

RETIRE REGAL[®]



The Holy Grail of Retirement

A Retirement Planning Framework for Income,
Tax Strategy, Social Security, Investing, and Legacy

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THE FIVE REALMS OF RETIREMENT™

Once people accept that retirement is not simply a continuation of accumulation, an important realization follows: No single strategy can carry the weight of retirement on its own. Yet many plans try.

They focus heavily on investments, lightly on taxes, episodically on income, and only eventually—if at all—on legacy. Each area is addressed independently, often at different times, by different professionals, using different assumptions.

The result is not failure. It's fragmentation.

Why Retirement Risk Never Arrives One at a Time

Retirement risks don't behave politely. They don't take turns. They don't announce themselves clearly. And they rarely stay confined to one category.

A market decline affects income. Income affects taxes. Taxes affect withdrawal decisions. Withdrawals affect legacy.

Everything touches everything else.

This is why optimizing one area while ignoring the others often creates unintended consequences. A tax-efficient decision can weaken income resilience. A growth-focused portfolio can increase behavioral risk. A

well-intended estate plan can complicate liquidity.

Retirement, in practice, is not a checklist. It's a system.

The Need for a Holistic Map

When systems work well, you rarely notice them. When they fail, the failure feels sudden—even if the cause was long developing. Retirement planning is no different.

What's missing in many plans is not intelligence or effort, but coordination. A way to organize decisions so that, throughout your retirement journey, progress in one area doesn't undermine another.

To this end, every meaningful journey requires more than a destination. It requires a map.

Without a map, progress becomes reactive. Decisions are made one turn at a time, often without understanding how one path affects the next. When everything goes smoothly, this rarely feels like a problem. When conditions change, confusion sets in quickly.

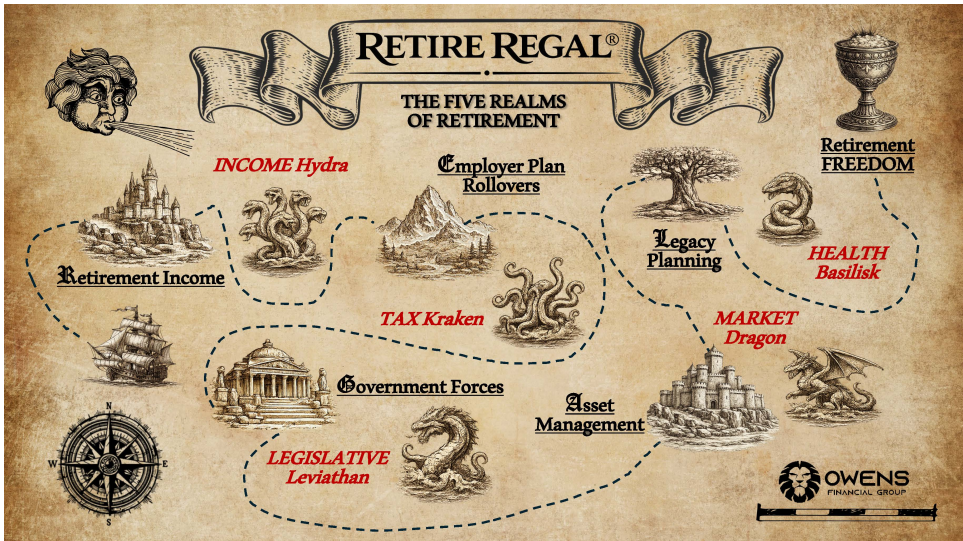
Retirement is no different.

Most people do not struggle in retirement because they lack intelligence, discipline, or effort. They struggle because they are given directions — not a map. Advice arrives in pieces. Decisions are made in isolation. Progress in one area occasionally creates problems in another.

What is missing is not expertise. It is perspective.

This is why the Retire REGAL® framework is best understood not as a strategy, portfolio, or product — but as a map of the journey itself.

A way to see where you are, where you're headed, and what must be navigated along the way in pursuit of the ultimate goal of retirement: freedom.



The Five Realms of Retirement Map

THE FIVE REALMS OF RETIREMENT

As you look at the map, you'll notice that retirement is not represented as a single destination reached all at once. It unfolds through a series of Realms — distinct territories that must be entered, understood, and navigated deliberately.

These Realms make up the REGAL acronym, each representing a necessary stop along the way. Each presents its own challenges, risks, and decisions. And each one, if handled well, moves you closer to finding Freedom — The Holy Grail of Retirement.

These realms are not optional detours. They are the terrain.

R: Retirement Income — Where the Journey Is Lived

The journey begins where retirement is felt most directly: income.

This realm determines how daily life unfolds once work ends. It is where assets are transformed into cash flow that supports lifestyle, stability, and peace of mind. On the map, this is not an abstract concept — it is the land where the traveler lives.

Income is not simply a number on a spreadsheet. It is the rhythm of retirement. It shapes how confidently you spend, how you respond to market movement, and whether decisions feel reversible or permanent. When income is fragile or overly dependent on market conditions, even strong portfolios can feel unstable. When income is structured intentionally — layered, coordinated, and predictable — confidence becomes a byproduct rather than a goal.

This is the first realm because without income clarity, no journey feels secure. And without income design, every other decision carries more emotional weight than it should.

E: Employer Plan Rollovers — The Crossing Point

Every journey has a crossing — a moment when the traveler leaves familiar ground and enters new territory.

For most retirees, that crossing is the rollover of employer-sponsored plans such as a 401(k), 403(b), or pension. On the map, this is a transition zone — not because assets simply move accounts, but because their purpose changes.

Money designed for accumulation must now support income, manage risk, coordinate with taxation, and interact with government benefits. Decisions made here quietly shape liquidity, flexibility, tax exposure, and investment positioning for decades. Yet this crossing is often treated as administrative rather than strategic.

Handled thoughtfully, it becomes an opportunity to align structure with intention. Handled casually, it can lock in inefficiencies that ripple through the rest of the journey.

That is why this realm deserves more than a signature and a transfer form. It deserves examination.

G: Government Forces — The Rules of the Land

Every realm operates under rules.

In retirement, those rules are shaped by Social Security, taxation, Medicare, and legislation. This realm reflects the reality that no retirement journey exists outside the systems that govern it.

On the map, this territory is unavoidable. Whether planned for or not, its influence is felt everywhere else. Taxes affect income. Medicare premiums respond to income decisions. Legislative changes reshape long-term assumptions. Required minimum distributions alter cash flow whether spending requires them or not.

Ignoring the rules does not eliminate their impact. It merely reduces your ability to respond intelligently.

Understanding the rules of the land does not eliminate risk — but it reduces unnecessary friction. It allows income, assets, and legacy decisions to be made with foresight rather than reaction.

In retirement, coordination with government systems is not optional. It is structural.

A: Asset Management — The Stronghold Designed to Support the Path

As the journey continues, structure becomes essential. Asset management represents how wealth is organized, not just how it grows. On the map, this realm appears as a fortified structure — a reminder that retirement assets must now support income, respond to volatility, and preserve flexibility.

In the chapters ahead, we will explore this architecture more fully through what I call the REGAL Stronghold — a planning and investment approach designed to assign purpose to assets, layer them intentionally, and position them to better navigate the risks encountered along the way.

Without structure, even substantial wealth can feel exposed.

This is often the moment when retirement planning shifts from effort to design. Early in life, progress is driven by persistence. Contribute consistently. Stay invested. Ride out volatility. Keep moving forward.

But there comes a point when pushing harder is no longer the solution.

On that desert highway years ago, watching that raven suspended in the wind, my father offered a simple observation: "Stop. Analyze the problem. Take corrective measures."

The raven's failure wasn't a lack of effort. It was a failure to recognize that the environment had changed.

Retirement presents a similar inflection point. The strategies that built wealth are not necessarily the ones that preserve freedom. Continuing to flap harder—to rely solely on accumulation logic—does not correct structural exposure.

Asset management in retirement requires something different. It requires pausing long enough to examine how assets are organized, how income is produced, how risks are layered, and how volatility is absorbed.

In other words:

Stop chasing accumulation. Analyze how the pieces interact. Take corrective measures by assigning assets distinct roles.

This is where the Stronghold begins to matter—as a deliberate response to changing terrain.

L: Legacy Planning — The Meaning of the Journey

Every journey eventually invites reflection.

Legacy planning represents the final realm — not because it comes last in importance, but because it gives meaning to everything that came

before it. This realm is about clarity, stewardship, and ensuring that what has been built serves both loved ones and peace of mind while you are still living.

Legacy is often misunderstood as a legal exercise — a will drafted, a trust created, beneficiaries named. Those tools matter, but they are not the whole story. Legacy planning is about intention. It asks whether your assets are positioned in a way that reflects your values, reduces unnecessary burden on others, and supports the people and causes you care about.

On the map, this realm reminds us that retirement freedom is not purely personal. It extends beyond the traveler. When legacy is coordinated with income, taxation, and asset structure, it becomes an extension of freedom rather than an afterthought.

The journey does not end at security. It culminates in clarity.

Why the Realms Must Be Traveled Together

Each realm can be explored independently.

Many retirement plans attempt exactly that.

But the map makes one thing clear: no realm stands alone.

Choices made in one territory affect the conditions in the next. Income decisions influence taxes. Tax strategies affect Medicare. Asset structure determines how risks are experienced. Legacy intentions shape present-day confidence.

The Retire REGAL framework does not change the destination.

It changes how the journey is navigated.

Instead of reacting to each challenge as it appears, the traveler moves with awareness — understanding the terrain ahead and preparing accordingly.

That is how the quest for the Holy Grail of retirement is completed.

Not by chance. But by design.

The Drawbridges Between Realms

The realms do not simply coexist. They must be crossed.

During the accumulation years, most financial decisions are recoverable. A poor investment can be offset by time. A missed contribution can be corrected the following year. A suboptimal allocation can be rebalanced. The bridges between decisions are two-way—the traveler can always go back.

Retirement changes this.

In a compressed window—often no more than eighteen to twenty-four months—the traveler faces a series of decisions that cannot be reversed. When to claim Social Security. How to handle an employer plan rollover. Whether to pursue Roth conversions, and how much, and in which tax year. When to enroll in Medicare, knowing that missing that window can carry long-lasting late-enrollment penalties — though the specifics depend on individual circumstances, coverage history, and whether a Special Enrollment Period applies. How to restructure income so that essential expenses are no longer tied to market cooperation. How to reposition assets so they serve distinct roles rather than competing for the same job. How to update legacy documents to reflect an entirely different financial reality.

Each of these is a drawbridge.

It lowers once. The traveler crosses. And it rises behind them.

There is no returning to the other side.

This alone would demand careful navigation. But the true danger of the drawbridges is not that they are irreversible. It is that each crossing reshapes the terrain for every crossing that follows.

A Social Security timing decision changes taxable income. Taxable income changes the Roth conversion math. The Roth conversion changes Medicare premium calculations through income-related monthly adjustment amounts. Medicare premiums change income needs. Income needs change which assets must be accessed and when. Asset access changes legacy positioning. The traveler is not crossing one bridge at a time. They are crossing a gauntlet—and the sequence matters as much as the individual choices.

On the map, these crossings are visible. The paths between realms are not open roads. They are drawbridges positioned at the intersections where realms meet. And the foemen—the risks described in the chapter ahead—are positioned precisely along these paths, where the traveler is most exposed.

This interconnection explains a behavior that many experienced professionals observe but rarely name: intelligent, well-prepared people who freeze at the threshold of retirement. The paralysis is not caused by lack of knowledge. It is caused by an instinctive recognition that these decisions are entangled—that making one choice without understanding its effect on the others could set off a cascade of consequences that cannot be unwound.

The alternative is equally common and equally incomplete. Many travelers cross each bridge in isolation. They make the Social Security decision without modeling the tax impact. They handle the rollover without considering income structure. They address Medicare as a standalone administrative task. Each decision is made responsibly—but none of them are made in coordination. The result is a series of individually sound choices that quietly work against each other once the drawbridges have risen behind them.

This is precisely why the Retire REGAL framework treats retirement as a system rather than a sequence of independent events. It does not simply identify the realms. It maps the crossings—the order in which

they should be approached, the timing that reduces unnecessary friction, and the interactions between them that most plans never model.

The destination remains the same: freedom.

But the path to it is not a straight line. It is a series of one-way crossings that must be navigated deliberately, with full awareness of how each one affects the next. Those who approach the drawbridges with a map arrive at the Stronghold with their options intact. Those who cross without one may find that the most important choices were made before they understood what was at stake.

Pause and Reflect: The Drawbridge Checklist

The drawbridges described in this chapter are not abstract. If you are within five years of retirement—or already in it—you are standing in front of them now. Three steps, none of which require an advisor, can begin to clarify the path ahead.

First, visit ssa.gov and request your Social Security statement. When it arrives, look at three numbers: your estimated benefit at 62, at your full retirement age, and at 70. Those three numbers are the foundation of nearly every timing decision you will face. Without them, the first drawbridge is crossed blindfolded.

Second, calculate what percentage of your retirement savings sits in tax-deferred accounts—traditional IRAs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s—versus tax-free accounts like Roths or regular taxable accounts. If the tax-deferred number exceeds 70 percent, the chapter ahead on the Tax Kraken will be especially relevant. That is not a crisis. It is a signal that the sequence of crossings matters more than most people realize.

Third, determine whether you are within two years of Medicare enrollment. If you are, learn what IRMAA is before it finds you. The Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount is a surcharge on

Medicare premiums triggered by income reported two years prior. It connects income decisions to healthcare costs in ways that are rarely intuitive—and it is one of the clearest examples of why everything touches everything else.

These three steps cost nothing, require no professional guidance, and take roughly thirty minutes. But once completed, the chapters ahead will read differently—not as theory, but as a map of decisions you can already see approaching.

Why This Structure Changes the Conversation

The value of the Retire REGAL process is not that it introduces new ideas. Many of the concepts will feel familiar.

The difference is that the Retire REGAL process:

Forces coordination

Exposes hidden dependencies

Prevents overconfidence in any single strategy

It gives retirees a way to evaluate decisions not by how clever they are but by how well they support freedom across the entire system. This is how complexity becomes manageable and how confidence becomes durable.

REGAL is not five steps—it is five pressures operating simultaneously.

YOUR NEXT STEP

**IF YOU RECOGNIZED YOURSELF IN THESE PAGES — IF THE
DRAWBRIDGES FEEL CLOSER THAN YOU'D LIKE — THE
NEXT STEP IS A CONVERSATION.**

The Retire REGAL® framework is not a brochure. It is a working process — one built to map your specific terrain, sequence your decisions, and help to replace anxiety with structural confidence.

To schedule a complimentary consultation with Owens Financial Group to see how the Five Realms apply to your retirement picture, visit retirereg.com

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