

Aging in Place vs. Moving to a 55+ Community: Here Are Some Considerations

It has been almost four months since Rita and I moved into our 2-bedroom rental in an "active adult" 55+ community. As such, not all our fellow residents are retired, much less in need of assistance in day-to-day living. Meals are not provided other than a daily continental breakfast, the primary purpose of which is to facilitate socializing.

Why would seniors want to sell their beloved single-family home with a vegetable garden and fenced yard for their dog? Good question! We loved our home backing to Lookout Mountain, where we lived for 10 years before selling it in March. Our motivation was purely financial at the time, believing that we were at the top of the sellers market. We thought that "cashing out" and renting for a year or two might make sense financially, and we liked what we saw at Avenida Lakewood.

In our minds, it turned out to be a good decision, but would it be a good decision for you? Rita and I have had some time now to weigh the pros and cons (mostly pros) of that decision, and I thought it would make a good topic for this column.

The most compelling positive about our move is that *we gained a community* which we lacked in the isolation of our single-family home. Yes, we knew and liked many of our neighbors, but Avenida takes community to a whole new level.

As I mentioned in a prior column, we had made more friends in our first month than we made in 10 years as owners of our single-family home. That's precisely because it's a 55+ community, and not because it's an apartment building.

In a regular apartment building,

one might occasionally see a neighbor in the hallway, elevator or lobby, but the level of activity in a 55+ community is such that it's rare for us not to see neighbors every time we leave our apartment, not to mention when we engage in one of the group activities.

When we would leave our Golden home, we usually left by car from our garage, and the most "connection" we'd have with our neighbors might be waving to them through the car window. I might see my next-door neighbor when I walked to the mailbox, and I did meet fellow dog walkers when I took our dog out once a day. But that was about it.

In any given month there are over 300 group activities for our 275+ fellow residents. (I've posted the calendar of July's Avenida events at www.GoldenREblog.com, so you can see the variety.) I myself will attend three fitness classes this week — one on strength building, another on balance and flexibility, and a third on cardio conditioning. Rita likes her Mahjong group and a couple card game groups, and she is joining me on two of those workouts. I also joined the group that writes the monthly newsletter.

That's just 2% of the available activities, however, and over half our fellow residents engage in 10 or more activities each month. *That's what creates the community.* Rita and I are new, so we don't know everyone's name, but it seems that many fellow residents do, and social director Sadie definitely knows everyone by name.

Being in our 70s, it's inevitable that one day in the next 20 or so years, one of us will pre-decease the

other, and I can already see that many arms will embrace the one of us who lives on. One well-loved resident died in March (none since, by the way), and he was mourned in the newsletter — which also features a paragraph about each resident who moves in or leaves.

So, *community* is the number one "pro" of our new lifestyle. In our prior homes, Rita and I never experienced such a sense of community.

While one might miss the lawns and gardens of his/her single-family home, it's hard to miss the weeding, lawn mowing and snow shoveling — although I did enjoy using my new electric snow blower! (I have it in storage, if you'd like to buy it.)

Rita wasn't keen about our move initially but has come to love our new home. The few "cons" that we came up with, such as having to dispose of so many possessions or having to walk the dog instead of letting it out the back door, have proved in the end to be positives.

Getting rid of decades of accumulated possessions was a challenge, but a good one. Our heirs will have far less to deal with, and several charities benefited from our donations. And having to walk the dog helps me complete the exercise rings on my Apple Watch each day!

We no longer have a garage, just a carport in the parking lot. With less need of two cars, we have downsized to just one. There are four ChargePoint charging stations in the parking lot, and there's a bike room for my electric bike.

We have no pantry and a smaller refrigerator, and there's no place to put a second refrigerator or freezer, so we are spending less money at Costco these days. We were able to rent storage cages on the same floor as our apartment, which helps.

We had to drive to everything before, but now we are within walking distance of a King Soopers, a liquor store, and three favorite restaurants (Mexican, Chinese and

Japanese) plus a light rail station.

Several food trucks come to our building each month, and a mini farmer's market sets up in one of the many common spaces each month. A carpool to a weekly farmer's market is one of the summer activities.

We don't have a guest bedroom as we did in our home, but the building has two nicely furnished guest apartments that residents can reserve for a reasonable fee.

Our kitchen is much smaller than the fabulous kitchen in our home, especially regarding counterspace, but Rita bought a rolling island and recently volunteered to me that she loves our kitchen now.

Our stacked washer and dryer aren't as nice or as big as our high-efficiency units were, but there are jumbo units in the basement that we can use for free if the need arises (for comforters, etc.). There's also a dog wash room, but our mobile groomer comes to Avenida just as she did to our prior home. Rita and I like to patronize the salon, too!

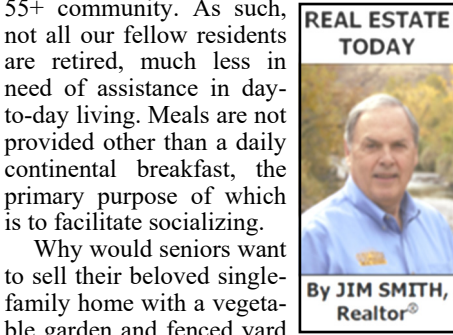
Security is another advantage of our particular community, with a private security company patrolling our parking lot and sidewalks from dusk until dawn every day. Residents are issued a credit card-sized RFID card which opens all the doors and gates to the building.

I welcome readers' feedback on this perspective on the 55+ rental option. It should be pointed out that there are many different types of 55+ communities including ones with owned single-family homes.

Useful Website on Downsizing

A reader notified me of a retirement website that his organization has created to provide advice on retirement and downsizing. He wrote: "We cover everything from finances and moving logistics to coping with the emotions that come from parting with a family home. Please feel free to take a look."

I did take a look, and it's good. See the link at GoldenREblog.com.



Just Listed: Rare Patio Home Near Arvada Center

Are you looking for a maintenance-free patio home? Here it is, a 3-bedroom ranch-style home at **8266 W. 67th Place**, in a quiet subdivision called Meadow Ridge at Hagaman Ranch, within walking distance of the Arvada Center for the Arts. Great finishes inside, a 5'x19' covered porch, and a 10'x17' deck in back with an electric retractable awning and sun shade. The unfinished half-basement with a structural concrete floor plus an equally large crawl space provide great storage. The HOA shovels snow right up to your garage and front porch. Arvada High School is also within walking distance, and Old Towne Arvada with its light rail station is just a mile south of this home. Don't miss the video tour at www.ArvidaPatioHome.com, which shows you all the features of this great home, then call your agent or Jim Smith at **303-525-1851** to set a private showing — or come to the **open house on Saturday, July 30th, from noon to 2pm.**



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