

*The Summit Residences feature mountainside rancher homes with master on main and an additional level below*



THE HOME YOU LOVE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

# Q&A *with* Lynn Harrison

— By Susan M Boyce —



**Y**ou're on a quest, a search for that elusive entity known as the perfect home. For many first-time buyers, the perfect home is defined as much by price as by features – does it fit the budget or not?

But for mature homeowners who've seen their kids through college, experienced a successful career and are now ready to enter a new phase in their lives, finding the perfect home typically involves more than just a budget. It's about finding a home that will still be a delight in five, 10 or even 20 years.

This issue, *New Home Guide* chats with Lynn Harrison, owner of Harrison Marketing, about some of the considerations for buyers as they right-size for the future.

**Q:** *No matter how many times we do it, buying a home is such an emotional experience that it's easy to get caught up in the heat of the moment. What's your top tip for someone who's looking for a home they can stay in for a long time into retirement – whatever their ideal retirement looks like?*

**A:** Pause for a reality check. That means considering your lifestyle not only in terms of what's important to you now, but what's going to be important in the future. People often ignore the fact they're going to feel differently in their 70s than they do in their 50s — no matter what their health is like. Unfortunately, it frequently means they end up moving more often than they need to.

**Q: *Are downsizing and moving to a condo synonymous?***

A: Not at all. Although many people do, not everyone wants to move to a condo or even a townhouse when they're ready to sell their large, single-family home. But they will most likely be looking for different features in their new house.

For example, at The Summit Residences in Chilliwack, I saw many buyers who were 60-plus, barely retired, and loved the concept of a rancher with full basement below. It meant their master suite and regular, day-to-day living was all on one level, but looking ahead, they could still have guest bedrooms or extras like a home office – rooms they probably wouldn't use more than a couple of times a week – on the secondary level.

A two-storey with master on the main is also a more cost-effective alternative to a traditional rancher – a big consideration with today's escalating land prices – because it has the same footprint but twice the square footage.

**Q: *Aging in place is something that's beginning to come to the forefront of people's awareness – especially Baby Boomers. What are some of the features that make it possible to stay in your home for a long time?***

A: Accessibility is important, but it's a misconception to think accessibility equates to an institutional look. Simple steps like making sure your hallways are wide enough, having at least one walk-in shower instead of all soaker tubs, or installing lever-style door handles instead of knobs. I've also heard of homes where a main floor and second floor closet were stacked, so if the homeowner needed an elevator in the future, it's an

easy conversion and he could still get to his upper floor bedroom.

Plus, there are simple things you can do during construction – like putting extra bracing inside the walls anywhere you think you might need a grab bar or railing in the future – that you'll never even realize are there until you need them.

**Q: *How are today's active retirees and semi-retirees different than earlier generations when it comes to choosing a home for the future?***

A: Not so long ago, no one would have thought of moving into a more dense neighbourhood as they get older. But now, whether it's for environmental or medical reasons, many buyers want to park their car most of the time and walk to amenities like shopping or entertainment. For them, a more urban setting makes sense. It's also often easier to make new friends when all you need to do is walk across the street to that cool coffee shop or funky boutique. Even if you choose not to go out every day, the fact you could creates a sense of connection – a connection we sometimes lose as we age, and friends and family move away.

The other side of that question is when you see parents moving to the suburbs so they can be closer to their children and grandchildren.

But ultimately, a move is usually about lifestyle. In addition, more mature buyers want the nice things they put off while they were paying for the kids to go through school. A simple luxury like the beauty of granite counters wasn't practical with a young family because it would break too many dishes. Now they can have it and enjoy it.



*Built for total flexibility, this Mariner's Retreat by Harald Koehn Construction even has a bed that pulls out of the wall.*