

REAL ESTATE SECTION



Property Feature

37401 South Fork Road Willits

MLS: 322003823

Offered for sale at: \$779,000

A rare opportunity to own a home with guest cottage on 160 acres in the exclusive Cherry Creek ranches community.

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3 Bedroom, 2 Bath Home in Brooktrails



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They’re playing our song

“Getting old is not for the faint of heart.” My mother says this often. She ought to know. She and her husband are both 100 years old. They deal with many of the things you’d think two 100-year-old people deal with. They both use walkers but not wheelchairs. They live in a two-room managed-care condo with daily help and all meals prepared. There’s a small lake outside their window and my mother loves to sit and watch the geese and ducks swimming by, plucking and grooming. For her, it’s as good as TV.

My stepdad likes to go to the weekly dances. He loves life. Goes out to play cards every day, various games and activities. An old railroad man who handled timber shipping accounts, he can strike up a conversation with anyone. I really admire how each day is a holiday for him, it seems. Having a good attitude seems to be an elixir for those who live long lives.

They live in a nice assisted-living place. Most assisted-living places have different levels of assistance based on the needs of the resident. It can get pretty expensive, and for many people, will likely take all their income plus some. Savings, retirement accounts – if you have one – various government programs, insurance, GI, etc. make up the rest. Many people don’t have resources like these available. There’s a great need for affordable, reasonable assistance for millions of older and disabled people.

The cost of living is going way up. Inflation is increasing much faster than most peoples’ income. There’s that, and there’s the distribution of wealth in our nation’s economy. The tax bill of 2018 that passed with only Republican votes gave a permanent tax reduction to corporations. Regular taxpayers saw a temporary tax break but many of these tax cuts will expire in 2025 and around 65 percent of the population will have a sizable tax increase in the following couple of years, per Joseph E. Stiglitz’s article in The New York Times on October 31, 2020. Resulting deficits could leave a hole of billions or trillions of dollars, threatening Social Security and Medicare, which most Americans rely on.

In Willits, there’s not enough housing – period, but also very little affordable housing for the elderly and disable. In fact, there’s not even enough such housing for people who could afford to buy something. In areas where they have them, a rented two-room older condo with minimal care for two people often costs around \$6,000 or more per month! Can you afford that, especially when you’re old and not working? There are other solutions to be found, more affordable ones.

Developing more housing depends, of necessity, on expanded water and distribution capacity, more street construction, expanded sewer capacity, energy and internet – all that stuff we depend on to live. Local development of

needed housing and care for those in need starts in the community. We can’t just say “costs go up faster than income and we just have to live with less,” leaving people homeless. This is a dilemma that we have to create a solution for. Everything starts with planning.



Bill Barksdale
Columnist

Willits needs more housing for the elderly and disabled. More housing needed for everyone, really. Here’s part of the equation: We ask, “What are the people’s incomes in the area?” Then create housing that most people can afford. People who are living in just regular housing today, will likely be wanting the more “senior” versions of housing and ways of living in the future. Let’s just start planning it now! Create apartments and condos, on large lots and small acreage that we can get infrastructure to. The housing by the Willits Senior Center is a start.

Local government – I request that you begin with zoning. Willits is a mishmash of dysfunctional zoning, it just grew that way. But it doesn’t have to stay that way. The tool of the general plan is really a vision statement of how we want things to grow. What would a better-planned, more-convenient-to-live-in, beautiful Willits look like?

Willits, like many places, has limited city staff and funds. Only so much can be done at a time. Things have to be prioritized. That’s why a plan is so important! When you have a long-term plan – say a 10-year plan – then each decision, everything you fix or expand or zone for, becomes a step toward that vision, that plan. That’s how the tool of planning works. That’s how all goal-setting works.

As my column title advises: “They’re playing our song.” Meaning, we’re all headed in that direction. Nice elder-care housing could be ready in three to four years with the cooperation of city and builder / developers. Good, creative planning can get us a place to live that is well-planned, well-built, safe and attractive. The question of affordability comes up again. There are ways. We need to find them, and to create affordability with legislation and evaluation of resources. It’s our future after all.

In one episode of “The Golden Girls,” Sophia says, “It costs money to get old.” The price is not only a place to live, many people become “homeless” as they grow old for lack of funds. The suicide rate of Americans 85 years or older is over 20 percent. White males made up 69.38 percent in 2019 of suicides, per the Centers for Disease Control! If you or anyone you know is thinking of suicide, please call 800-273-8255 or 911, or call a trusted friend or family member. Pause, and talk with someone, please.

Factors of growing old or disabled include: growing old in place (in your home with help), homelessness, health care, managed care, assisted living, food, lack of enough income, family assistance or lack of, mental-health issues, loneliness, pets, affordable housing, failing health and pain, death of friends, discovering new interests, finding ways to be happy.

As a community we need to be talking about these issues, and finding solutions. We can’t just ignore that this is happening. Most of us will be dealing with at least some of these issues as we age. Earlier I mentioned planning, meaning primarily municipal planning by the city. The pissing match between the county and the city about land has to end. The city must zone for needed housing development and facilities. Fix the broken patchwork of zoning in Willits and create appropriate housing for our aging population. Expensive, inadequate housing on big lots is not the answer. Selling land to the highest bidder for more industrial development in town is definitely not the answer. Let’s get serious!

I don’t care what your age is; you will need this type of housing if you live long enough. Get vocal. Attend city council meetings and ask that senior housing with various levels of care get in the plan. It doesn’t have to all be care-type facilities. It can be co-housing with sharing of some facilities, condos above commercial space as one sees in many towns and cities, small houses on tiny lots with a common parking area. These are all types of development that are being done right now all over the country. Believe me when I say, they’re playing our song as we age and look toward what we need here. If you want to stay in Willits, as I do, we need places to live that work for older and disabled people. And while we’re at it, for everyone really.

Bill Barksdale was inducted into the 2016 Realtor® Hall of Fame, and served as chair of the County of Mendocino Assessment Appeals Board, settling property-tax disputes between the county assessor and citizens and businesses. Read more of Barksdale’s columns on his blog at www.bbarksdale.com.



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(707) 984-7078

Joe Morf, Agent
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Great Residential Building Lot In Town

The lot is .29 of an acre, mostly level and buildable. All city utilities are available at this convenient location. \$140,000.



129+/- Acres Sky Rock Ranch

This is an outstanding one-of-a-kind ranch property. Gorgeous 3,700 sq. ft. custom lodge style home with every comfort you would want. There are 3 bedrooms and 3 full baths, a custom kitchen, a huge river rocked fireplace, office and many other features. Large barn, horse barn, shop, fenced pastures and well water. Borders Rocktree Creek.
Reduced to \$1,999,975



Close to Town

Roomy mobile home located in a nice spot in the park. There are 2 bedrooms and 2 baths, a wheel chair ramp and a small sunny garden spot. Borders a lovely open area.
\$59,500



Vintage Queen Anne Cottage

In need of restoration. This Victorian home was built around 1902. It is located in a convenient part of town. It will be a lovely showplace when it is brought back to its original condition.
\$269,000



203+/- Acres Gorgeous Branscomb Property

166 +/- acres zoned TP. 37+/- acres zoned RR5. There are approximately 96 acres of level land with close to ¾ of a mile of the Eel River running through the middle of the property. Paved road access, power, phone, redwood timber & an active harvest plan. Old large, timbered barn with PG&E. **\$1,495,000**



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