

The Central Indiana Downsizing Guide

Rightsize your home, protect your finances,
and move forward with confidence.

A 55+ guide by Robert Francois, SRES®
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A Note From Robert

If you're reading this, you've probably had the thought: this house is more than we need now. Maybe the kids are grown and gone. Maybe the stairs are getting old. Maybe you're just tired of spending weekends on upkeep instead of enjoying life.

That thought is worth taking seriously — and worth doing well. A move at this stage of life isn't just a real estate transaction. It's a financial decision, a lifestyle decision, and an emotional one. I wrote this guide so you can think it through clearly before you decide anything.

A little about me: I'm a Residential Real Estate Specialist serving central Indiana, and I hold the SRES® (Seniors Real Estate Specialist) designation — specialized training in the unique needs of home buyers and sellers age 55+. My background is in accounting and finance, so the money side of your move gets the attention it deserves. I work with families in English, Français, Kreyòl, and Español.

This guide is education, not advice. For tax, legal, or financial decisions, always consult your own professionals — and I'll happily connect you with trusted ones. When you're ready to talk through your situation, call or text me at 317-480-6590.

Let's begin.

Chapter 1: Is It Time? 7 Signs You're Ready

There's no perfect age to downsize — there's only the right season of life. See how many of these sound familiar:

1. Rooms you haven't entered in months. If entire bedrooms, the basement, or the formal dining room sit unused, you're heating, cooling, cleaning, and insuring space you don't live in.
2. Maintenance is a burden, not a hobby. When the yard, the gutters, and the repairs feel like obligations instead of pride, the house owns you — not the other way around.
3. The stairs are a daily negotiation. One-level living isn't just convenience; it's planning ahead for the next 15–20 years.
4. Your money is trapped in walls. If most of your net worth sits in home equity while monthly costs strain a fixed or semi-fixed income, a move can free up cash and lower bills at the same time.

5. You're far from what matters. Grandkids, doctors, friends, church — if life keeps pulling you across town, consider moving toward it.
6. You want simpler, not smaller-minded. Downsizing isn't giving up. It's trading square footage for freedom: travel, hobbies, time with family.
7. The thought keeps coming back. If you've considered it more than twice this year, it's not a passing mood. Explore it properly — that's what this guide is for.

If three or more ring true, keep reading. The next chapters give you the numbers and the plan.

Chapter 2: What 'Downsizing' Really Means

Forget the word 'downsizing' if it bothers you. Professionals call it rightsizing: matching your home to the life you actually live now. That can take several forms:

Your options in central Indiana

- **Smaller single-family home.** A 2–3 bedroom ranch on a manageable lot. Stays familiar, cuts upkeep.
- **One-level condo or townhome.** No stairs, exterior maintenance often handled by the association. Read HOA rules and fees carefully.
- **55+ community. Age-restricted neighborhoods with amenities, social life, and low-maintenance homes. Ask me what I know about current options around Fishers, Carmel, Noblesville, and Brownsburg.**
- **New construction ranch.** Modern one-level plans, energy efficient, builder warranties. Several central Indiana builders focus on this segment.
- **Stay and modify.** Sometimes the right move is no move: main-floor laundry, a stair lift, bathroom grab bars, and a lawn service can extend your years in the home you love.

There is no universally 'best' option — only the best fit for your health, finances, family geography, and how you want your days to feel. Chapter 7 gives you a checklist for evaluating any home.

Chapter 3: The Money Side

This is where my finance background earns its keep. A move at 55+ should improve your monthly picture, not just change your address. Let's run the numbers honestly.

The true cost of staying

Most people underestimate what their current home costs. Add up a full year:

- Mortgage or rent payment (principal + interest)
- Property taxes (check your current assessment — Indiana assessments have shifted notably in recent years)
- Homeowner's insurance
- Utilities (heating/cooling a larger home adds up)
- Maintenance and repairs (budget roughly 1–2% of home value per year on an older home)
- Lawn care, snow removal, gutter cleaning — whether you pay someone or 'pay' with your weekends

Stay vs. move worksheet

Fill this in with your real numbers. Use monthly figures:

Monthly cost	Staying (current home)	Moving (next home)
Housing payment	\$_____	\$_____
Property tax	\$_____	\$_____
Insurance	\$_____	\$_____
Utilities	\$_____	\$_____
Maintenance/repairs	\$_____	\$_____
Yard / exterior	\$_____	\$_____
HOA (if any)	\$_____	\$_____
TOTAL	\$_____	\$_____

Then add the one-time side: estimated net proceeds from selling (sale price minus mortgage payoff, closing costs, and repairs), minus the cost of the next home and moving expenses. What's left is capital you free up — for savings, travel, helping family, or simply breathing room.

A few financial notes

- **Capital gains.** If you've lived in the home 2 of the last 5 years, federal law may exclude up to \$250,000 of gain (\$500,000 for married couples). Confirm your situation with a tax professional.
- **Indiana property taxes.** The homestead deduction and caps (1% of assessed value for homesteads) matter here — a move changes your tax picture. Your county assessor's site has the details.
- **Don't buy the payment, buy the plan.** A smaller mortgage at today's rates can still beat a paid-off house with \$800/month in taxes, insurance, and upkeep. Run the worksheet before assuming.

This is general education, not financial advice. I always recommend a conversation with your CPA or financial advisor before deciding — I can suggest professionals experienced with 55+ movers.

Chapter 4: Your 90-Day Timeline

A calm, well-paced move beats a rushed one every time. Here's a realistic framework — compress or stretch it to fit your life:

When	Focus	Key actions
Days 1–30	Decide & declutter	Run the money worksheet; tour 2–3 possible next-home options; begin sorting belongings room by room (see Chapter 5).
Days 31–60	Prepare to sell	Get a pricing analysis; handle repairs and touch-ups; interview movers; line up financing or proof of funds if

		buying.
Days 61–75	List & shop	Home goes on the market; serious house-hunting for your next place; keep decluttering as showings happen.
Days 76–90	Close & move	Accept offers; inspections and appraisals; coordinate closing dates; move in stages if possible.

The single biggest timeline-killer I see: underestimating decluttering. A lifetime of belongings takes longer to sort than anyone expects. Start Chapter 5 early — even before you're sure you're moving.

Chapter 5: Decluttering a Lifetime

This is the emotional heart of the move, and it deserves patience. You're not 'getting rid of stuff' — you're curating what goes with you into the next chapter.

The four-box method, room by room

Take one room at a time. For every item, it goes in one of four categories:

8. Take with you — it fits the next home and your next life.
9. Give to family — offer specific items to specific people now, not 'someday.' Give them a deadline to collect.
10. Donate or sell — charities, consignment shops, and estate-sale companies all serve central Indiana. For a full house, an estate sale professional is often worth it.
11. Let go — broken, duplicated, or kept from guilt. Thank it and release it.

Be kind to yourself

- Do one room (or one closet) per session. Marathon sorting leads to burnout and bad decisions.

- Photograph sentimental items you can't keep — the memory survives without the object.
- Start with the least emotional rooms (laundry, garage) and work toward the hardest (bedrooms, memory boxes).
- If family wants a say, invite them early with a clear deadline. 'Come choose what you want by the 15th' prevents the limbo of good intentions.

Chapter 6: Selling Your Current Home

Many 55+ sellers have lived in their home 20–40 years. The market has changed since you bought — here's how to sell from strength:

- **Price from data, not memories.** What you paid, what you put into it, and what the neighbor claims their house is worth are not pricing. A current market analysis of comparable central Indiana sales is. I'll prepare one for you free.
- **First impressions still rule.** Fresh neutral paint, decluttered rooms, trimmed landscaping, and good lighting routinely return many times their cost. You don't need a renovation — you need polish.
- **Disclose honestly.** Indiana requires a seller's disclosure. Older homes have quirks; documented honesty builds buyer confidence and prevents deals from falling apart late.
- **Timing.** Spring brings the most buyers in central Indiana, but serious buyers — including relocating 55+ buyers — shop year-round. The right preparation matters more than the perfect month.
- **Where do you go? The most stressful part of selling later in life is the 'where next' question. We solve it before listing: your next home identified, or a flexible closing timeline negotiated. We'll make sure you always know exactly where you're headed next.**

Chapter 7: Finding Your Next Home — The One-Level Checklist

Whether it's a ranch, condo, or 55+ community home, evaluate every candidate against this list:

- One-level living: primary bedroom, full bath, kitchen, and laundry all on the main floor

- Step-free entry (or easily ramped) — think 10 years ahead, not just today
- Doorways and hallways wide enough for comfortable movement
- Low-maintenance exterior: who handles the roof, lawn, and snow?
- HOA: read the actual rules and budget, not the brochure — fees, reserves, and restrictions
- Proximity: family, doctors, hospital, grocery, pharmacy, place of worship
- Natural light and ventilation — it affects mood more than people expect
- Guest space: where do visiting kids and grandkids sleep?
- Storage: downsized doesn't mean zero storage — check closets, garage, attic
- Resale: even if this is your 'forever' home, buy something the next buyer will want too

Want the current list of 55+ communities and one-level new construction around Fishers, Carmel, Noblesville, Brownsburg, and Greenfield? Call or text me at 317-480-6590 — I can help you research current options.

Chapter 8: Working With Family

Adult children are often part of a 55+ move — sometimes helping, sometimes with strong opinions. A few principles keep everyone aligned:

- **It's your decision.** Input is welcome; authority is yours. Say so kindly and early.
- **One point person.** If several kids are involved, designate one sibling as the coordinator to avoid five conflicting instructions.
- **Put logistics in writing.** Who's helping sort? Who's taking the piano? Deadlines prevent resentment.
- **Powers of attorney.** If a parent's health is a factor, make sure POA and healthcare documents are current before the move — your estate attorney can confirm.
- **Talk about money openly — within comfort.** Kids worry about parents overspending or underselling. Sharing the plan (not necessarily the numbers) builds trust.

I regularly work with families across generations and languages — English, Français, Kreyòl, Español — so everyone at the table understands every step.

Chapter 9: Your Team

The right specialists make a 55+ move smooth. You likely need some combination of:

- **An SRES® real estate specialist** to price, market, and negotiate both your sale and purchase with senior-specific expertise. That's my role.
- **An estate or real estate attorney** for contracts, title, POA review, and any trust or estate considerations.
- **A CPA or financial advisor** to model the tax and cash-flow impact before you commit.
- **A trusted mover** preferably one experienced with senior moves — ask me for names.
- **An estate-sale or cleanout professional** if you're clearing a full longtime home.

Don't have these people yet? One call to me at 317-480-6590 and I can help you find reputable professionals.

Chapter 10: Your 7-Day Action Plan

Don't just read — start. One small step per day:

12. Day 1: Fill in the Stay vs. Move worksheet in Chapter 3 with your best estimates.
13. Day 2: Walk your home with fresh eyes. List every room you haven't used in 3 months.
14. Day 3: Call or text me at 317-480-6590 for a free, no-pressure pricing analysis of your current home.
15. Day 4: Drive through 2 neighborhoods or communities you'd consider. Notice how they feel.
16. Day 5: Start one closet with the four-box method from Chapter 5.
17. Day 6: Talk with your family or point person about the idea — share this guide.
18. Day 7: Review your worksheet and your week. Then call me to talk through what you found — even if the answer is 'not yet.'

Ready When You Are

There is no obligation in a conversation. If you're even thinking about a move in the next year or two, the smartest step is information — what your home is worth, what your options cost, and what your timeline could look like. I'll give you all three, free, with zero pressure.

Call or text 317-480-6590 any time. I answer my own phone.

Robert Francois, SRES® · Central Indiana Realtor

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