

NYT's Five-Year Retirement Plan

If you're about five years out from retirement and break into a cold sweat when you think about what your future holds, it seems that you're not alone.

Have I saved enough? Should I downsize? Can I even afford to retire?

The *New York Times* offers answers with its "Countdown to Retirement: A Five-Year Plan" (<https://nyti.ms/2NmIMpp>)

The story acknowledges pre-retirees' fear and provides the steps you can take year-by-year during the five years preceding retirement to ensure that you're ready for the transition.

With five years to go, for example, your first, most daunting step is taking a hard look at your finances—savings, asset allocation, future income, and so forth, and running what-if scenarios.

At the four-year mark, you may want to consider your future living arrangements for later in retirement. Investigate retirement communities. See what you like, get a feel for a community's costs, and see how easily you can move from independent to assisted living as your needs change.

Three years out, consider what your day-to-day life will entail. That is, what will you do all day? Think about housing again. Will you downsize or stay in your current home? If you're going to sell your house, what upgrades will it need? What needs to be done if you'd like to stay there as you age? It's best to take on such projects while you still have a salary.

Two years before retirement is another good time to closely eye your financing and consider some financial maneuvering—perhaps converting a tax-deferred I.R.A. into a Roth I.R.A. and practicing living on a reduced salary, for example.

Exploring Medicare, making tweaks to your investment portfolio, and ensuring that you have cash for your living expenses are all things to do in that final year.

Smart-Home Security

Sure, the smart-home features that let you control your house remotely or by voice are hugely convenient.

But all those connected devices that let you open your garage door, unlock doors, turn on lights, and change the temperature, also can compromise your privacy and security when you buy a home.

A recent NBC News report (<https://nbcnews.to/2NmiTuj>) warns that a home's previous owner could still have control over all those devices, including cameras inside the house, if you haven't taken steps to wipe and reset all the data.

When you buy a property, be sure you know about every smart device that's in the house.

Remove the previous homeowner's profile and contact information on each one, update the software, and reset the passwords.

If you're still concerned about privacy, consider buying new thermostats and garage door openers, and replacing smart lightbulbs.

Build Lifelines for Aging

Just as you built a network during your work life to advance your career, it's a good idea to build a network for aging.

That's one concept that has emerged from a program, "GIANTS" (Grand Individuals Aging with Neighbours in Thunder Bay), in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

The idea <http://bit.ly/2mmgLXX> is to create a list of eight people—friends, neighbors, relative, tennis buddies, handymen, and so forth—who can be your lifelines when you age.

They're people you can rely to make you feel connected to your community, stave off loneliness, help you in a pinch, meet up for coffee, and so forth.

And you can do the same for them.

Since it often gets more difficult to find new friends and build relationships as people age, it's never too early to start looking around and picking your group.

If you're a young baby boomer, for example, now is a good time to establish and nurture those relationships so that they last for the long haul.

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