

# Help with Retirement Planning

Planning for retirement is important advice for communities, as well as soon-to-be retirees. Recent economic trends have caused employers increasingly to encourage employees to opt for early retirement. How does this influx of retired people effect their communities?

Donna Iams, associate professor of consumer studies at the University of Arizona, was recently part of a Western regional study of retirement planning. It focused on location and housing planning and preferences of two groups: first, University employees who have not yet retired, and second, residents of a retirement community and other retirees who want to be located in the same community.

Both groups reported an increasing concern about environmental quality in possible retirement locations. The quality of drinking water, efficient energy usage, pollution, and waste disposal were important factors to pre-retirees and retirees when choosing a home. This study reflects a very recent development — the growing awareness of the environment.

People also were concerned about the type of community they wanted to live in during retirement. Iams reported the most popular retirement locations were small suburban communities within 20 minutes of a major city with a population of at least 500,000.

Both pre-retirees and retirees desired the amenities of a large metropolitan area. They wanted accessible shopping, public transportation, low cost of living and utilities and medical services. Specifically, they included a hospital where general surgery or at least limited surgery could be performed.



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However, the two sample groups also had differences. Eighty-seven percent of the pre-retirees said convenient library facilities were important, but only 27 percent of those already retired found it important. Iams theorized that the university orientation of pre-retirees was responsible.

The majority of people still planning retirement owned or planned to buy a single family, detached house. People already retired were more interested in renting a condominium or a town house.

Even some retirees who owned a single family detached house said they would choose another alternative if they were doing their planning now. They preferred having less upkeep needed to maintain condominiums or town houses. They were concerned about failing health, or they wanted to travel.

As a results of Iams' study, pre-retirees can have a more concrete idea of the concerns that they will want to explore during retirement planning, including areas not always covered in the popular retirement-planning books.

Also, community planners can get a better idea of possible future needs of a growing number of retirees. In fact, Iams said that several developers in the Tucson/Phoenix area already have incorporated this information when they expanded existing retirement communities and planned new ones. ❖



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