

Of a certain age...

By Sue Stafford
Columnist

After 12 years in my comfortable home on Whychus Creek, it is time for me to downsize and economize, hopefully without giving up my own front door and patch of garden. That's much easier said than done, particularly if I want to continue to live in Sisters, which I do.

It's no secret that affordable housing to buy, in my case under \$200,000, is non-existent in Sisters. So are affordable rents, if I could even find a rental available. So what are those of us over 70 with limited incomes going to do? Whatever I am able to realize from the sale of my home must go toward living out the rest of my life. And who knows how long that will be?

The possibility of moving back to Portland, where I was born and raised, or Seattle, where I spent 33 years before moving to Sisters, is out of the question. Both areas are among the most expensive in the country, to say nothing of the rain and the traffic.

There are several newer trends in the housing industry that could go a long way toward alleviating this dearth of affordable housing. Everyday on Facebook are numbers of posts regarding "tiny houses" starting at about 200 square feet. Everything is compact, simple and multiuse. On my computer screen they look cute and charming. With a starting price tag under \$50,000, some slightly larger version of one of those might be doable — except where would I put it?

The other trend is what is referred to as "missing middle" housing, which was very prevalent in U.S. cities until after World War II, when the Leavittown phenomenon came into being and families left the cities and moved in droves to the housing developments/

subdivisions in the newly minted suburbs.

Prior to that time, between 1870 and 1940, was the heyday of medium-scaled housing in American cities. Today's "New Urbanists," the leaders in the missing-middle movement, say the needed housing encompasses a variety of dwelling types: townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, two- and three-flats, row houses, and bungalow courts. I remember well the tidy brick bungalow or apartment courts in Portland — one-story individual dwellings or attached apartments often built in a U-shape around a center courtyard from which each resident entered their own unit.

A modern-day variation of the bungalow court is a single lot on which are constructed four or five small detached cottages built around a common center courtyard. They can be built either for sale or kept as rentals. They are a best-of-both-worlds compromise between private and communal, while offering viable financial options.

The beauty of a duplex is the ability to buy or rent one side of it, or buy the whole duplex and rent out one side while living in the other. The option is always open to sell the other side.

There is a smattering of duplexes, townhouses and cottages throughout Sisters, although many of them are in Pine Meadow Village where the starting purchase price is out of my range and rents are way north of \$1,000 a month.

Here in Sisters, as in many other places, there are a number of factors that currently deter builders from building any of these alternative housing options. First things first, there would probably need to be changes made in the city and/or county land development codes and zoning to allow for a range of multi-unit or clustered housing

types compatible in scale with single-family homes, so they can be part of new single-family detached developments as well as on lots scattered throughout the community.

Given the costs of land, labor, and materials, plus conforming with regulations, housing that is mid- or lower-priced often doesn't pencil out for developers. As the middle has dwindled, financing has become more difficult for the smaller builders who usually attempt these types of projects.

And finally, there is the NIMBY factor — the single-family detached housing owners who are opposed to multi-unit developments next to them.

It will take a combination of many factors to facilitate the development and construction of missing-middle housing here in Sisters. In addition to changed codes and City-offered incentives to builders, we may have to think outside the box — perhaps enlisting planning or design assistance from college architecture students whose designs could be part of their practical experience while lowering building costs.

I am a believer that where there is a will there is a way. If there are enough of us with the will, we can find a way. And it needs to happen soon.

OSU-Cascades buys pumice mine property

BEND (AP) — Oregon State University-Cascades has purchased a pumice mine for the expansion of its Bend campus.

The university will pay more than \$7.9 million to 4R-Equipment, a subsidiary of local construction company Jack Robinson and Sons, to close the deal for the 46-acre property, according to *The Bulletin*. The university intends to open the new campus to students when the 2016-17 school year begins.

University officials had been eyeing the property since 2013, when it purchased an adjacent 10-acre site. Building has been underway at the smaller site since last summer. Even before the deal for the larger property was finalized the university had begun preliminary planning for a larger campus.

OSU-Cascades officials say they plan to eventually enroll 3,000 to 5,000 students, but the new campus will open this fall with a student population of about 1,000.

OSU-Cascades President Becky Johnson said Tuesday that the larger site will be developed in stride with student growth.

"Now that we will have a campus next year, we will start to get that bump in enrollment we expect," she said.

Johnson said the school is

continuing to consider purchasing a third property adjacent to the first two.

OSU-Cascades has been embroiled in a legal battle with opponents of the campus. With citizens' group Truth in Site raising concerns about how the campus could affect livability and traffic in Bend's west side.

Truth in Site's appeals of the city's decision to approve the campus plan have been rejected by the state Land Use Board of Appeals and the Oregon Court of Appeals. The state Supreme Court declined to hear the case last month.

Truth in Site has argued that by purchasing the 10-acre property first, the university skirted a city requirement for a more comprehensive plan for any development larger than 20 acres.

Johnson said she's unsure what kind of resistance the university will face when it seeks approval for the expanded campus, but believes that the first phase was not duplicitous and should help calm some concerns.

"My goal all along has been to get the 10-acre site up and running so people can get used to what it's like to have a small university campus," she said. "I honestly don't think it will be as impactful as people think."

THE CAMPAIGN FOR WHYCHUS CREEK

Flowing from snowy mountains, through pine forests and creekside meadows . . . Whychus Creek IS Central Oregon. Donate to the Campaign for Whychus Creek today: deschuteslandtrust.org/campaign

DESCHUTES LAND TRUST

This ad sponsored by The Nugget Newspaper in support of Deschutes Land Trust.

A Sweet Deal!
♥♥ **\$300** ♥♥
Discount

For the month of February when you start a comprehensive treatment program!
New Patients Only.
Not valid with any other offer.

THE BRACE PLACE
Central Oregon Orthodontic Specialists

Smile by Shae
541-382-0410
410 E. Cascade Ave. Sisters

CentralOregonBracePlace.com