ProsperPlan Wealth

The Financial Planning Process:

A Step-by-Step Guide to Understanding, Implementing, and Benefiting from Fiduciary Advice

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INTRODUCTION

Financial planning is more than managing investments. It is the long-term process of identifying your goals, organizing your financial life in support of what you want to achieve, and following a expertly designed roadmap for the future. This way, rather than merely respond when change occurs, a well-structured plan helps you make proactive decisions that take advantage of the twists and turns that are an inevitable part of life.

Whether you are building wealth, preparing for retirement, or transitioning through major life events, building a thoughtful plan with a great advisor creates stability and confidence, increases and secures your wealth, and reduces stress.

> Financial planning isn't just about numbers, it's about making life decisions with insight and clarity
>
> – Lauren Williams,
> ProsperPlan founding partner,
> CFP®, MBA.

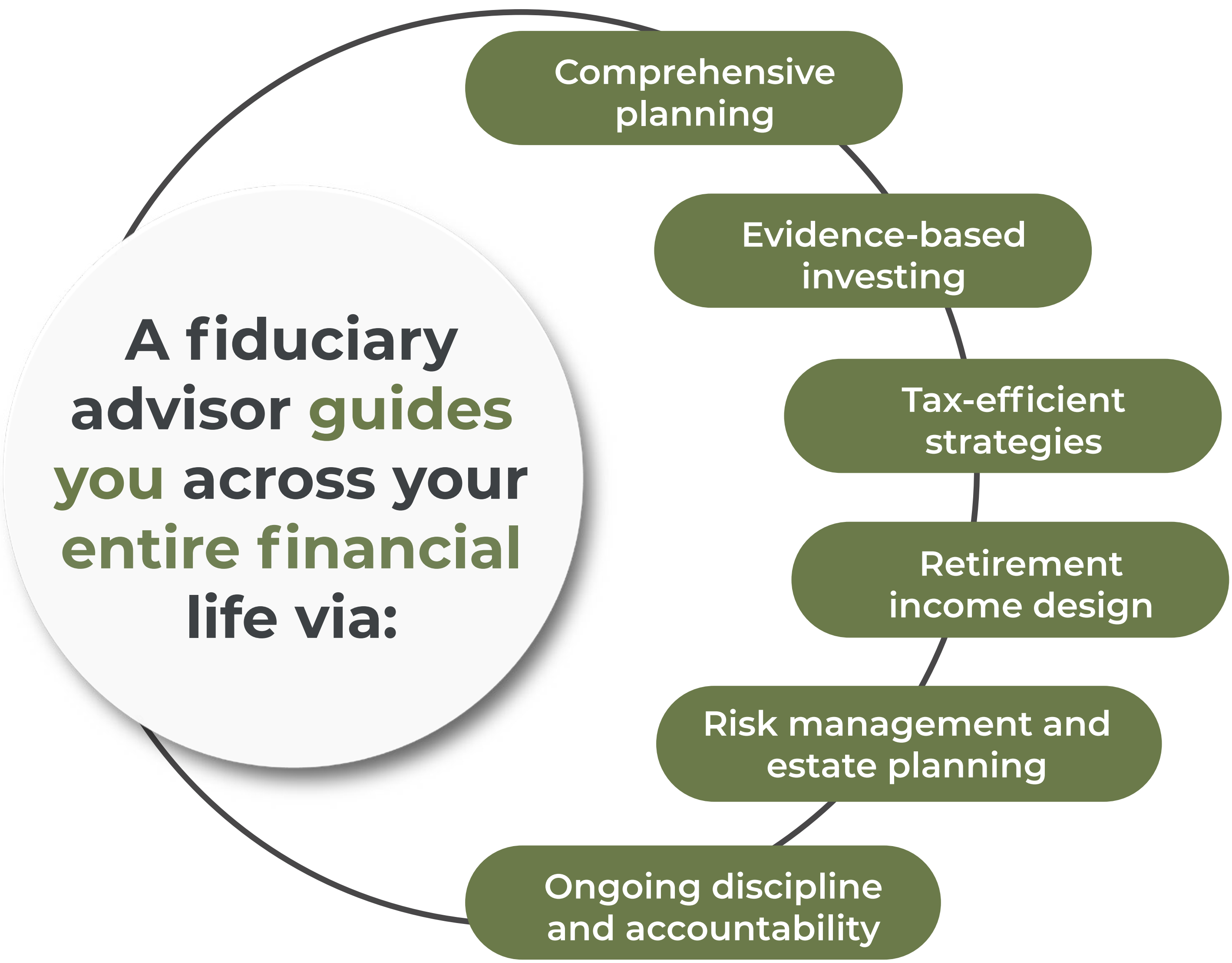
A structured process ensures your decisions are proactive rather than reactive, and that you remain in control of your financial life at every stage.

Discovery — **Implementation** — **Ongoing Review**

While obviously greatly simplified above, ProsperPlan's three-step fiduciary planning process provides you with a structured, repeatable framework for achieving clarity, alignment, and long-term financial confidence.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF A FIDUCIARY FINANCIAL ADVISOR

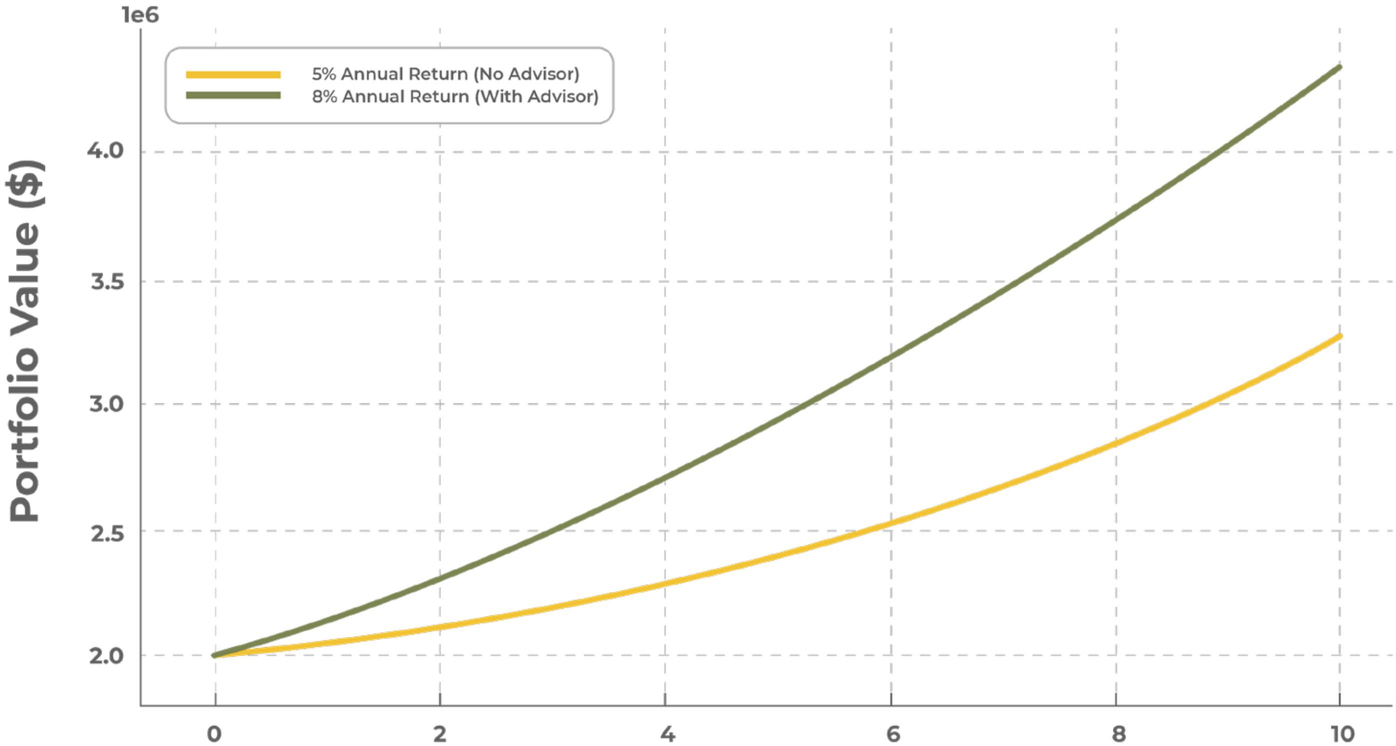
A fiduciary financial advisor serves as your advocate in every financial decision. Unlike brokers or sales-driven advisors who will be compensated or rewarded based on the specific products they sell you; a fiduciary is legally and ethically required to, without exception, place your interests first. This standard creates genuine transparency and trust, giving you confidence that the advice you receive is free from conflicts of interest.



> Our clients trust that every recommendation we make is designed for their success, not ours.
>
> – Chris Grellas ProsperPlan founding partner, CFP®, MSBA.

10-Year Growth of $2,000,000

Advisor vs. No Advisor



Due to factors such as behavioral finance, rebalancing, and money-saving tax planning, several studies have shown that clients who partner with a qualified advisor average a consistent, long-term net-worth growth of at least an additional 3% per year when compared to those who manage their wealth on their own. [1]

Over a decade, that's more than $1 million extra in wealth realized on a $2 million investment portfolio.

1 Putting a value on your value: Quantifying Vanguard Advisor's Alpha

THE FIRST MEETING:
GATHERING YOUR INFORMATION

Your financial life is unique, so the planning process begins with an in-depth understanding of you, your values, priorities, and the financial realities you face today. The first meeting builds the foundation for everything that follows, ensuring your plan is accurate, personalized, and actionable.

This discovery session includes:

- Cash-flow and spending review
- Net-worth analysis
- Investment and retirement account assessment
- Insurance and risk evaluation
- Estate document review
- Social Security and retirement-timing considerations
- Goal identification and values-based planning

> We spend the time upfront to understand you fully, because a plan without context is just theory.
>
> \- Lauren Williams

ONGOING MEETINGS AND PLANNING FOR LIFE CHANGES

Financial planning is an ongoing process. That's because life evolves, jobs change, families grow, markets fluctuate, and laws shift. Regular ProsperPlan review meetings ensure your strategy stays aligned with your life, your goals, and your financial realities.

Fiduciary advisors review progress, adjust investments, update tax strategies, and help you make decisions around major life events such as buying a home, funding education, receiving an inheritance or pension, or preparing for retirement.

> A financial plan is a living document. Our job is to ensure it evolves with our clients' lives, keeping them on track for success.
>
> -Chris Grellas

The potential for higher returns, and significant money-saving tax planning strategies, are just a part of the value that a qualified, fiduciary advisor brings. Another example would be perfectly timing your Social Security.

For example, one study calculated that there are as many as 500 unique filing combinations for couples. [2]

Benefits can significantly impact lifetime retirement income but must also be timed to integrate with your other investments in a tax-efficient way.

ProsperPlan evaluates each client's situation to determine the claiming strategy that maximizes long-term financial stability.

2. 500 Ways to File for Social Security - The Fed Corner

INVESTMENT STRATEGY:
ALIGNING RISK, TIME HORIZON, AND GOALS

Investing is a tool, and not a goal by itself. ProsperPlan builds portfolios that reflect your timeline, risk tolerance, cash needs, and long-term financial objectives.

Our approach emphasizes diversification, cost efficiency, tax optimization, and discipline through market cycles.

> Investing is not about timing the market, it's about aligning your portfolio with your life and goals.
>
> -Lauren Williams

TAX PLANNING:
KEEPING MORE OF WHAT YOU EARN

Effective tax planning is not something that happens once a year and has little to do with filing your taxes on April 15th. It is actually a forward-looking strategy that anticipates future income, certain deductions, changes to your portfolio, and various life events, all long before they occur.

When tax planning is integrated into a multi-year financial plan, you can drastically minimize lifetime taxes, improve cash flow, and preserve significantly more wealth. By looking ahead rather than reacting at the last minute, a fiduciary advisor can identify opportunities that greatly compound over time.

Proactive, multi-year tax planning also helps clients avoid costly mistakes that sometimes can't be fixed retroactively.

A well-designed tax strategy evaluates how today's choices affect tomorrow's outcomes; especially around Social Security timing, capital gains (money you make from investments), Roth conversions, business income, and Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs).

By modeling tax projections years in advance, advisors help clients make smarter decisions such as when to harvest gains or losses, how to coordinate spousal income, or when to shift assets into more tax-efficient investment vehicles.

Examples of long-term tax strategies include:

- **Roth conversions timed over multiple low-income years** to reduce future RMDs and improve retirement income efficiency
- **Managing capital gains over several tax years** to avoid bracket creep and net investment income surcharges
- **Strategic charitable giving**, such as donor-advised funds funded in high-income years to maximize deductions
- **Tax-efficient withdrawal sequencing**, balancing taxable, tax-deferred, and tax-free accounts to minimize lifetime tax drag

By planning not just for this year but for the next decade, you gain far greater control over your finances and could save tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars over your lifetime. Forward-thinking tax planning is one of the most impactful ways a fiduciary advisor can improve long-term outcomes.

It is that important.

> Smart tax planning isn't optional, it's one of the most effective ways to improve outcomes over decades.
>
> -Chris Grellas

ESTATE PLANNING:

WHY IT IS A CRITICAL PART OF YOUR FINANCIAL PLAN

Estate planning is an essential component of a complete financial strategy because it ensures that your wealth, wishes, and legacy are protected; both during your lifetime and long after. While many people associate estate planning solely with wills and inheritances, it actually encompasses a much broader set of tools designed to safeguard your assets, reduce unnecessary taxes, and provide clarity for your loved ones during challenging times.

Without an estate plan, even individuals with modest wealth may leave behind financial and legal complications, and familial duress, that easily could have been avoided with proper preparation.

> Estate planning is about clarity and control, giving you and your family peace of mind.
>
> -Lauren Williams

Examples of long-term tax strategies include:

A thoughtful estate plan provides several key benefits:

- **Protects your family** by specifying how assets should be distributed and who should manage them
- **Reduces stress and uncertainty** for spouses, children, and beneficiaries
- **Minimizes probate delays and potential legal disputes**
- **Ensures your medical and financial decisions are honored** through powers of attorney and advanced directives
- **Coordinates seamlessly with tax and retirement strategies** to preserve as much wealth as possible

When integrated into your broader financial plan, estate planning becomes not just a legal exercise but a powerful tool for achieving long-term security, continuity, and peace of mind. It aligns your financial goals with your personal values and provides a blueprint that protects the people and priorities that matter most.

> Estate planning is about clarity and control, giving you and your family peace of mind.
>
> -Lauren Williams

THE VALUE OF A 100% PROSPERPLAN FIDUCIARY ADVISOR

Working with a fee-only, 100% ProsperPlan Wealth fiduciary partner-advisor, gives you a level of protection, transparency, and trust that non-fiduciary advisors simply cannot guarantee. Fiduciaries are legally and ethically obligated to always act in your best interest; meaning every recommendation must be designed to benefit you, and not us, and not Wall Street or some insurance product manufacturer.

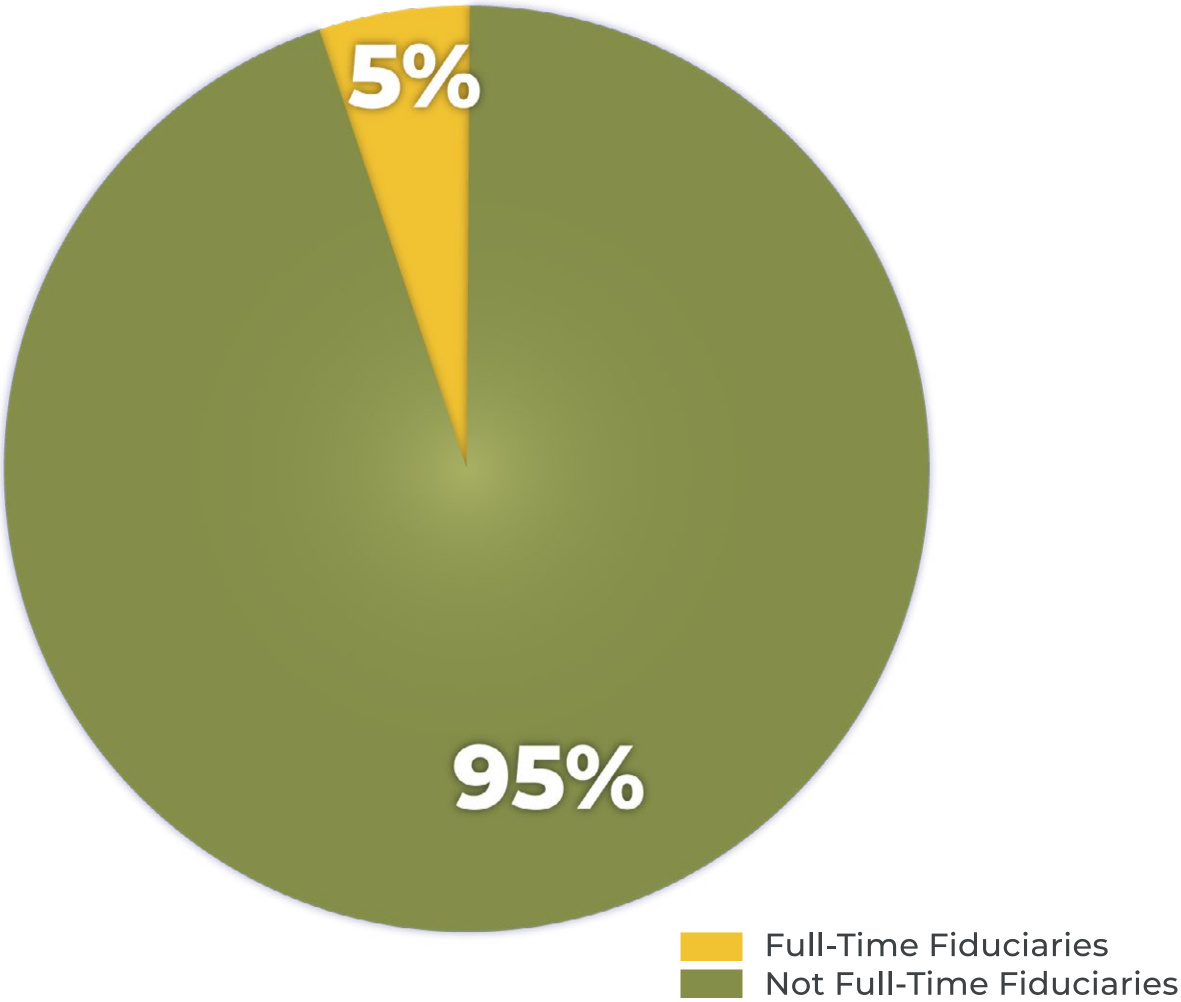
In contrast, **many non-fiduciary advisors operate under a "suitability" standard**, which allows them to recommend products that pay higher commissions or meet internal sales quotas, even if those options are not the most cost-effective or beneficial for you.

ProsperPlan Wealth advisors go far beyond meeting the minimum fiduciary requirement. As 100% fiduciaries, we provide:

Conflict-free advice, with no commissions, quotas, kickbacks, or sales incentives
Full fee transparency, so you always know exactly what you are paying and why
Evidence-based strategies, chosen solely because they support your goals
Ongoing monitoring and alignment, ensuring recommendations continue to serve your best interest over time
Comprehensive financial planning, integrating taxes, retirement income, estate planning, and risk management with no hidden agenda

Breakdown of Financial Advisor by Fiduciary Status[3]

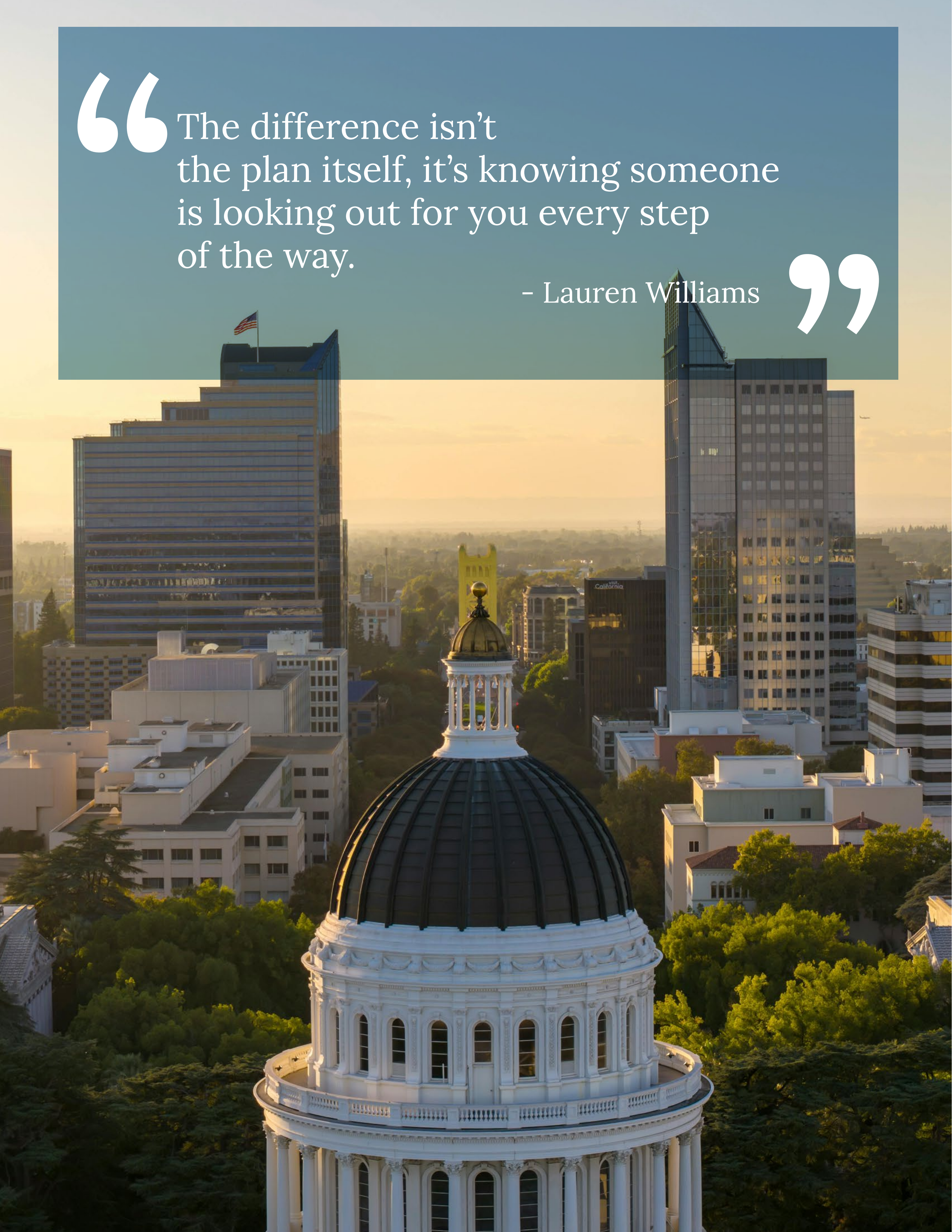
The below chart reveals that the percentage of full-time fiduciary advisors is small when compared to money-managers with conflicts.



By working with a ProsperPlan fiduciary advisor, you receive advice that is objective, data-driven, and aligned with your long-term success.

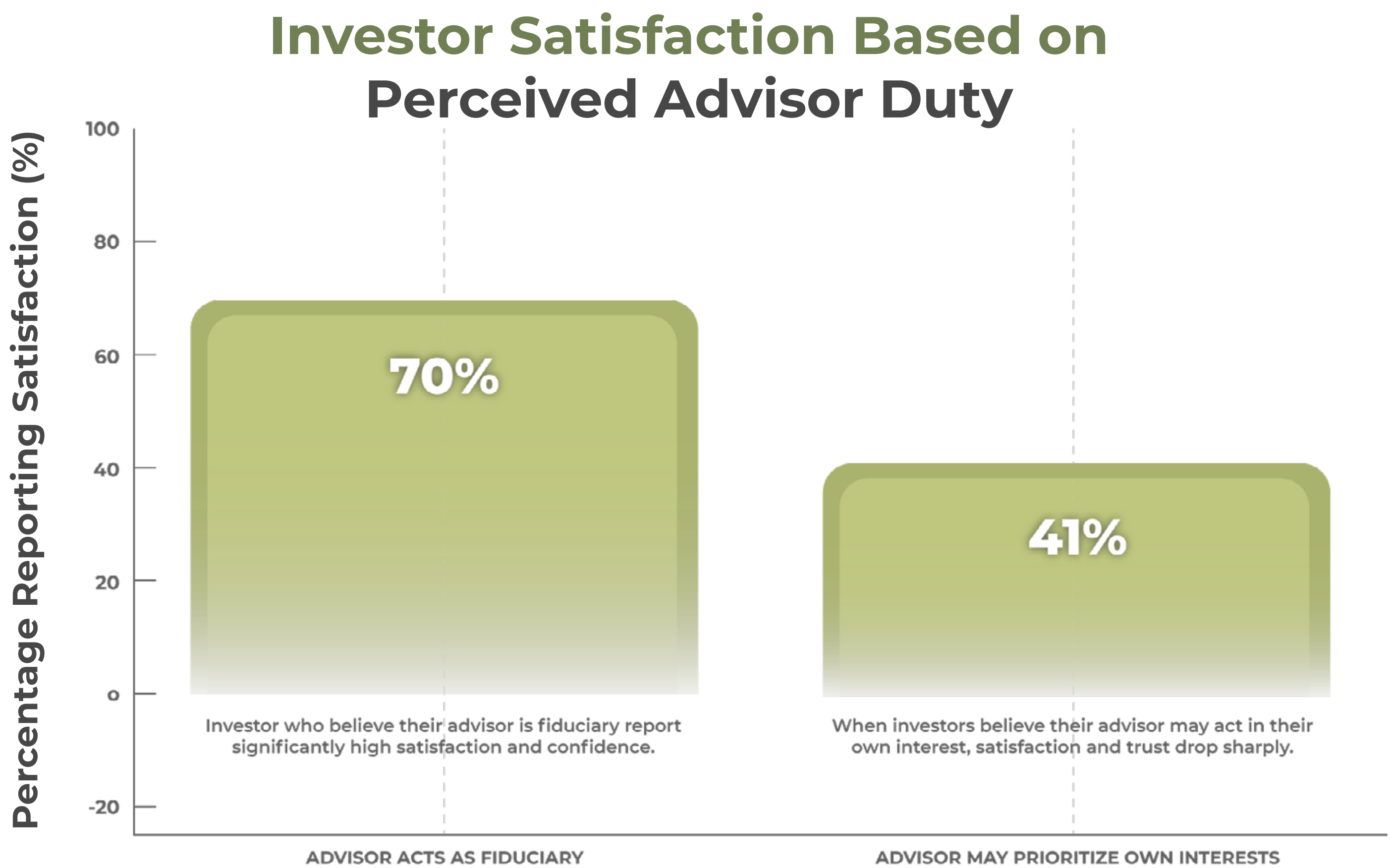
The result is a relationship grounded in trust, where every conversation, every recommendation, and every decision is focused exclusively on helping the client achieve greater financial clarity, confidence, and control.

3 What Percentage of Financial Advisors Are Fiduciaries? - Bright Advisers



> The difference isn't the plan itself, it's knowing someone is looking out for you every step of the way.
>
> \- Lauren Williams

HOW TO FIND AND VET AN HONEST ADVISOR



SOURCE: 70% of investors satisfied with their fiduciary advisor: Cerulli

Choosing the right advisor is one of the most important financial decisions you will ever make.

Your advisor should be transparent, credentialed, conflict-free, and clearly committed to your best interest.

Be sure to:

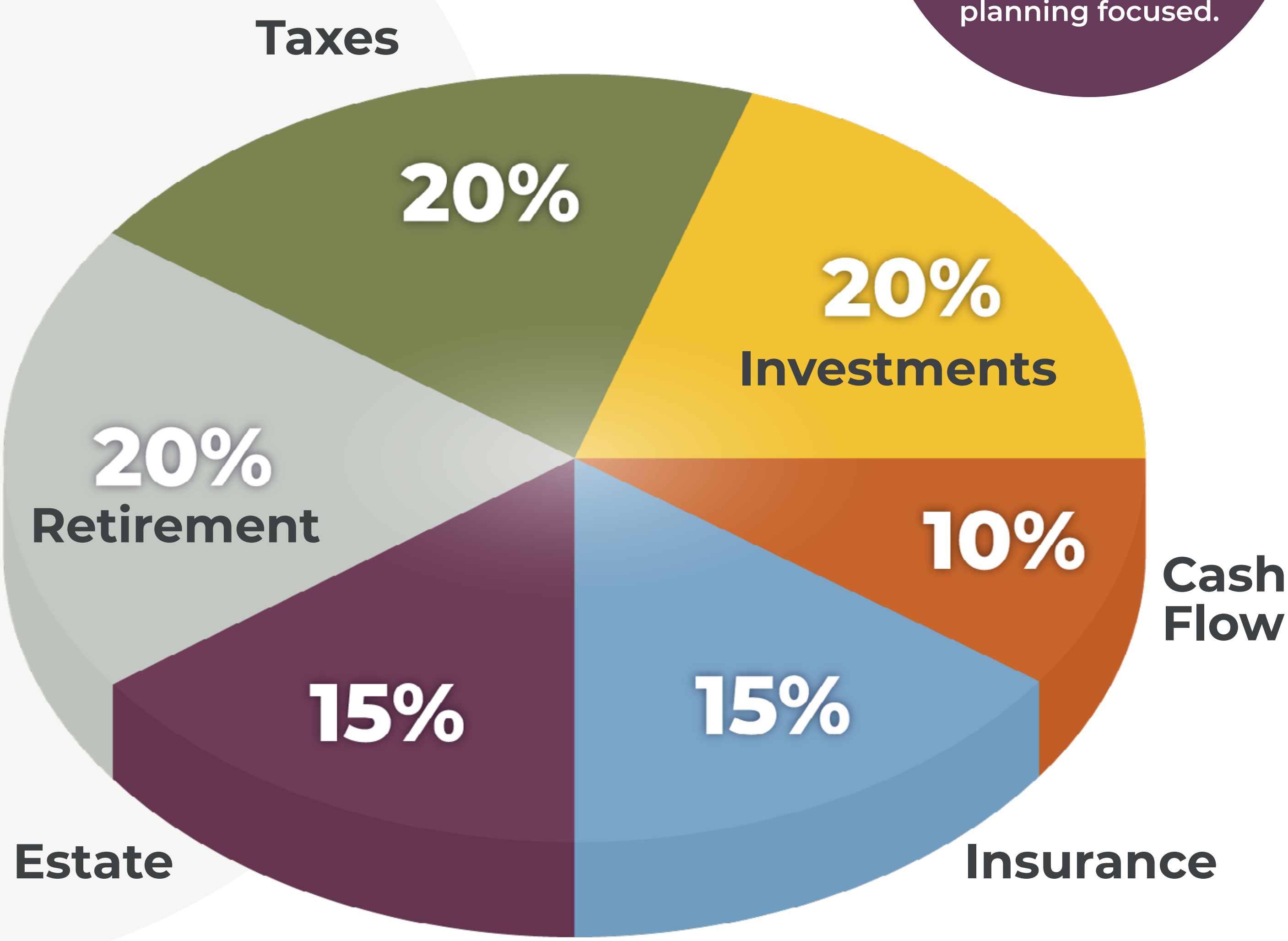
- Confirm 100% fiduciary status (ask them)
- Verify credentials (CFP®, CFA®, CPA)
- Ask about education (Relevant undergraduate and graduate degrees)
- Review disciplinary history on SEC, FINRA, CFP Board
- Understand their fee structure
- Confirm their experience working with clients like you

> Trust is earned,
> not assumed.
>
> \- Chris Grellas

THE PROSPERPLAN APPROACH

With advanced degrees, decades of combined leadership experience, and a holistic approach, ProsperPlan integrates every area of your financial life into one cohesive strategy.

ProsperPlan advisors are **100% fiduciary,** independent, experienced, highly credentialed and educated, and planning focused.



Though purely for illustrative purposes, ProsperPlan's holistic planning framework harmonizes investments, taxes, retirement strategy, estate planning, risk management, and cash-flow planning into a unified roadmap for long-term financial well-being.

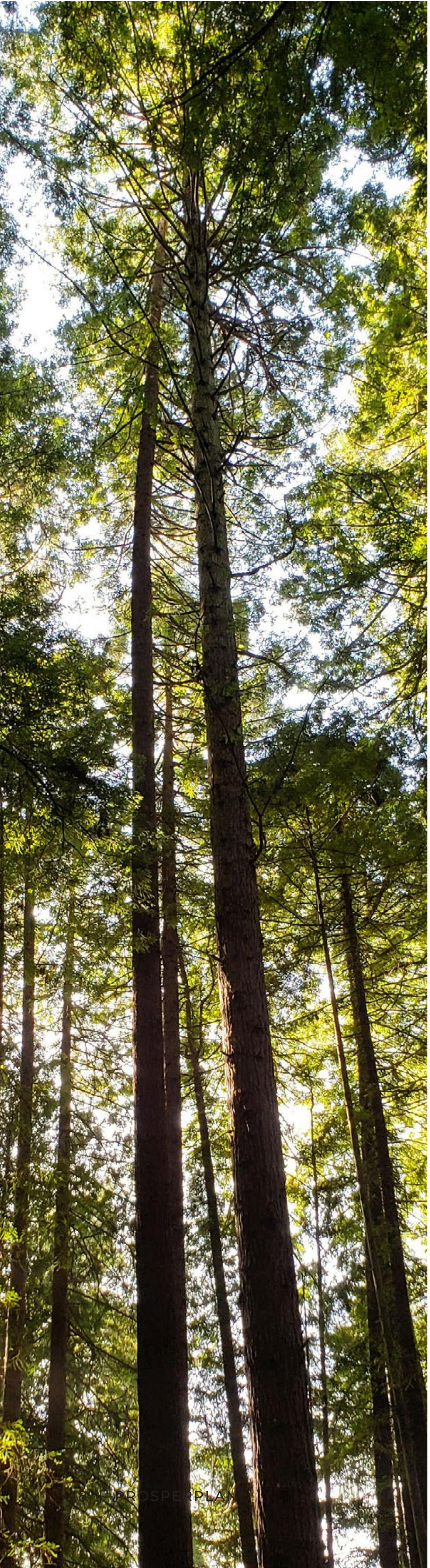
CONCLUSION

The financial planning process provides clarity, confidence, and control over your financial future.

By partnering with ProsperPlan, you ensure that every decision is made in your best interest, your investments are strategically aligned and your plan evolves as your life changes.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP TODAY

Your financial future deserves guidance you can trust. Schedule a complimentary consultation with a ProsperPlan fiduciary partner-advisor to create a personalized plan that aligns with your goals, maximizes your wealth, and provides peace of mind.



RESOURCES

Social Security Administration (SSA.gov)

Raymond James – Social Security Planning Insights

The Wealth Advisor – Retirement Planning Articles

ProsperPlan – Financial Advisor Perspectives

Nolo – Social Security Guides

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