you and the seller sign the purchase and sales agreement, you will also choose a closing agent, an impartial 3rd party who handles all the paperwork, money and instructions. *In California, the home buying process closes with what is known as the Escrow Process and an escrow agent completes the deal.*

Steps of the Escrow Process:

1. This process begins when your offer is accepted by the seller and the contract is signed.
2. Your Earnest Money Deposit is deposited to the escrow company, the seller’s real estate brokerage or attorney (depending on the contract) to a neutral third party, along with the purchase contract.
3. The escrow agent will verify that the buyer and seller have completed their responsibilities in the deal.
4. The escrow agent notifies the seller's agent when the title has been recorded.
5. The seller's agent will deliver the keys to your agent (the buyer's agent) or directly to you.

The Buyer’s Role in Closing

Once you enter a contract with the seller, with your agent, your closing duties include:

- Reviewing and signing off on all disclosures made by the seller (things like property flaws or any improvements and repairs or potential hazards). These disclosures may be given prior to you making the offer and will be factored into the price.
- Arranging for all property inspections to be completed within the contingency period.
- Reviewing all home inspection findings and renegotiating based on any new flaws uncovered (submitting modified requests to the seller, changing the offer price or cancelling the deal and recouping the deposit).
- Removing any contingencies once the inspections are cleared and issues resolved (or the contingency period ends without any additional requests to the seller).

The Closing Agent's Role

Your closing or escrow agent prepares the complete instructions for you and the seller to finalize the deal, including:

- Coordinating with your lender who prepares and sends all your loan documents to the escrow company.
- Determining the seller's loan payoff amount
- Prorating the property taxes
- Verifying that the seller completes all repairs, pest control or any other agreements related to the contingencies made in your contract, and arranges a final billing date for all utilities.
- Confirming that you, the buyer, are finishing your loan application, purchasing a homeowner's insurance policy and calling the utilities to set up service under your name as of the closing date.
- Making sure the title company researches the ownership history of the property, doing a comprehensive title search for the final title report.
- Once all documents are prepared, the closing agent informs you will how much you need to pay at the settlement, in the form of a cashier's or certified check.

When the escrow agent is satisfied that everything is in order, then the "closing meeting" can take place.

Chapter 13 - The Closing Process

After everything has been satisfied for the escrow process, the *closing* can take place. For the actual closing meeting, many times, the buyer and seller don't even meet. The meeting might only include you and your agent along with the escrow or closing agent.



Up until this point your agent will have directed the entire process, making sure the closing agent has all the requirements for you and seller. This means coordinating all appointments, dates and times, and ensuring all parties are prepared with the necessary documents... *everything completed beforehand*

But you'll have to come prepared... be ready to spend an hour or two, and verify all the documents.

What You'll Need to Bring to the Closing

- **A certified cashier's check** – covering the down payment and the closing costs
- **Proof of Homeowner's Insurance** – Your mortgage lender requires you to have a "hazard" policy. And the closing agent needs to verify you have a policy effective on the closing day, with proof it's paid up for one year.
- **Photo Identification** - a valid driver's license or passport
- **Purchase and Sales Contract** – to verify any details including closing cost

The Deed - Title Transfer

You'll sign all the closing documents including the *HUD-1 Settlement Form*, the deed (transferring ownership from seller to the buyer) and any final mortgage documents.

The deed will be recorded at the local municipality, then the funds are distributed to the various parties... and then you can take possession of the home.

Read Everything

As always, your agent represents your interests and has a full understanding of each step of the process.

But you should still be sure to read all paperwork before signing. Don't be afraid to take your time, even if the other people in the room must wait for you to read in silence. This is serious a matter, so don't treat it lightly.

Beware of "Cold Feet"

Suddenly, everything you had worked for over the past weeks or months seems all wrong... and at the most crucial moment.

Sometimes buyers look for reasons to sabotage a home purchase. They tend to make a fuss over little things, even minor changes or repairs, using this as an excuse to back out of the deal. What a shame!

This is another sign of emotions rearing their ugly head again!

This is expected. With the help of your agent, you'll have a constant voice of reason and someone to help you see things clearly. Count on your agent to find solutions to problems or changes that pop-up... even at the last minute.

And for your own comfort, go back and review all the reasons and criteria that led you to choose this home.

Ask yourself...

Do the compelling reasons still stand... or has anything changed significantly since you began pursuing the home?

Remember, your emotions are running wild at times, and usually work against you at the most critical times.

Section 5 - “The When”

Chapter 1 - Timing & Preparing to Sell Your House

Preparing Your Home for Appraisal

First off, it's important to learn about the appraisal process and how to increase the home's maximum value. But the home appraisal *also helps a buyer* determine how much financing they need to purchase your home.

Understanding Comps

Appraisers begin by finding the value of a home by choosing nearby and recent comparable sales, or “comps”. They look within your home's community, and whenever possible find the exact model and match for homes that have recently sold.

The better the match and the more recent the sale, the more weight that price can have in determining the final appraised value.

If no comparable homes within the community have recently sold, the appraiser expands his view to homes within a one-mile radius, within 20% of the same square footage, and to homes sold within the past six months (these are the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac guidelines for secondary market investors).

Evaluating the Property

The appraiser inspects, measures and photographs the entire home. After evaluating the condition of the property, the materials used in construction and other particular items that make it unique, the appraiser compares these homes against your home to come up with a value.

The appraisal could be what you expect or better, *or even below what you actually paid for the home*. Remember, the appraiser is only considering sold comparable homes. And any pending sales that fetch a higher price could also boost your home's appraisal value.

Whatever the case might be, you should look at simple strategies for boosting the value. [Get a free home value estimate by clicking here.](#)

Sell in May... and Go Away!

Prepare your home to sell in May. According to a study by Zillow.com, the best time of year to sell your home is the month of May. *Homes on the market May 1 through May 15 sold roughly 18.5 days sooner than homes that weren't listed in the same timeframe.*

Those homes also sold at roughly 1% higher price too! [See the full article here.](#)

Tips for Downsizing or Rightsizing

Not only knowing what to declutter, *but how to do it!*

Jewelry, heirlooms, collections and sentimental items needing special care can complicate the process. *Start eliminating your stuff at least 3 months before your move.* Make 3 separate piles... one for keeping, selling and giving away (and don't throw away - recycle, reuse, sell and donate whatever possible). [See a list of 10 tips here.](#)

And for the finer details on “the how”, here's [a list of 12 things you should never discard and why.](#)

Chapter 2 - How to Prepare Your Home to Sell

To Remodel... or Not to Remodel?

From a Realtor's® perspective what is equally if not more important, is *the added marketability of the home with the new improvement*. Perhaps it's not necessary. But ultimately you need to consider market conditions and your situation... timing, finances, etc.

There are likely to be other renovated and improved homes competing with yours.

So, should you decide *against* making improvements before listing your home, *then just be sure your home is uncluttered and immaculately clean*. You should also expect your listing and eventual sales price to be lower than other improved and upgraded competing homes.



Home Remodeling - Home appraisers make an important note on whether the home has been remodeled or upgraded. So, if it makes sense, prioritize the areas needing upgrades.

Where to start

To increase your home's value without going overboard, consider making health and safety repairs and...

- Apply a new coat of paint
- New carpet or flooring
- Or if you have the budget... make major improvements like kitchen and bathroom upgrades.

Kitchens... bathrooms... and flooring – this is where remodeling gives the biggest bang for the buck, from both the appraiser's and buyer's eyes.

Another great place to invest is *the entrance of your home... or having a new steel front door installed*.

But remember, if the roof leaks or other areas of the home have obvious defects, *buyers will walk away from your home no matter how gorgeous your new entryway, kitchen or bathroom is*.

Be Careful of How Much You Spend!

According to *certified residential appraiser* [Don Lowe](#), rarely does a seller recoup the full value of the home improvement in the home sales price.

For example, a better grade of granite, or a more expensive hardwood floor choice doesn't guarantee an increase in your home's appraised value. *You'll surely get credit for upgrading*

the countertop or the floor, but you won't receive added value because of the more expensive grade choice.

Instead, go with standard grade materials in neutral tones... and if you need new appliances for the kitchen, don't purchase top of the line brand names.

And keep in mind, if the improvements do no more than simply bring your home up to the standard of nearby competing homes, *then they certainly won't cause your home to sell at a premium... or any sooner.*

The things you can't control

Just remember, there are other factors determining your home's value that you can't actually change... such as: *comparable home sales... views from the home... size of lot... private location... quality & attractiveness of your neighborhood... noise issues and more.*

So be careful not to over-spend.

[Click here to get customized tips on how to increase your home's value.](#)

Chapter 3 - Children at Home, Wait Until They Leave?

A Delicate Retirement Planning Dilemma.

According to a recent [Gallup poll](#), 29% of US adults under the age of 35 live with their parents.

But with that said, downsizing from a bigger, costlier family home for a couple is an obvious choice... *and hopefully it brings a financial windfall of some degree.* And for most people, once the kids move out seems like an ideal time to sell the house.

But if you've got adult children living at home... and you're waiting sell your family home until they're out on their own, *then you could be facing a dilemma.*

Timing on When to Sell Is a Huge Factor

You shouldn't necessarily wait to pull the trigger until you become "empty nesters." By selling even before retirement... and while your kids at home... you could find an even bigger financial advantage from downsizing.

Of course, this implies you need to officially give your kids the boot... *even while their still in school or starting out in the workforce.* It's best to prepare by gradually easing into retirement... **while you're still working.**

Determine a Few Things in Advance

Will spending and expenses actually go down with a smaller house or empty house?

This isn't always the case for everyone. Even if the kids no longer reside with you... are you still supporting them financially? Who is paying tuition, food, lodging and travel expenses, student loan debt?

Are you planning mega-renovations... trips... or big purchases?

With goals like this, it's best to make sure you tackle them in during earning years, while you have a steady income. *Even more reason to downsize your home and expenses before retirement.* But beware, with the mortgage paid off, the temptation to spend big could put a dent in your long-term retirement plans.

How much will it cost to maintain a big, empty house... and the utilities that go with it?

Think of the physical upkeep and work involved... as well as the financial costs. Especially if the house takes longer than you expect to sell and you're already ready to move to your next place... those costs could be damaging to your nest egg.

Instead, that effort and cash could go a long way to enjoying a pre-retirement period and saving for the day when you officially leave the workforce. [Read more about common mistakes empty nesters make.](#)

Getting back to your kids...

Letting your children live at home with you... rent & utility free, etc., is a huge potential boost *to their savings*. However, be aware... giving them the easy life for too long could harm them... rather than help them.

Get your kids on their way in life... and get busy planning your retirement

Learning to live frugally is one of the biggest gifts you can give them.

[The Financial Samurai at Personalcapital.com](#) shares some good hard and fast rules for when to push your kids out the door. In general, 32 years old... after 14 years of adulthood is a benchmark. But whenever you see signs of low motivation, little professional progress and a lack of help around the house... *these could be the flashing warning signs*.

Chapter 4 - Wait Until Retirement, or Downsize While Still in the Workforce?

The timing of your move and downsizing a home has many various aspects to consider. In general, downsizing can prove to be a good move and *boost your retirement nest egg by letting you tap into your home equity and cut costs.*

However, this is not always the case. Many people are making the wrong assumptions and aren't ending up where they expect to be... and even losing money.

Basic Mistakes Future Retirees Make When Approaching Downsizing:

- Overestimating the value of your current home - you don't come out with as much as you expected
- Underestimating the cost of your new home - depleting your nest egg or limiting your goals
- Forgetting tax implications - locations with higher property tax, income tax or sales taxes didn't expect.
- Waiting too long – after retiring from full time work and waiting on adult children at home

[Check out this article for specific tips on how to avoid these dangers.](#)

Getting Forced Out of the Workforce

According to the *Center for Retirement Research at Boston College*, more and more people are considering working longer, until after age 65, to make up for shortfalls in retirement savings and health insurance.

That number has grown from 11 to 33%, however the results show an opposite trend... *with 37% actually retiring before age 58.*

The major reasons for working people to retire earlier than expected include:

- Worsening health conditions
- Job loss and lack of job mobility
- Access to retiree health insurance also provides an incentive

Get Professional Advice

Your individual situation, including your income and tax bracket could affect your decisions. Either way you need some professional advice.

With all that said, *it could be much better to start all this while you're still in the workforce.*

Your Real Estate professional will recommend local *tax advisers, estate planners and investment consultants* to help you get a clear picture and set up a detailed strategy. But this level of planning requires the proper time to line up and evaluate, *better to get started sooner rather than later.*

The Chance to Grow Your Assets

While you're still in the workforce you have a primary source of income... and a way to continue growing your assets. However, once you stop working your focus shifts to protecting the value of your assets... and it is much harder to recoup losses at this point.

Also during retirement, your investment window is shorter than it was 30 years ago, when you could take on more risk with your investments. Now in retirement, you'll gradually be liquidating investment accounts and paying the deferred taxes. Living expenses may start to rise as you plan new adventures or need to cover medical expenses.

All the Signs Point Towards Downsizing Before Leaving the Workforce

If you have the luxury to do it early on, then don't wait. But if you must wait until retirement or are forced to retire early, *downsizing can still be a good move and help you shed any unnecessary baggage.* Just make sure you get the proper advice and don't rush any important decisions.

Also let's not forget, moving itself becomes more difficult with age, not only physically but also socially. So approaching downsizing in your pre-retiree years could make your transition much smoother.

Get a head start on all this... check out this article for [ideas on how to ease into retirement](#).

Section 6 - How to Avoid Moving in Retirement - Intro

New Options for Senior Housing & Strong Support Networks

More seniors are determined to stay put and age-in-place, wanting nothing to do with retirement homes.

And as real estate agents, it's our job to help you get what you want in your home... whether that means finding a new home or just modify your existing residence or living situation.

The Problems Ahead for Seniors

"What's happened in the past is that traditionally developers, builders, have been younger middle-aged adults building housing for other younger, middle-aged adults. We talk about parks for children and schools, and they are important, but what about what older people need? They don't need parks with slides. They need a place to walk, to sit, access to restrooms, water. That is never discussed." - Dr. Dilip Jeste, Senior Associate Dean for Healthy Aging and Senior Care at UCSD.

The Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard & AARP report that the number older adults living with disabilities is expected to dramatically increase. On top of that, today's housing supply isn't designed to accommodate the physical and cognitive difficulties that come with age.

Hence many older households will be forced to make potentially expensive modifications to their current homes or move to more accessible units.

Dangers in the Home

According to stopfalls.org, for people age 65 and older, falls are the biggest cause of injury, hospital visits for trauma, and cause of death from an injury.

1. Lack of support in the bathroom/shower – need for grab bars and non-slip mats.
2. Lack of support in the toilet – need for grab bars or raised toilet seats.
3. Climbing and descending staircases – need to install handrails on both sides of the stairs.
4. Dark passages and stairways – need for brighter lighting and switches at both ends.
5. Objects in the way – remove things like books, clothes, newspapers, and shoes from the pathway.
6. Slippery rugs – remove or secure them with double-sided tape.
7. Items out of reach - Keep commonly used items at levels that can be easily reached.

Limited Transportation Leads to Isolation

A 2009 AARP report found that 24% of households aged 80 and over don't have cars. Today's major challenge is to help seniors live independently without becoming isolated.

Cooperation Across Many Groups and Support Systems Among Seniors...

The emphasis is on health and wellness, arts and culture, and education... making San Diego more welcoming. Residents are finding it easier to age in place... easier to retrofit a home... and easier to find the necessary support services to stay in their home as long as they want.

San Diego County has joined the World Health Organization and AARP as a member of the Age-Friendly Communities Network. The local government, its leaders, civic partners and residents, all share the vision of San Diego becoming a model for the rest of the world as an age friendly community.

Chapter 1 - Customizing Homes for Aging in Place

Age Friendly Home Construction and Modifications

Laurence Weinstein is a renowned expert on age-friendly architecture. He's pioneered the concept of *"Design adapting to people... rather than people adapting to design."* His non-profit organization, *Smart Livable Homes*, offers [a complete checklist for Universal and Accessible Designed Homes](#).

These principles address a wide range of physical and mental abilities. *Designs are affordable, accessible, adjustable, adaptable, and attractive.*

The "visit-able home"

The process starts with making accessible pathways and entrances:

- One ZERO-STEP entrance to the home.
- A minimum 32" clear, open passage space for all main interior
- floor doors, including bathrooms.
- A full wheelchair-accessible bathroom on the main floor.

Other essential features promoted by www.Livablehomes.org include *adding appropriate interior features... proper electrical and lighting systems... and customized kitchen, bathroom and bedroom modifications:*

1. Wide hallways for easy passage of household furnishings and personal accessibility.
2. Wide exterior and interior doors for easy passage.
3. Raised electrical outlets grounded and easy to access.
4. Larger rocker style wall switches located within easy reach at approximately 42" height.
5. Lever-style door handles – easy to open.
6. Large, easy-to-read thermostats at a convenient height for easy adjustment.
7. Adjustable-height shelves in all closets for flexible storage and retrieval.
8. Energy-efficient fluorescent lighting to eliminate shadows and create a safer environment.
9. Convenient cabinet systems with accessibility to store, retrieve, or use kitchen and bath accessories/features.
10. Easy-access sinks and plumbing - faucets with designs reflecting current décor trends.
11. Kitchen appliances with large front or side mounted controls for easier operation.
12. Elevated or raised dishwasher for no-stoop, no-bend loading and unloading.
13. Oval-bowl toilets at more comfortable heights in all bathrooms.
14. Easy-access, single-lever shower control in master bathroom with anti-scald, pressure-balance feature.
15. Full-length vanity mirrors mounted directly above counter backsplash.

16.Full-extension drawers and shelves inside cabinets for easy access.

SGPA, a San Diego-based Architecture and Planning firm, offers more detailed suggestions and advice to enhance everyday living - [click here to learn more.](#)

Start Modifying... From the Start

Don't wait until retirement to make modifications to your home... if you can, get an early start.

Vince Butler, Residential Remodeling Contractor, spoke to AARP Livable Communities, he said:

"There are several simple solutions I could have included in the initial construction, and the challenge of later having to accommodate my mom as she recovered from surgery drove home a few more lessons, namely: The time to install 'aging-friendly' features in a home is when it's being built or remodeled — regardless of the age of the current or potential residents."

Chapter 2 - Sources of Funding for Renovations

Costs of Renovations

Renovations are an essential part of retirement planning, whether for health and safety, or just making homes more attractive, comfortable, or multipurpose.

According to the *Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard, and AARP*, households aged 55+ make up almost half (47%) of all spending on home renovations in the U.S... *about \$90 billion annually.*

And according the U.S. Census Bureau, as of May 2013, the median costs of home renovations were as follows:

Kitchen - \$5,000... Roof - \$4,600... Plumbing, electrical, etc. - \$3,600... Recreation rooms - \$3,000... Bedrooms - \$2,500... Bathroom - \$2,400... Patio, terrace, deck - \$2,000... Floors, paneling, ceiling - \$ 1,200... Doors & windows - \$1,200

Funding at Your Fingertips...

Besides traditional home equity loans, home improvement loans and personal loans... *there are many government programs that offer or insure funding to help modify your home.* Many offer favorable terms and some are in the form of grants... *some of which don't require full repayment.*

Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants in California – “Section 504 Loans”

Gives loan amounts up to \$20,000 at a 1% fixed interest rate... the max. grant available is \$7,500 and loans and grants can be combined for up to \$27,500 in total assistance. Find complete information here - [Section 504 loans.](#)

The CalHome Program finances grants including *deferred-payment loans* and direct, forgivable loans to promote low-income homeownership and home rehabilitation. This also includes purchases and improvements for manufactured homes... those not on built on permanent foundations. [Click here for full information.](#)

County of San Diego Housing and Community Development Loans

Available to residents of unincorporated areas of San Diego County, or in the cities of Del Mar, Imperial Beach, Lemon Grove, Poway, or Solana Beach... offers single family home repair, deferred loans at 3% simple interest, calculated annually. The amount borrowed is required to be repaid when the property is sold or the borrower moves from the property. [Click here for the full program details.](#)

San Diego Housing Commission - Rehabilitation Grants and Loans

Financing is available for mobile homes and owner occupied single unit and 2, 3 and 4 unit properties within the City of San Diego - [click here for detailed information.](#)

203k Rehabilitation Loans

203k loan is for those who want to buy a damaged or older home and fix it up. A portion of the loan is issued to purchase a home (at least 1 year old), and the remaining portion of the loan is used for repairs and modifications.

The [203k Rehab Loan](#) is a variation of the 203k loan but it only handles loans less than \$35,000 to repair, improve, or upgrade a home.

Title 1 Property Improvement Loan Program

The [FHA Title I loan](#), allows for home repairs and improvements, especially if your home equity is limited. Funds can be used for things like wheelchair accessibility improvements, building ramps, replacing windows, and solar or thermal energy-saving systems.

Home Equity Loans & Lines of Credit

Don't forget about using traditional options, often providing quick access to funds for modifications. [Click here for a full list and descriptions of secured and unsecured loans](#).

Chapter 3 - Home Add-ons

There's a wide range of ways to avoid living in isolation or paying thousands per month in assisted living facilities... while providing customized housing and care... right in a family member's home or near future caregivers.

Living with adult children or family members, under the same roof, isn't always a perfect fit for independent living. And age-friendly homes, retirement villages and co-housing options are potential answers as well... *but these don't always address the need for living in close proximity to loved ones or caregivers.*

Here are few options that could address all these concerns:

Granny Pods

Think of a cottage or guest house on your property... only in this case the guest is a permanent resident. Seniors can have independence and proximity to loved ones... right in the backyard... even with a well-equipped home.

Granny Pods are prefabricated and transported by trailer to the residence. They can have nursing home amenities and high-tech medical equipment, with hand railings, video camera systems to monitor what's going on inside or if the person needs help, and a soft floor to protect against falls.

MEDCottage (<http://www.medcottage.com/>), builds units about the size of a master bedroom, from 300 to 600 sq. feet.

Basic versions exist as well, however in San Diego County, you'll need to consider local zoning requirements. Ordinances vary by location, some reserve such housing for seniors, while others look to alleviate the demand for housing, accommodating residents of all ages.

Read more about the benefits and decide for yourself whether this is a good fit - [click here](#).

In-Law Suites or "Granny Flats"

Multi-generational trends of family members living under one roof are growing. And many homebuilders are accommodating senior living spaces in their new home designs, including attached units or separate wings to the house, even with private entrances.

Multigenerational homes provide group living situations for parents, grandparents and the adult children's families. With over 51 million Americans currently living in such an arrangement. For more info and ideas, see this [report from NBC Nightly News](#).

Casitas - Guest Houses in San Diego

Casitas are also called mother-in-law suites, granny flats, or studios. The cities of Encinitas and Carlsbad have encouraged building these units in new developments, with attached or

detached casitas. A typical guest house has at least 1 bedroom/1 bath with a kitchenette (and sometimes a laundry room), and a separate entrance.

Some are in a family compound or on 2 legal lots. Many custom homes with guest houses are located in the *Leucadia, Olivenhain, Cardiff by the Sea* areas of Encinitas, and a few can also be found in *Encinitas Ranch, Sidonia, or near Beacon's beach* as well.

Getting Easier to Build a Granny Flat

The California government is making the process smoother, eliminating the need for additional permits, if the current zoning guidelines are met. Other strict requirements and various fees are also eliminated under this new legislation. [Read more details here.](#)

Get Help Building a Granny Flat in San Diego

Learn about city regulations, various styles and even get help with permits for granny flats - [click here.](#)

Chapter 4 - In-home Care Options

For isolated seniors with children and relatives living far away, and with their own busy lives, the need for competent, affordable and caring services in the home is at a critical point.

In-home care focuses on short- or long-term personal assistance, *but it's not medical care*. However, many San Diego agencies can provide both types of care.

In-Home Care Costs Can Be High

Many options for care are available, however only a limited number of options exist for covering expenses: *paid out of pocket and then reimbursed through private insurance or through Medicaid*. Median monthly costs for 30 hours of weekly services are as follows (2014 Genworth Cost of Care Survey):

- Licensed homemaker services (help with cooking and errands) - \$2,500
- Licensed home health aide (assistance with personal care) - \$2,600
- Adult day services - median daily rate is \$65, typical monthly expenses (weekdays only) - \$1,400

In-Home Care Programs in San Diego

Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP) - MSSP care managers work to find and coordinate services with the client, family members and medical team. MSSP seeks to protect frail elders and prevent the high costs of institutional care. [See details of the MSSP program here.](#)

Senior Options, Advocacy and Referrals (SOAR) - serves frail and disabled adults age 60 and older, those who are at risk of nursing home placement. SOAR care managers coordinate services in the home and prevent hospitalization or long-term, out-of-home placement. [See here full details of the SOAR program.](#)

Serving Seniors.org – offering a wide range of health care coordination services, including:

- Nursing Case Management - chronic disease management, health screens & assessments, navigating the healthcare system, weight management, nutrition education, and follow-up care.
- Mental Health Services - mental health education, counseling, referrals and assessment.
- [Click here to see Serving Seniors full program information and services.](#)

List of In-Home Care Service Providers – Reviews and Feedback - There are over 25 private service providers in San Diego. Each offers flexible, responsive and customized plans fit to each person's need, with experienced and qualified staff. [Click here for a list of San Diego in-home care providers.](#)

Home Healthcare Agencies - offering short-term medical care (different from in-home care), providing professional health workers who carry out customized **home health care plans**, under nurse supervision. Services need to be reimbursed by Medicare or other insurance plans. The health care workers may include:

- Certified Nursing Aides (or *home health aides*) have formal training and certification
- Physical therapist or occupational therapist - helping after a major incident to recover and regain mobility
- Speech Therapists - if an illness or injury has affected the speech of a loved one.
- Visiting Nurses - (RNs and licensed practical nurses (LPNs), licensed vocational nurses (LVNs), advanced practical nurses (APNs) - provide skilled medical care, evaluating and keeping notes on the progress.

Depending on the needs, the agency can request doctor approval for additional services. You'll have to confirm your insurance will cover any extended services. [Click here for a complete list of Home Health Agencies in San Diego County.](#)

The Senior Mental Health Team - part of San Diego County's, Aging and Independent Services (AIS), they provide crisis assessment and assistance for people age 60 and older with mental health issues. They work with the client and significant others to create a plan to keep the person as safe and as independent as possible. [Click here for more information.](#)



Chapter 5 - Transportation Options for Aging Seniors

Mobility and getting out for routine errands are major obstacles to quality of life for many seniors. In fact, *AARP found that 24% of households aged 80 and over don't have cars.*

A particular challenge is the “car-centric” lifestyle of suburban communities. As more and more older adults in the suburbs and rural areas become less able to drive, *alternatives to private cars has been largely lacking.*

Livability in San Diego is increasing thanks to policies and programs enhancing connectivity, both publicly and privately.

San Diego Transportation Services

ElderHelp - “Senior a- Go-Go” - [ElderHelp](#) provides escorted transportation picking up members at their door.

RideFact - Available to seniors 60 or older who have no other transportation options, [RideFACT](#) operates throughout San Diego County, 7 days per week. Some services require approval and application in advance.

- Reservations and Rides – reserved in advance, calling or using the website to know all available transit options.
- By car, bus, train or shuttle service, you can find a free or low cost option for your trip.
- See all service providers and find help to plan your trip in advance at <http://www.factsd.org/>

Volunteer Driver Services – safe, reliable and low cost transportation by trained volunteers – locations all across San Diego County - <http://www.factsd.org/volunteer-driver-services/>

ADA Paratransit – Part of the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, this service provides transportation for disabled people *unable to use public transit*. The service covers the same areas as public transit services – however you first need to [apply and become certified to be eligible](#).

NCTD – North County Transit District – public transportation for North San Diego County includes:

- *Coaster* commuter rail service
- *Sprinter* light rail service
- *Breeze* bus system
- Flex rural, on-demand service

- NCTD LIFT Program – facilitates transportation with ADA Paratransit – [click here for details.](#)

MTS - Metropolitan Transit System - daily fixed route bus and light rail trolley service accommodating those with physical, cognitive, and visual disabilities. MTS buses and trolleys all feature low floors, lifts/ramps, audio announcements, priority seating areas for elderly/disabled, enhanced signs, kneeling buses and hand rails.

[MTS provides reduced fares and passes](#) for:

- Senior Citizens (60+)
- Medicare Recipients (not MediCal)
- People with disabilities qualified by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Youth ages 6-18 (with school or transit identification)

Uber – San Diego - A new kind of demand transportation. Cheap rides in private cars and efficient service, now available all throughout San Diego County. Get estimates for a ride and choose from low cost economy to luxury car options, all estimates and fares include all applicable fees. [Click here for more details and to sign up for Uber.](#)

About Us

Jean and Ken Tritle are licensed Realtors® in the state of California. Jean has a real estate broker's license (CalBRE# 01777754) and Ken has a real estate salesperson license (CalBRE# 01892793).



They value integrity, respect, honesty, relationships, and believe that people are put on earth for a reason... to serve others beyond their own personal needs. They specialize in assisting 55+ home buyers and sellers... and have already helped many happy retirees with their specialized, team approach.

Our Team-Based Approach to Real Estate Matching Services

Within our real estate team, we have both *Listing and Buyer Specialists* who apply their expertise for your benefit, completing twice the amount of work in the same amount of time. This is always a win-win situation for clients and our team of San Diego Realtors®. We focus on giving clients access to a network of highly skilled agents... with the right expertise to help with all your real estate goals... and allowing us to grow our business while following our passions.

On the Selling side of our team, we have *SRES®*, *Senior Real Estate Specialists* to meet your specialized needs as a senior. The **SRES®** designation is given to Realtors® who have completed educational courses and training focused on helping seniors *and their families* with buying and selling a home.

On the buyer side we work with *Home Buyer Specialists* who concentrate on learning, in the greatest detail possible, what is important to you in your next home, so they can narrow the focus to finding you the best home. When you find the right home, they will negotiate the right deal for you, and work efficiently towards a successful and timely close.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We are professional Realtors®, we have many great reviews from happy clients and are proud of the service we provide and the relationships we've built. Our pledge to you is to focus solely on your needs until you're living in the perfect home. In fact, if you ever experience anything otherwise, *we would expect you to fire us.*

Our services are free, so if you are considering real estate professionals, please give our team the opportunity to earn your business.

[Contact the DreamWell Homes team now!](#)