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Yes, it's true...real estate in the secondary home marketplaces, including on Salt Spring Island, continues to strengthen.

Our season for coastal discretionary regions runs from March Break to the Canadian Thanksgiving celebration in October. More outcomes to be reported on as activity goes forward...the season is just now clicking into place.

Prices on Salt Spring have not yet stabilized, to date, but sales volume has increased. It may take until May to see the true pattern of 2015's market rhythm for the Gulf Islands.

Meantime...forecasters are noting continuing growth in primary residence/city markets, including from the elder population.

Remember that Country Mouse/City Mouse story? It was a "grass is always greener" alert...Country Mouse was convinced City Mouse's life was much more fun, & City Mouse returned the favour...just so certain that Country Mouse had the best of all lifestyles.

You know the rest: they switched lives and discovered the old truth that we are usually happiest right where we first find ourselves. Well, most of the time.

This aphoristic tale might need a little updating for our times. With life expectancies extending dramatically, we might need to separate retirement years into two sections: Early and Late(r) Retirement.

My thought about this is real estate oriented, as it's about the advantages/disadvantages of primary residence (city) and secondary home (rural & small town) lifestyles, as one truly ages.

In the early 1990s, pre-internet impact, there was an entire movement being discussed, called Penturbia. The idea was that people would retire & leave the cities to seek pleasing small towns...thus leaving a primary residence region for a secondary home area.

Small towns had infrastructure (hospitals, health services, cultural options, rural beauties on their boundaries, some had colleges/universities, & many offered amenities to allure one in those retirement years. What was that hobby you always wanted to explore? You get the idea).

Now, in the real post-Internet world of 2015 & on, there is a supposed move back to the city from small town/rural regions. Forecasts say that over 70% of the world's population will be living in cities, in the very near future.

There is also the thought that elderly seniors will prefer to walk to services/amenities and will prefer to live in the heart of cities. It's not a suburb experience that's being sought...it's a move to a downtown core.

Hmmm....

In this great Pacific Northwest Coast region, what are some of these potentially impacted smaller townships?

On the Vancouver Island side of Georgia Strait, we could look at Duncan (the main hub of the very large Cowichan Valley, which includes Mill Bay, Cowichan Bay, Maple Bay, Yellowpoint, Lake Cowichan), plus at Nanaimo, at Parksville/Qualicum Beach, at Courtenay/Comox, at Campbell River. Let's not forget Port Alberni & the wild west coast (Uclulet & Tofino).

What about the lovely Gulf Islands? Southern islands: Salt Spring, Penders, Mayne, Galiano, Saturna, Thetis, Galiano. Mid-islands: Denman and Hornby. Northern: Quadra & Cortes. And what about southern Vancouver Island: Sooke, Metchosin, Saanich neighbourhoods?

On the Mainland side of Georgia Strait, we have the Sunshine Coast (includes Powell River, Sechelt, Gibsons), plus Texada Island & the Howe Sound Islands (Bowen, Keats, Gambier).

For all of these regions, a B.C. Ferry is involved in transport from the Lower Mainland, and a second ferry is required for a Gulf Island. Or, a floatplane or land based plane as travel opportunities are also possible to these destinations.

Hmmm....

So, if people enjoy vacation places on the Gulf Islands, on Vancouver Island, & on the Sunshine Coast, and then retire to them for that first time discovery retirement age, & then live on to where they might be in that second retirement phase, what then?

Well, if we're talking about the over 80s age group, and we are, then what about driving? In some areas, one loses one's driving licence at age 80...regardless. Diminishing physical health may become an issue. The loss of a partner can breed isolation and loneliness.

Hmmm....

I can see that enjoyment of a recreational property between childhood (with parents) to retirement (say, age 60, to your own retreat property), will add to the quality of your life. After 80, however, what might be best alternatives?

Good transit, easy walking places, all amenities easily at hand, smaller homes with no yard maintenance (spells "condo" to me), plus options specific to aging seniors to keep those grey cells in good order...all might be on a script for positive aging. Are such aging in place elements strongly in place in a secondary home area property choice?

Well...there's the challenge for all those delectable secondary home & recreational & retirement regions. To be able to remain in these scenically pristine regions will only add to the quality of life for all who are lucky enough to live in same. It's essential, though, to be paying attention to that second segment of aging, & to meet those challenges.

Time to talk to the elected officials, whether municipal or CRD or Islands Trust...plus provincial & federal. Let's make sure that the energizing & inspirational aspects of life in a secondary home region continue to optimize lifestyles between 80 & 100+.

The biotech revolution predicts that many will live to 100. The small town/rural options maintain a strong sense of personal community. Surely this is the key to successful aging outcomes?

Hmmm....

I think the smaller & more caring approach is key. It needs to be coupled with a physical infrastructure of ease, tailored to those physical dilemmas that capture the elderly. The personal recognition in a smaller community perhaps far outweighs the anonymity of a city environment. So, public officials, are you on this & are ahead of the need?

Salt Spring Island is well positioned in that it seems to attract a thoughtful population, & this aging in place aspect, for age 80 & older, is actively on the agenda of this unique community. Join in the discussions. Salt Spring often models out successful solutions for many community challenges...positive aging in place is no exception.

And your thoughts are? Always welcome!

Thinking of buying or selling? Please call me. Your best outcomes are my motivation. As your full-time & full-service real estate agent, specializing on Salt Spring Island & the Southern Gulf Islands, I look forward to bringing my knowledge (of both inventory & of trends) and experience (consistent award winning realtor) to your benefit.

How may I help you to buy your special Salt Spring Island or Gulf Island property?

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