

Baby boomers pursuing passion to new home

Quality-of-life criteria determines boomers' next move

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For past generations, a retirement dream home meant proximity to the shuffleboard court.

Not anymore. Increasingly, older adults choose to embark on new careers or continued education -- and they're seeking residences that facilitate those vibrant lifestyles. About 3.5 million boomer households moved last year, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

"Before you think about the home you want, it's important to envision the life you want," says Nancy Fernandez Mills, co-author of *Boomers! Funding Your Future in an Age of Uncertainty* and co-host of the PBS series "Boomers! Redefining Life After Fifty."

Consider these quality-of-life criteria, designed to help pinpoint the ideal base camp for the next phase of your journey.

Career path

"For some people, this is a great time to retire from their main career and switch to something else they never got to do," Mills says. That was true for Jeff Harris, who recently moved with his wife from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley to York, S.C. "I own an investment management practice, but I only go to the office two days a month now -- and I want to develop a career in public speaking," he says. "Our new home is 45 minutes outside of Charlotte, which has a very active chapter of the National Speakers Association."

Family

Sure, you want to dote on grandchildren -- but don't feel guilty if you want to live in a different time zone. The National Association of Realtors (NAR) surveyed nearly 2,000 Americans born between 1946 and 1964, and found that for households with an annual income of \$100,000 or more, only about one-third cited proximity to family as an important factor for a home location.

Even if your tennis game puts most 30-somethings to shame, plan ahead for changes in your health. That means access to dependable health-care services.

Guess which factor the NAR survey respondents placed above family? Proximity to quality medical care -- 41 percent said it was important for assessing a retirement location.

Hobbies and sports

For many baby boomers, retirement provides a chance to pursue their passions, whether it's painting, sailing -- or in Harris' case, flying airplanes. "It's a big hobby for me," he says. A nearby airport had a hangar available for Harris to store his airplane, "and there aren't a whole lot of hangars available at most airports." His hobby also provides a valuable service -- Harris volunteers for Airlift Hope, which coordinates pilots who donate their time and fly patients to specialized medical facilities.

Continuing education

Join the growing ranks of 50-plus Americans heading back to school -- but not to seek career advancement. "My wife was very excited because there's a school of ministry in Charlotte she's always wanted to attend," Harris says. "She's going to take a one-year course there, but isn't pursuing it as a profession." Look for schools nearby with a robust continuing education program, like the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (formerly the Third Age University) at University of Texas at Austin.

Transportation

How far is the nearest airport -- and how convenient is public transportation? If you prefer to use your own two feet, you're not alone. "Livable community" is a new buzzword, and part of that means being able to walk to cafe, library, movie theater," Mills says. "That's very attractive to a lot of people -- having a social scene that you can walk to."