



SALES AND MARKETING ROUNDTABLE #277: Integrating Place Planning into Financial Planning with Meg Stoltzfus, LCPC, and Lydia Durski, CFP

Thank you to everyone who attended our latest Sales and Marketing Roundtable! To provide anonymity during the Roundtable discussion, participants and their communities will not be identified.

ABOUT OUR GUESTS

This week on Varsity's Roundtable, we were joined by Meg Stoltzfus, LCPC, Live Well Retirement Navigator at Financial Council, and Lydia Durski, CFP®, Advisor at Financial Council.

Together, they shared how integrating place planning into financial planning helps clients better navigate their options as they age. The conversation blended financial insight with real-world decisions on where and how to live well in retirement!



“People know senior living is an option, but they don’t understand it. They want someone unbiased and trusted to lay out all the choices.” (Meg Stoltzfus)



FRESH PERSPECTIVES

- **HUMAN-CENTERED DIFFERENTIATION** - Financial Council didn't create its navigation program as a marketing tactic—it was born from a genuine need to help clients make better life decisions. That authenticity has become a powerful differentiator in a crowded marketplace.
- **GUIDED DECISION-MAKING** - Clients often default to staying at home simply because they don't understand all the options. Acting as an unbiased guide, Meg helps them define goals, weigh choices, and move from reactive to proactive planning.
- **THE VALUE OF "PLACE PLANNING"** - Instead of focusing solely on housing, the firm uses place planning—factoring in health, finances, and social connections—to help clients envision where and how they want to live across different stages of retirement.
- **A ROLE BEYOND FINANCE** - Meg's position is rare in financial services but likely to grow. By combining counseling expertise with financial planning, she brings a uniquely human layer that technology or AI cannot replicate.
- **PARTNERSHIPS THAT BUILD TRUST** - Senior living communities, care managers, and financial advisors can be stronger together. Building these relationships provides clients with holistic, unbiased guidance and strengthens trust across all sides.

LINKS & CONTACT INFO

Meg Stoltzfus, LCPC ([Linkedin](#))

Lydia Durski, CFP ([Linkedin](#))

Financial Council ([website](#))

COMING UP ON VARSITY'S ROUNDTABLE!

Please join our next Roundtable gathering on Thursday, October 9 at noon ET, 11 a.m. CT and 9 a.m. PT. We'll be joined by Peter Murphy Lewis, a documentary filmmaker who created People Worth Caring About, a YouTube series that shines a spotlight on caregivers in long-term care.

NEW ON VARSITY'S PODCAST, ROUNDTABLE TALK

Agetech is one of the fastest-growing frontiers in innovation, with the potential to transform how older adults live, connect, and thrive. At the center of this movement is Rick Robinson, Vice President and General Manager of the Agetech Collaborative from AARP, who is building a vibrant ecosystem of startups, investors, and enterprises committed to reshaping the future of aging.

In this episode of Roundtable Talk, Rick discusses how the collaborative accelerates startups, drives inclusivity in product design, and helps older adults embrace new technology. He also highlights the promise of AI and embodied devices to ease challenges like social isolation and the caregiver shortage. Check out the [episode here](#) on the Varsity website!





It is a paradox that the older one gets, the more meaningful decisions one needs to make, but the more confusing the choices become.

~A Financial Council client



A client recently shared a thoughtful observation: as people age, they're faced with more meaningful life decisions, yet the options only seem to get more confusing. This line stuck with Meg, especially since it came from a well-regarded professor in the Baltimore area after she explained the concept of CCRC at home. His response captured the heart of the challenge many face in the second half of life—navigating complicated, high-stakes choices. That's exactly where Meg and Lydia step in, helping people sort through the complexity and find clarity.



Financial Council is a comprehensive retirement planning and asset management firm based in Towson, Maryland.

Boutique firm founded in 1957

7 financial advisors; 21 total staff members

Strong focus on educating and empowering clients

Created its Live Well Retirement Navigation™ program in 2022



Financial Council is a boutique retirement planning and asset management company in Towson, Maryland, just north of Baltimore. It has deep roots—founded in 1957 by the father of current president Bill Leeb, who later joined him in the business after college. Today, the team includes seven financial advisors, with another soon to be licensed, and a total staff of 21 (about to be 22).

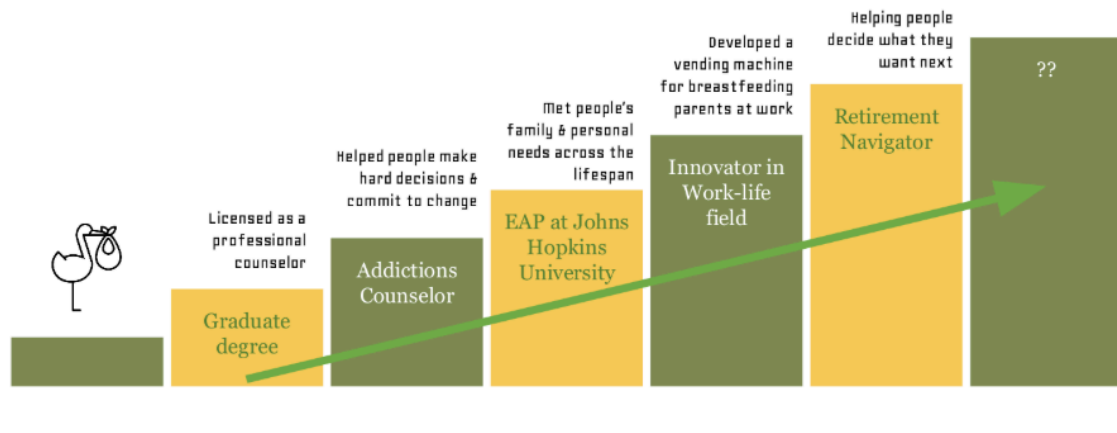
Growth has been intentional and steady, with a strong emphasis on personal relationships. Clients aren't just numbers—they're treated like family, with advisors often celebrating milestones alongside them.



Meg's role centers on education and guidance, especially around housing and care in later life. With a background as a licensed counselor, she acts as a thought partner and advocate—helping clients weigh options, navigate family conversations, and make confident choices.

She isn't a hands-on care manager or placement specialist, but a trusted resource who builds on the firm's existing client relationships. The position is rare in financial services, though she's seen a similar program at a Virginia firm. Looking ahead, she believes these human-centered roles will become more common, since they provide the kind of support AI can't replicate.

Meg's Career Path



Meg joked about being a “unicorn” because her career path is so unique. Starting out in addiction treatment, she spent 10 years helping people in methadone maintenance programs make tough life choices. From there, she moved to Johns Hopkins, first in the employee assistance program and later in the work-life office, where she created innovative solutions like a vending machine for breastfeeding pump parts for parents who forgot essential parts for their breast pump at home.

That role exposed her to the full spectrum of life services—from child care to elder care—and eventually led her to meet the firm’s principal, who asked her to develop a program that helps clients figure out what they want in retirement, not just what they can afford. She loves the work, sees it as a natural extension of her problem-solving mindset, and is excited about the future of the role.



The kinds of conversations clients bring up are often deeply personal and usually tied to “place”—where and how they want to live as they age. Concerns range from managing stairs after a fall to deciding between a condo, a one-story home, or moving closer to children. Some grapple with how to plan care for a child with special needs, which is coming up more often now.

The firm leans on “place planning” principles, influenced by Ryan Frederick’s *Right Place, Right Time*, to help clients weigh housing, health, finances, and social connections. They break retirement into three ten-year stages: early on, people may dream of a second home or warmer climate; in the middle stage, the focus shifts to questions about housing, safety, and community.

Why we integrate non- financial planning

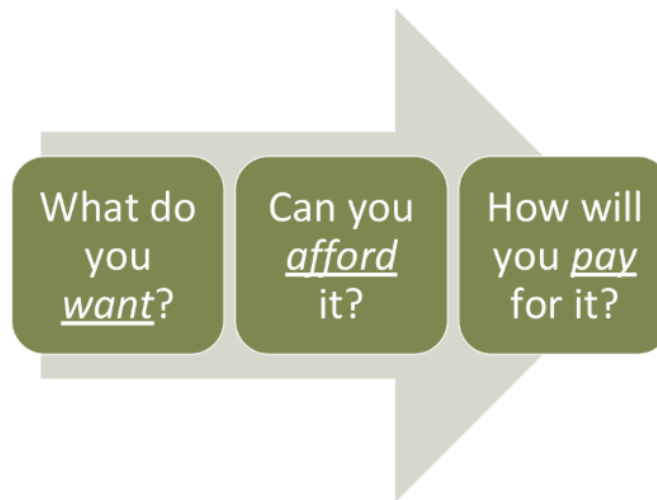
To support proactive planning and
informed decision-making for our
valued clients and their families

 Financial Council
Retire Well...

The program wasn't created as a marketing ploy—it grew out of a genuine desire to help clients make better, more proactive decisions. That said, it's become a differentiator for the firm and does support their marketing strategy. Many people, even those with advisors, still struggle with indecision or make impulsive choices they later regret, like rushing into a move. The goal is to slow that down and guide them toward informed, thoughtful planning.

The process starts with one key question: *What's the goal?* Clients may have very different objectives, and her role is to help them articulate what they truly want. Once that vision is clear, she partners with their financial advisor to connect the dots between aspirations and practical planning.

How we integrate non-financial planning



 **Financial Council**
Retire Well...™

From the advisor's side, Meg adds an essential layer to the planning process. Financial planning isn't just about whether something is affordable—it's about whether it aligns with what a client truly wants. Advisors should be regularly reviewing client's income needs, as well as life goals like travel, hobbies, home improvements, and this can and should involve place planning goals. We utilize Meg to help us better understand costs of senior living and contract types. Her role also ensures those choices are intentional rather than impulsive.

Once a client decides a path—like moving to senior living or aging at home—the advisors run financial plans to see how it fits alongside the rest of their lifestyle. Every client's situation is different: some can fund it by selling a home, others need to draw from accounts, or they need equity from their home as well as funds from their portfolios. The advisors then step in to structure costs efficiently, balancing affordability, taxes, and long-term stability so clients can move forward with confidence.

3 Types of Consults



Urgent

Typically involve housing & care



Beginning Planner

Unsure where to start



Prepared Planner

Is there anything else we need to think about?

In her three years at the firm, most of the work falls into three types of consultations. First are the urgent cases, usually tied to immediate housing or care needs. Then there are the beginners, people who know they should plan but don't know where to start. Finally, there are the prepared planners, who already have a direction and just want to refine details—like timing, downsizing, or making sure they haven't missed anything.

People know senior living is one option, but they don't understand it.

And they want to understand **ALL** their options from an unbiased and trusted source.



The big challenge is that people know senior living exists, but they don't really understand it—or the full range of options. Many in the Baltimore area have seen a family member or neighbor move into a CCRC, but few realize that rental communities or other alternatives are available. Most default to “staying at home,” not because it's always the best choice, but because they don't know what else is out there.

What clients really want is an unbiased, trusted source who can lay out every option—whether it's staying at home with a plan, moving to a condo or apartment, or considering senior living. They're also looking for guidance on timing and flexibility, so they can make proactive, confident decisions instead of reactive ones.

QUESTIONS

IS YOUR ROLE SOMETHING THAT YOU'VE SEEN ELSEWHERE? IS IT UNIQUE TO FINANCIAL COUNCIL? THE ROLE SEEMS LIKE SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE GREAT FOR COMMUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH.

MEG: My role is still pretty rare in the financial world. The only person I've connected with who does something similar is Arvette Reid at SEIA's Tyson's Corner office, where she runs a program focused on financing senior living goals. Beyond that, the closest models I've seen are care managers working with elder law or estate planning attorneys.

I do think this type of role will become more common. Financial firms need to offer services that go beyond what AI or software can provide—things that really require human connection and guidance. I've also noticed some real estate professionals starting to take a more holistic approach, but within financial firms, this model is still unique.

HOW DID YOU EDUCATE YOURSELF ON THE SENIOR LIVING MARKETPLACE, AND WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS WORKING WITH FINANCIAL ADVISORS WHO MAY NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND ENTRANCE FEE COMMUNITIES?

LYDIA: I'll be honest—I didn't fully understand all the details at first. Having Meg as a resource has been invaluable because she's done deep research into the different types of plans communities offer. Together, we look at whether Type A or Type C makes the most sense for a client, based on health, cognitive capacity, and personal needs. From there, we run the numbers to see if it's affordable.

I can't speak for how other advisors approach this, but at our firm we've built a strong process around combining Meg's expertise with our financial planning tools so clients can make the best, most informed decision.

MEG: I see it as two audiences—advisors and clients. For advisors, I look for opportunities to connect through associations like the Financial Planning Association or local and national groups, offering presentations or even informal conversations over lunch. At our firm,

we've been fortunate that advisors are very coachable and committed to doing what's best for clients.

With clients, it's about trust and careful guidance. For example, one couple wanted to stay home for three years because of their role in a grandchild's life. We worked closely with their advisors to review the financial impact, and I used motivational interviewing to better understand their goals. Eventually, they realized on their own they might move sooner, and we helped them visit communities and run the numbers. The process was iterative, balancing what they wanted emotionally with what was financially sustainable.

ARE YOU FINDING THAT CLIENTS ARE SHOWING MORE INTEREST IN RENTAL COMMUNITIES BECAUSE THEY'RE LESS OF A COMMITMENT? AND DO FACTORS LIKE FOR-PROFIT VS. NOT-FOR-PROFIT STATUS COME UP IN THOSE CONVERSATIONS?

MEG: Yes, rental communities often surprise people—they don't realize they exist or that many offer independent, assisted, and memory care on-site. In our area, where there are lots of academics and transplants, that flexibility is especially appealing. Clients like knowing they could relocate more easily if a child or grandchild moves across the country.

That said, it's less about people actively seeking rentals and more about them being pleasantly surprised to learn they have options beyond a CCRC. I don't see much bias against CCRCs from our clients or advisors—once people understand the landscape, they simply want the choice that best fits their situation.

FOR ANYONE ON THIS CALL, HAVE YOU TRIED REACHING OUT TO A LOCAL FINANCIAL ADVISOR? WERE YOU MET WITH A RECEPTIVE GROUP OR WERE THERE ROADBLOCKS?

PARTICIPANT: In my experience, financial advisors don't always understand the products we offer or the value they bring. Their focus is usually on protecting a client's wealth, and there's often a misconception that senior living is too expensive or simply not the right fit. That means part of our job is really to educate advisors—showing them the benefits of moving in earlier, while clients are still independent, rather than waiting until care needs (and costs) are much higher.

It can be a challenge at first, but once advisors understand the value, they tend to become some of the strongest advocates.

LYDIA: From our firm's perspective, it's always the client's money. Our role is to make sure their goals are met. If that goal includes moving to a community that supports their independence while providing resources, then that's what we plan for. That's been my experience working at Financial Council, and I hope others find advisors who take the same client-centered approach.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES ABOUT HOW THEY CAN VIEW ORGANIZATIONS LIKE YOURS AS A PARTNER?

MEG: Start by talking with your own financial advisor about the value your community offers—or connect with a fiduciary through professional associations. Building those relationships creates opportunities to collaborate. We also partner closely with aging life care professionals, who bring an unbiased view of different options and help clients think proactively.

LYDIA: Some advisors focus only on protecting wealth and shy away from conversations about senior living. But avoiding those discussions can backfire—clients may delay or make moves that aren't financially smart. The key is being proactive, engaging early, and balancing wealth preservation with thoughtful planning.