

Iowa Networking

FIVE THINGS ... you should know about choosing a senior living community

1 Consider passions and hobbies.

Choose a community that fits the retiree's lifestyle and interests. "Senior living is much like living at home — or even better," Scott Harrison says. He recommends picking a place with programs that focus on physical, emotional, spiritual, vocational, intellectual and social well being.

2 Search for services.

"Communities typically take care of housekeeping, maintenance and scheduled transportation," he says. "It's part of helping seniors lead a worry-free lifestyle." Look for on-site amenities such as beauty or barber shops, libraries and banking services, art studios, woodworking shops and walking paths.

3 Understand financial options.

Communities offer different entrance fees and a variety of contracts. Examining finances also allows seniors to budget monthly expenditures without any surprises. "Make sure you compare apples to apples and talk with your tax adviser or financial planner to see which option is best for you," Harrison says.

4 Research health care.

Does the community have health care and assisted living available on site? A continuum of care from independent living to skilled nursing will allow residents to stay in the community if they eventually have health needs.

5 Examine financial stability.

Check financial status and observe how the community invests money. Ask if the community is part of a larger organization and check rating services, such as FitchRatings.com. "Does it have a good track record and a strong balance sheet?" Harrison says.

— Kayla Craig



Scott Harrison

is president and chief executive of Lifespace Communities. The Des Moines company owns Deerfield in Urbandale and 10 other senior living communities in seven states.