

Checklist For Choosing a Retirement Community

At The Christenson Group of Companies, we want you to choose the adult community that is perfectly suited to you. Here's a helpful CHECK LIST to help you get started. This comprehensive list of questions could be the most important document you have to securing a happy future.

Is the timing right?

These questions will help you determine if it's time to move from that older house or condo to a new Active Adult Villa bungalow, or an Estate Condo in an Urban Village.

- Would you like to have more time and freedom to travel and enjoy life?
- Would you like to spend less time mowing the lawn and shoveling snow?
- Would you like to spend less money on maintenance costs?
- Is it time to plan for your future?
- Would you benefit from the convenience, services, amenities, recreation areas and parks of an Urban Village in the future?
- Would you enjoy a bright new modern home in a Christenson Community?
- In the future, as your life needs change, would access to optional services such as housekeeping, meals, and social events improve your quality of life?
- Would living near parks, walking trails, recreational facilities, the arts, and other amenities enhance your independence as you age?

The First Step

Getting started is as easy as finding a Condo Guide, Seniors Housing Guide, similar housing magazine or website for a list of quality adult & retirement communities in areas near you or your family.

Look only at those communities built by reputable builders – CHBA Member Builders – in a familiar area or where your adult children & grand children live.

- Do a web search of experienced operators and look at those communities that interest you.
- Choose two or three of the very best adult retirement communities you would like to see.
- Visit at least two of the communities that interest you most: view their show homes, learn what features and services they offer, and get an idea of availability, timing, and cost.
- Bring along your spouse, adult daughter or son, or a close friend for feedback and advice.
- If you or your spouse may require supportive services in the near future to live independently, contact Alberta Health Services (AHS) or Community Care Access (CCA) at 780-496-1300 and request an assessment for AHS care services funding.
- When you find a retirement community that provides the services you'll need in the future, speak to the staff and several current residents before making your final decision.

What to Look For When Choosing A Retirement Community

Visiting a potential home for the first time is exciting, but there is often a lot to take in. Here are some considerations for you to keep in mind when you're visiting a retirement community for the first time. Make a list and take the time to examine your potential home carefully. Take notes – if you visit a number of homes, notes help to make a final decision when you're ready.

- Is the location near where you live now, or near family and friends?
- Is the building modern and attractive; could you live there?
- Is it clean and well maintained?
- Are the public spaces bright and well decorated?
- Would your family and guests feel welcome when they visit?
- Do the staff members appear to be happy and do they try to answer all of your questions?
- Do the actions of the staff indicate they are well trained, professional and caring?

More About the Location of the Community

One of the most common considerations when looking for a new home is location. Although a complex may appear to be well situated at first blush, be sure to ask yourself these questions before you finalize your decision.

- Is it near your family and friends?
- Is it close to a grocery store, church, medical services, parks, recreation facilities, shops, pharmacies and restaurants?
- Does it offer convenient parking for your family and guests?

- Are there green spaces nearby with trails that encourage you to walk?
- Are small pets allowed?
- Is there public transit or a rent-a-car facility available within walking distance?
- Does the location offer easy access for a taxi?

View a Decorated Show Home

The location works, the common areas are functional and attractive, the staff and residents are happy and social; now it's time to check out the show home. If this is going to be your home for a number of years, you need to be sure it works.

- Is it large enough for a couple?
- Is there a full kitchen with modern appliances so you can prepare your own meals if you choose to?
- Is there room for a table or a counter to eat at?
- Is the home bright with large windows and drapes?
- Are the colours and finishes modern?
- Is the home designed for aging with non-slip flooring, wider doors, lever doorknobs, lever plumbing fixtures, and a walk-in shower?
- Is there a barrier free bathroom with a no-step shower, lever taps, raised toilet, grab bars, a medicine chest or drawers for pharmaceuticals?
- Is the bathroom spacious enough that an aide can assist you, as you age in your own home?
- Will the bedroom accommodate a full sized bed and dresser, with room for an aide to assist you, when required?
- Does the suite have a washer & dryer?
- Are the floors easy to clean and designed to reduce the hazard of falling? Are steps eliminated?

- Does the suite have air conditioning or a ceiling fan for cooling in the summer?
- Is there a powder room, or an extra door to the master bathroom, for your guests?
- Is the balcony large enough for you to have your flowers, a lawn chair, and possibly a BBQ?
- Is there a parking stall, carport, garage, or underground parking stall available for your car?
- Can you give up the parking stall in the future, if you no longer use it, to reduce your cost of living?
- Is your new building energy efficient and does it use low maintenance materials to keep monthly operating costs reasonable?

Community Design

Community is always a foundation in the planning of any Christenson project. Not only do we consider the neighbourhood community as we plan, we intentionally design the building, or group of buildings, to be a community as well. When you're deciding on a new home, think of the entire complex as a community and ask yourself these questions:

- Does the community have bright and attractively decorated social areas?
- Is there a dining room with a commercial kitchen nearby able to provide nutritious meals and social opportunities?
- Are meals optional, or are you expected to take all of your daily meals every day in the dining room?
- Does the community have access to water, coffee, tea, and healthy snacks between meals?

- Is there a family party room, larger than your own suite that your family can use for special events such as birthdays, showers and anniversaries?
- Is there a furnished guest suite for your visitors to stay in for up to a week at a time?
- Are there exercise and activity rooms along with well-maintained sidewalks to help you keep up your exercise routine and stay fit?
- Are there recreational staff and programs to help the community stay active?
- Is there a crafts room or a library to spend quality time with your neighbours and to keep mentally active?

Community Services

When choosing a community, look for those thoughtful valuable extras that mean a great deal.

- Is there a friendly staff person assigned to greet people?
- Are there social events planned for the residents? Will you be able to take part in outings to go shopping, the arts, sports events, or themed charity parties like our Inspired Living Program?
- Does the complex have a social committee?
- Are there qualified maintenance staff members on site to handle your repairs in a timely manner?
- Are there trained, experienced, caring staff members on site to respond to any health issues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?
- Does a doctor, pharmacist, or other specialist make regular visits to the community?

Resident's Well-Being

At a Christenson Community, the resident's wellbeing is top of mind from the early stages of building design to the day to day operation. Here are some of the signs you should watch for, and some of the questions you shouldn't hesitate to ask.

- Do the residents appear to be happy and involved?
- Are the residents well dressed?
- Are residents treated with dignity?
- Are social activities offered? How frequently and what kind of activities are available?
- Can residents enjoy their privacy if they choose to?
- Can residents keep their own furniture and possessions?
- Is there a hairdresser available for personal grooming?
- Does the community offer bright, furnished lounges conveniently located for socializing?

Safety Considerations

Resident safety should never be an afterthought in any complex, particularly one that houses individuals who may have hearing or mobility issues. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their home so be sure to ask these questions as you choose a retirement community.

- Is there a Phillips Lifeline or other emergency call response system?
- Does the building have a comprehensive sprinkler system for fire safety?
- Are there smoke alarms with strobe lights in each suite?

- Is there a 2-hour-rated firewall to give residents the time needed to horizontal exit through steel fire doors, without having to go down stairs, when their mobility slows?
- Are the exit stairwells wide, easy to find, and bright?
- Does the building schedule regular fire drills?

Optional Supportive Services

Every individual is unique, so you should expect to enjoy supportive services that are tailored to your specific needs. Never assume that these services will be available. Ask these questions in advance to ensure that you enjoy many years of comfortable living.

- Does the building offer supportive services such as housekeeping, dressings, meals, medication administration and personal care that you can purchase in addition to AHS home care?
- Do residents have access to site based home care funded by Alberta Health Services (AHS)?
- Is there an AHS funded Designated Supportive Living (DSL) program on site to provide up to 2 hours of funded care per Resident?
- Is there a Memory Care or Safe Living program secured area on site for future dementia needs and to manage wandering?
- Is there a long-term care facility nearby?
- Is this a Supportive Living Facility licensed by the Alberta government?
- Are there optional services available that you can purchase?
- Can you purchase extra private pay care services to personalize and complement basic government paid programs?

Financial Choice and Security

There are a number of important financial considerations you should confirm before you sign a lease with a new retirement community.

- Can you rent by the month?
- Can you lease, with a predictable rent, for up to 5 years?
- Is there a Life Lease loan option available to reduce your monthly rent below your income?
- Is it possible for your rent, or your monthly operating costs, to go up more than 8% a year?
- If it is a rental property today, could it be converted to a condominium in the future?
- If it is a condo, could it have a Special Assessment for common area repairs to the building envelope or the parkade?
- Could you purchase a nearby active adult condo within walking distance of a Christenson Community, and attend social events, purchase meals, use the amenities, and access additional services for a small annual fee?
- If your needs change, or if you need to move out, can you give 90 days written notice and move out?
- Is there a guaranteed pay back amount, or a set release fee, or must you sell your unit on your own, taking the risk for the market value at the time, without any guaranteed price?
- Could you downsize into a smaller unit in the same community, to reduce your monthly living costs, or to pay for more care services, if your spouse needs to go into long term care, or if they pass away and your income is reduced?

- Is there a long term care facility, with dementia care services, within walking distance, so that you can stay together as a couple, and where visiting each other will remain convenient in the future?

Timing Your Move

Many people put off the search for a retirement community until something happens and they are forced to move. When a person experiences an accident, a stroke or other illness, their family is under stress to find a home and services quickly. This is not an optimum situation. Plan to move while you still enjoy a good quality of life. Just be sure to ask these important questions.

- Are there homes in the community of your choice available now, or when, in the future?
- Are you able to view a home similar to the one that you are interested in?
- If in the future, when will your unit be ready?
- Do you have to sell your current home before you move in?
- Can I rent until my home sells?
- Can you hold your unit for 7 days while you are making your final decision by giving a \$1,000 refundable Reservation Agreement?
- Should I get legal or accounting advice?
- When will the 10% down payment be required to bind the contract?
- When will I have to pay for the remaining balance for my new home?
- Is this style of housing in a good location, planned for the future, with optional services, a secure investment?

Any other questions?

Check out cdlhomes.com and learn more about Aging In Place at AlbertaCommunityBuilders.com