

Choosing the retirement community that's right for you is a bit like writing a term paper: success is a combination of careful planning and thorough research. The following suggestions are designed to help you organize your search, come up with a list of communities you'd like to visit, and, finally, use those visits to make an informed decision.

Things to do before visiting a community:

1. Realizing that options abound and waiting lists may be years long, begin your search well before you're ready to move.
2. Familiarize yourself with the various kinds of retirement communities: active adult, assisted living, continuing care, extended care, etc. Quarry Hill is an extended care community.
3. Narrow your search by seeking legal and financial advice from qualified third parties. Make a list of the types of communities that fit your long-term plans and projected budget.
4. Further whittle your list by determining what you're looking for in a community: the types of services and amenities offered, recreational opportunities, location, included and a-la-carte costs, etc.
5. Arrange to tour as many of the communities on your short list as you can.

Things to ask yourself while visiting a community:

1. Is the entrance to the community inviting?
2. Do the grounds appear well maintained and attractive?
3. Are lobbies, offices, and common areas neat and attractive?
4. What activities does the community offer? Does the list include activities of interest to you?
5. Does the community maintain connections with the town or city in which it's located (by inviting the public to some of its programs, cultivating relationships with local schools, or other means)?
6. Does the community seem adequately staffed? Do staff members seem attentive to residents' needs?
7. Are residents out and about, using the community's facilities and interacting with each other and with the staff?
8. Do residents appear happy, friendly, and outgoing?
9. Is the community near, or affiliated with, a medical center?
10. Does the community provide easy access to shopping, cultural, and recreational activities?
11. Are the amenities that are most important to you (e.g., fitness center, dining room, crafts studio, computers, library) available on site?
12. Is the home or apartment you see during your visit well appointed and in good condition? To what extent would such a residence accommodate your needs and lifestyle?
13. Are there any restrictions on how long family and friends can stay? And are there any guest quarters available?
14. Is it a pet-friendly community?
15. Does the community offer transportation services?
16. Most important of all, does the community feel like home to you?

The fact is, there is really no one best place for retirement. Each one has his own idea of the ideal place. However, with the vast choices available for you today and with some strategies to help you find that ideal place that will suite you, retirement will be an enjoyable and interesting stage in your life.