D'ANGELIS WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Retirement Income Playbook

How to turn what you have built into income you can count on, for as long as you need it.

Retirement changes the fundamental question you have been asking your money for decades. During your working years, the question was simple: how do I save and grow enough? In retirement, the question flips: how do I turn what I have built into income I can count on, for as long as I need it?

A strong nest egg is not the same as a reliable paycheck. Converting one into the other requires a plan that accounts for timing, taxes, market volatility, and the reality that retirement can last decades. This guide walks through the core building blocks of that plan so you can approach retirement income with clarity rather than guesswork.

A practical, educational guide — not a sales pitch.

Work through it one section at a time. Check the boxes as you go. At the end, you will score yourselves and get a simple 30-minute review agenda you can hold this week — no special knowledge required.

START HERE

The question most pre-retirees never ask

Most pre-retirees think of their financial picture as a collection of account balances: a 401(k) here, a brokerage account there, maybe a pension or Social Security benefit. A more useful starting point is to think in terms of income sources and how they layer together over time.

Answer these five questions out loud, together:

- Do we know every income source we will have in retirement — and when each one turns on?
- Do we know our essential monthly expenses, separate from the discretionary spending we could flex?
- Do we know how much we plan to withdraw each year, and from which accounts first?

- If the market fell in our first few years of retirement, would we have to sell growth investments at a loss to pay everyday bills?
- Do we know how withdrawals from each type of account will be taxed — and how that affects what we keep?

If any answer was a pause, this guide is for you.

How to use this guide

Read it in order. Sections 1 and 2 build your income picture and your withdrawal strategy. Sections 3 and 4 deal with the two risks that most often derail a plan — bad timing and the wrong balance between certainty and growth. Section 5 brings in taxes, because the order you withdraw matters. Section 6 explains why the pieces have to be looked at together, not in isolation.

SECTION 1

Start with your income sources, not your account balances

The order in which your income sources turn on, and how they interact, has a meaningful effect on how long your money lasts and how much you keep after taxes. This is often called income sequencing, and it is one of the most overlooked parts of retirement planning.

Income source	What to know
Social Security	A foundational, generally inflation-adjusted benefit that can typically begin at various ages, each with different tradeoffs.
Pensions	For those who have them, often a fixed, predictable income stream.
Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)	Mandatory withdrawals from certain tax-deferred retirement accounts once you reach a specific age set by current law.
Personal savings and investments	Taxable brokerage accounts, IRAs, and workplace retirement accounts that you control more directly in terms of when and how much to withdraw.

Build your income map

- List every source, when it starts, and whether it is fixed, inflation-adjusted, or variable.
- Note which sources you control — and which ones are set by a plan, an employer, or the law.
- Look at the gaps: in years before a source turns on, which accounts will cover everyday spending?
- Revisit the map when a source starts, stops, or changes — sequencing is not a one-time decision.

The point is not to maximise any single source in isolation. It is to see how they layer together over time, so a gap in one year does not force a costly decision in another.

SECTION 2

Building a withdrawal strategy

A withdrawal strategy answers a deceptively simple question: how much can I take out each year, and from which accounts?

Spending needs versus wants

Separating essential expenses — housing, health care, food — from discretionary ones — travel, hobbies — helps you understand your true floor and where there is flexibility in difficult years. Your essential floor is the amount that must be covered even in a lean year. Everything above it is where flexibility lives.

Flexibility over rigidity

Markets move, and a strategy that adjusts modestly in strong years and lean years tends to hold up better than a fixed withdrawal amount that never changes. Flexibility does not mean guessing. It means agreeing in advance how you will adjust — for example, trimming discretionary spending in a down year — rather than making that decision under pressure.

Longevity

Retirement today can last twenty, thirty, or more years. A withdrawal strategy should be built with a long runway in mind, not just the first few years after you stop working. A plan that looks comfortable for five years can still run short if it ignores the decades that may follow.

There is no single formula that fits every household.

The right withdrawal approach depends on your goals, your other income sources, your risk tolerance, and your family situation. If a rule of thumb sounds too simple for a decision this large, it probably is.

SECTION 3

Managing sequence-of-returns risk

One of the more technical but important concepts in retirement income planning is sequence-of-returns risk: the risk that comes from the order in which investment returns occur, not just their average over time.

Here is the idea in plain terms: two retirees can experience the exact same average return over twenty years and end up in very different places, depending on whether the weak years happened early or late in retirement. A market downturn in your first few retirement years, combined with withdrawals, can do more lasting damage to a portfolio than the same downturn occurring later, after the portfolio has had time to grow.

Why early downturns hurt more

When you are still working, a downturn is painful but you are not also selling investments to live on. In retirement, withdrawals and a downturn can combine: you sell more shares to raise the same amount of cash, leaving fewer shares to recover when markets rebound. That is the lasting damage sequence risk describes.

The cushion idea

This is part of why many retirees consider holding a cushion of more stable assets, such as cash or short-term holdings, to help cover near-term spending needs. The goal is to reduce the need to sell growth-oriented investments at a loss during a downturn, giving the rest of the portfolio time to recover.

- Know how many months of essential spending your cushion covers — and what replenishes it.
- Agree in advance what counts as a downturn that triggers using the cushion, rather than deciding in the moment.
- Review the cushion as part of your regular plan review, not only when markets fall.

SECTION 4

Balancing guaranteed income and growth

Retirement income planning often comes down to a balance between two goals that can feel like they are in tension: the desire for guaranteed, predictable income and the desire for continued growth to keep pace with inflation and support a potentially long retirement.

Side of the balance	What it can do — and where it falls short
Guaranteed income	Social Security, pensions, or certain insurance-based products can provide a reliable floor to cover essential expenses. On its own, however, it may not keep pace with rising costs over a long retirement.
Growth	Growth-oriented investments, such as stocks, can help your purchasing power keep up over time and support discretionary spending or legacy goals. On their own, they can expose essential spending to market swings at the worst possible times.

Neither extreme tends to serve most retirees well. An all-guaranteed approach may not keep pace with rising costs over a long retirement. An all-growth approach may expose essential spending to market swings at the worst possible times. The right balance is personal and should reflect your specific income needs, other resources, and comfort with uncertainty.

Questions to ask about your balance

- Are our essential expenses covered by sources we can count on, even in a down market?
- Is enough of the plan still growing to keep pace with rising costs over a retirement that could last decades?

- If we lean too far one way, what is the cost — in lost purchasing power, or in sleepless nights?

SECTION 5

Withdrawing tax-efficiently across account types

Many retirees hold savings across three broad categories of accounts, each with different tax treatment. The order in which you draw from these accounts can affect how much you pay in taxes over your retirement, how your income affects things like Medicare premiums, and how much you are able to pass on to heirs.

Account type	Tax treatment in general terms
Taxable accounts (brokerage)	Generally funded with after-tax dollars, where growth may be subject to capital gains tax when sold.
Tax-deferred accounts (traditional 401(k)s and IRAs)	Contributions may have reduced taxable income in the past, but withdrawals in retirement are generally taxed as ordinary income.
Tax-free accounts (Roth IRAs and Roth 401(k)s)	Qualified withdrawals are generally free of federal income tax.

Be deliberate rather than default

A common approach is to be deliberate rather than default, sometimes drawing from taxable accounts first to allow tax-deferred and tax-free accounts more time to grow, and sometimes blending withdrawals across account types in a given year to manage your tax bracket.

There is no one-size-fits-all withdrawal order. The right sequence depends on your total income picture, your tax situation, and your goals for the assets you may eventually leave behind. This is an area where working with a tax professional alongside your financial advisor can be especially valuable.

Taxes are part of the withdrawal decision, not an afterthought.

Before you change which account you draw from, ask how that change affects your taxable income for the year, your Medicare premiums, and what remains for heirs. A withdrawal that looks simple on its own can have ripple effects elsewhere.

SECTION 6

Why a personalized plan matters

Every element covered here — income sequencing, withdrawal strategy, sequence-of-returns risk, the balance between guaranteed income and growth, and tax-efficient withdrawals — interacts with the others. A change in one area often has ripple effects elsewhere.

That is part of why a generic rule of thumb rarely serves a retiree as well as a plan built around their specific circumstances: their expenses, their other income sources, their health and family considerations,

and their goals for the years ahead.

A financial professional can help you look at these pieces together rather than in isolation, stress-test your plan against different market and longevity scenarios, and adjust course as life and markets change. Retirement income planning is not a one-time decision made the week before you retire. It is an ongoing process that benefits from regular review.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Your 30-minute retirement income review agenda

You do not need a full day or a professional in the room to start. You need 30 minutes, this guide, and an honest look at your income picture.

Time	Agenda item
0–5 min	Answer the five opening questions from the Start Here section, out loud.
5–12 min	List your income sources and when each one turns on — your income map from Section 1.
12–20 min	Separate essential from discretionary spending, and note where you have flexibility in a lean year.
20–27 min	Pick your two biggest gaps from the checklist below.
27–30 min	Assign one owner and one date to each gap. Put the date on the calendar before you stand up.

Self-score checklist — be honest

Score 1 point for each statement you can say yes to today.

- ■ We can list every retirement income source we expect, and when each one starts.
- ■ We know our essential monthly expenses, separate from discretionary spending.
- ■ We have a withdrawal strategy — how much each year, and from which accounts.
- ■ We have a cushion for near-term spending, so we are not forced to sell growth investments in a downturn.
- ■ Our essential expenses are covered by income we can count on, even in a down market.
- ■ Enough of our plan is still positioned for growth to keep pace with rising costs over a long retirement.
- ■ We have thought through the tax order of our withdrawals — taxable, tax-deferred, and tax-free — with a professional.
- ■ Our income plan has been reviewed as a whole, not as separate accounts, in the last year.

7–8: You are in strong shape — keep it current with an annual review. 4–6: A solid base with real gaps worth closing soon. 0–3: Your income plan is exposed — treat the gaps above as urgent, starting with your income map and your essential-expense floor.

WORKSHEET

Your income map worksheet

Fill this in together. It does not need to be perfect — it needs to be complete enough that you can see how your income layers over time, and where the gaps are.

Income source	When does it start? / Notes
Social Security	
Pension (if any)	
Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)	
Taxable brokerage account	
Traditional 401(k) / IRA	
Roth IRA / Roth 401(k)	
Other savings or income	

Essential expenses each month (housing, health care, food):

_____

Discretionary spending we could flex in a lean year (travel, hobbies, other):

_____

Near-term cushion for spending, and what replenishes it:

_____

Questions to bring to your review

Use these with your financial advisor and, where tax is involved, your tax professional. They follow directly from the sections in this guide.

- How do our income sources layer together, and where are the gaps before each source turns on?
- How much can we withdraw each year, from which accounts, while keeping a long runway in mind?
- What is our plan if markets fall early in retirement — what do we draw on first, and what do we leave alone?
- Are our essential expenses covered by income we can count on, and is enough still growing to keep pace with rising costs?
- In what order should we draw from taxable, tax-deferred, and tax-free accounts this year — and how does that affect our tax bracket and Medicare premiums?

- How often should we review this plan together, and what would trigger a change sooner?

WORK WITH US

Turn your gaps into a plan: book a Family Wealth Strategy Session

If your score left you with questions, that is exactly what this session is for. A Family Wealth Strategy Session with D'Angelis Wealth Management is a working conversation about your retirement income: how your income sources layer together, how much you can withdraw and from which accounts, how to handle sequence risk and the balance between guaranteed income and growth, and how to withdraw tax-efficiently across account types.

Our family team — based in Paramus, New Jersey — works with higher-net-worth families and business owners who want what they have built to be protected, understood, and ready to pass on. Bring your checklist from this guide; we will start there.

Book your Family Wealth Strategy Session

Schedule online at:

oncehub.com/DAngelisWealthManagement

Full link: https://oncehub.com/DAngelisWealthManagement

Or call us at: **551-284-9844**

Website: dangeliswealthmanagement.com

Before your session

- Bring your completed self-score checklist.
- Bring your income map, if you have started one — or come ready to start it.
- Write down the one question from this guide you most want answered.

Important disclosure: This guide is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not financial, investment, tax, or legal advice, and it is not a recommendation or solicitation for any product, strategy, or service. It does not consider your individual circumstances. Tax laws and rules change and vary by state and by situation; consult a qualified tax professional about your own circumstances, and an estate planning attorney licensed in your state for wills, powers of attorney, health care proxies, trusts, and related documents. D'Angelis Wealth Management, Paramus, New Jersey.