

Willits Weekly | Edition 27 | October 11, 2018

REAL ESTATE SECTION



Photos by Mathew Caine

Above: Willits Furniture employees stand in front of the store under the 50th anniversary banner, from left: Donna Murphy, Bill Murphy, David Mann, and July Perez-Perreault, with owners Margie and Mike Smith. Not shown: Julian Mendoza and Curtis Deshiell.

Half-Century Sale

Locally owned Willits Furniture celebrates 50th year in business with anniversary savings

Willits Furniture has been a mainstay business in town for 50 years now, and is celebrating with an anniversary sale offering up to 50 percent savings, through November 9.

"Due to the current economy, it is more important than ever that local residents do everything they possibly can to support their local businesses," says Willits Furniture owner Mike Smith, making his plea on behalf of everybody who has a business in Willits. "These businesses support people that live here. If those businesses go away, then those people are likely to go away."

Mathew Caine
Features Writer
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Smith would like to see the businesses in town flourish so there is more for everyone. He would like to see people who grew up in Willits, stay and raise their families here, shop locally, and support the local economy for the benefit of all.

"I think people need to think twice about how and where they spend their money," Smith continued. "I think that now is the time for people to dig in and be supportive of their local merchants. A large percentage of the money spent in Willits stays in Willits, as opposed to money spent on the large corporations where almost none of the money stays local."

Read the rest of
Furniture | Over on Page RE6

Above, right: A Restoration-style coffee table sits in front of a plush L-shaped couch. Below, left: The display room is crowded with unique pieces of furniture. Below, right: Mike and Margie Smith's granddaughter, Marina Lee, works at the store during the summer.



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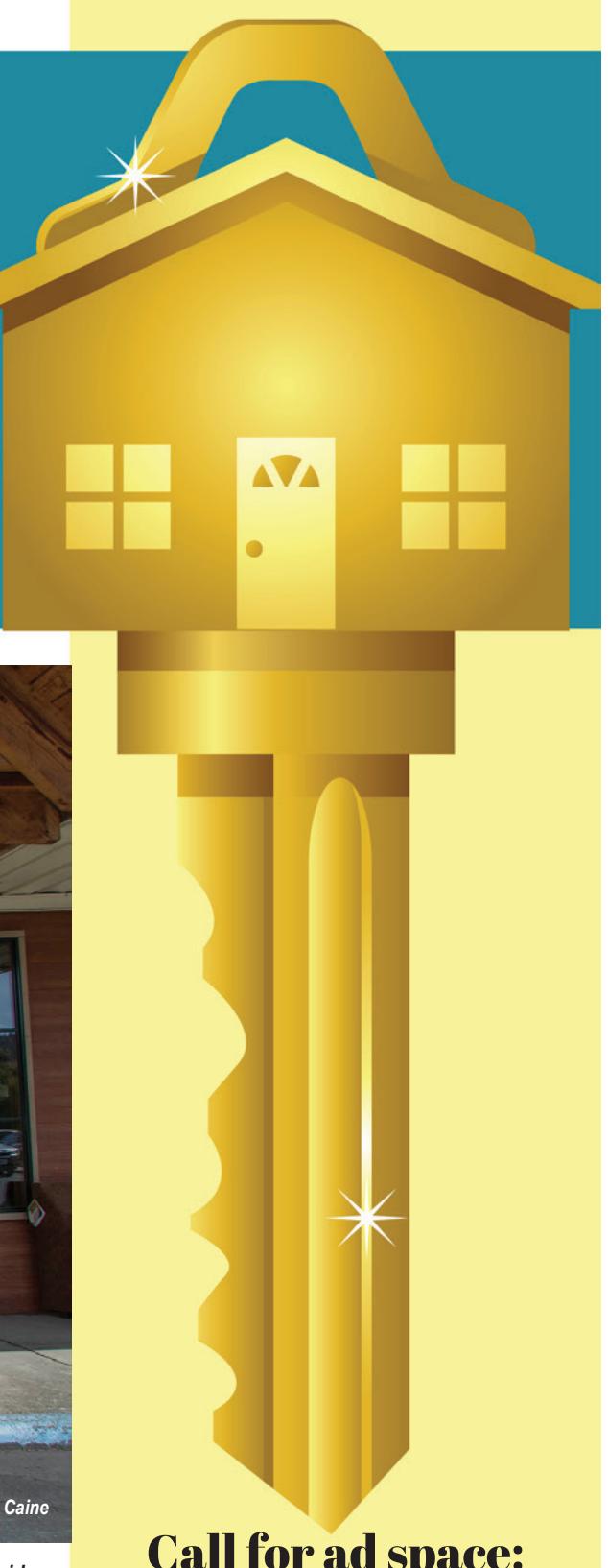
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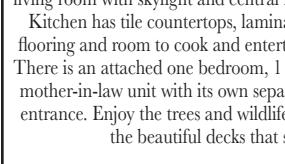
Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018 • 11:00am-1:00pm • Hosted by Sharon Noah



Private and peaceful, this 2 bedroom, 2 bath home sits among beautiful trees with an area behind the fence for parking. The interior includes beautiful tile and hardwood floors throughout, skylights and large windows to bring the sunshine in. There is plenty of wood trim and accents to bring in the warmth and a basement room for guests or just a getaway. Enjoy the relaxation whether you are inside or out. \$329,000

1559 Camellia Place

Sunday, Oct. 14, 2018 • 11:00am-1:00pm • Hosted by Sharon Noah



Come home to this 2 bedroom, 2 bath home that includes a tile entry, large living room with skylight and central heat. Kitchen has tile countertops, laminate flooring and room to cook and entertain. There is an attached one bedroom, 1 bath mother-in-law unit with its own separate entrance. Enjoy the trees and wildlife on the beautiful decks that surround the home. \$369,000

27328 Bear Drive

Sunday, Oct. 14, 2018 • 2:00-4:00pm • Hosted by Sharon Noah



Comfortable 3 bedroom, 2 bath home features wood flooring, cathedral ceiling in living room with double sliding doors out to the deck to enjoy among the beautiful trees. The kitchen has granite countertops

with tile back splash, stainless steel appliances including a commercial quality gas range. Both downstairs bedrooms have

new carpet and sliding doors to the deck. Relax outside in your private yard with hot tub. \$299,000



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COLUMN | Real Estate Beat

Your house is haunted!

I just said that to get your attention. But actually your house is alive, and it changes with or without your attention.

Just like all living things, your house needs maintenance and, in many cases, improvements, so that it stays healthy. Your house wants a checkup now and then, just like you. An unhealthy house is an expensive burden.

If your house has a crawl space underneath, go down there and crawl around with a flashlight to see what's going on. It's a good thing to do, at least once a year. You can learn a lot. Pay extra attention beneath the bathrooms and kitchen.

That white fungus under your deck house – it eats wood and cardboard for a living. If you see rodent droppings, you've likely got a foundation vent that needs to be replaced. If the ground is damp, you should install a vapor barrier to keep the moisture from making the crawl space damp and encouraging the growth of mold, mildew and wood-boring beetles.

Not only do these things stink, but they eat your house, literally. If you have standing water under the house, you need a sump pump installed to pump that water outside.

I suggest you get a professional pest inspection every five years or so. Don't wait for 20 years to get an extremely unpleasant surprise that you've got a bad fungus or wood-boring beetle infestation (usually both) that will now cost thousands of dollars to repair.

Earth-to-wood contact, usually at siding, steps and fences connected to the house, are an invitation to termites for lunch. It's a lot cheaper to do small repairs every few years and rake the soil away from the wood.

Fix leaky plumbing right away, of course. When I bought my 1970s vintage house some years ago, the old dishwasher had been leaking for years but it wasn't obvious. When I installed a modern dishwasher, the plumber said, "Bill, come here. I want to show you something." He took his fist and thumped the floor. That section of floor crumbled into the crawl space. That's a haunted space I had to replace.

Let me remind you again, have a couple of fire extinguishers around the house – especially near the kitchen (near, but not right next to the stove, so you can grab it in an emergency). Also have extinguishers in your garage and bedrooms. Household extinguishers are labeled A, B or C, which tells you the types of fires the extinguisher is effective against. A is for ordinary combustibles like wood, paper and cloth; B is for flammable liquids, such as gasoline or cooking oil; and C is for electrical fires. Some extinguishers are ABC and work on all of these types of

fires. Make sure you've got the right kind at each location.

Important: chemical fire extinguishers, the kind you normally get at the hardware store, can cake up after a while. These caked-up extinguishers need to be replaced or refreshed. The good news is you can call Ukiah Oxygen, and they will come right here to Willits and renew your metal-topped extinguisher. Call Travis at 489-0211. You can also take your extinguishers to Ukiah Oxygen in Ukiah, 462-8674.

The plastic-topped extinguishers are pretty much throwaways after use or caking. Please note that the extinguisher may show that it's charged, but it may still be solidified, so refresh them every couple of years. A caked-up extinguisher just blows compressed air on your fire – bad news!

I also carry an ABC extinguisher in the trunk of my car. It can save your life, or someone else's.

Clean your woodstove chimney and spark arrester at least once per year. I mean it! A plugged-up spark arrester can fill your house with carbon monoxide, and you will be haunting your house instead of living in it. A chimney clogged up with very flammable creosote will eventually cause a dangerous chimney fire, making your house just a memory.

Please change your central heat furnace filter a few times per year. This is for both renters and homeowners. I see furnace filters that look like my Aunt Alice's old fur coat (I guess that would be rat fur, because dirty filters are gray).

A dirty filter is not only recirculating very dirty air, but it will eventually drastically shorten the life of your furnace motor because of the lack of air flow. Think of trying to drink a strawberry milk shake when a strawberry is stuck in the straw.

It's easy and cheap to regularly change a furnace filter. It costs less than \$10.

Clothes dryer vent ducts get clogged up with lint. Check yours once in a while. A dryer vent that's clogged up will kill the dryer, and may even cause a fire. Never vent a dryer into your attic or under the house. Blow that warm, moist air outside where it won't fester mold.

Since we're discussing health and safety issues, I'd also like to remind you to have a grab-and-go bag packed – always – for emergencies in case you only have a minute to escape. Once there's an earthquake or fire, you won't

have time to pack. Your bag should include a change of clothes (don't forget the underwear), some cash in small and larger bills (the banks and ATMs will be closed, and it's better to pay \$5 for a small item instead of a \$20, because no one will have change).

Also have your meds easy to grab. I have a couple of metal or plastic cups, spoons, a knife, and a can opener. You can eat more with a spoon than a fork. Have carriers handy. There are some good collapsible dog carriers that are easy to store. Livestock needs special preplanning.

Don't forget your animals. Have a grab-and-go bag for them ready with a leash, food, bowls and any meds. Have carriers handy. There are some good collapsible dog carriers that are easy to store. Livestock needs special preplanning.

I don't know if your house is haunted, but as Dr. Frankenstein once said, "It's alive!"

Bill Barksdale was a 2016 inductee into the Realtor® Hall of Fame. He can be reached at Coldwell Banker Mendo Realty Inc. at 707-489-2232 or bark@pacific.net



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Presented by: Alison Pernell



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3500+ sq ft. Home features 3 generous sized bedrooms, living room, formal dining room, kitchen, music room, office, much more and a shop on a 1/2 acre parcel. \$395,000

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Sewer laterals gone sideways

In recent years, an environmental group called California River Watch has sued the City of Willits (and many other California cities) in an effort to protect the quality and health of public waterways.

As a Willits property owner and business owner, I am very concerned about the way the City of Willits is responding to the lawsuit – the city has attempted to avoid the hard work of methodically protecting our water, and instead implemented a point-of-sale system. The City of Ukiah started down the same path until they realized it doesn't solve the problem. For the same reason, no one in Sonoma County uses a point-of-sale system either.

In the interest of full disclosure, I remind you that I'm a Realtor and I make my living by helping people buy and sell homes – and this point-of-sale ordinance is not good for the home buying and selling process. It increases costs and may delay the closing of transactions.

Delays can cost local homebuyers enormous sums of money, depending on how they impact interest rates. All that being said, if the point-of-sale ordinance solved the problem of leaky sewer pipes in an efficient and effective manner, I'd just have to accept it and move on. However, it doesn't, so I won't.

People who know me know I am almost always against government interference in people's private lives. However, when individuals pollute the water we all depend on, I appreciate the government creating an ordinance that requires them to clean up their mess.

As homeowners, we are all responsible for certain things: one of which is to make sure we don't let cracked sewer laterals leak raw sewage into local waterways or overload our sewage treatment plant by allowing broken sewer laterals to function like French drains that whisk rainwater into the processing plant.

The California River Watch lawsuit requires the City of Willits to create a process to inspect sewer laterals throughout the city. Sewer laterals are the pipes that carry sewage from our homes to the sewer main.

Instead of taking a neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach, the city decided to only require inspections under three circumstances: when a property is sold to a new owner, when the city updates or repairs a sewer main on your street, or when a property owner chooses to remodel.

Here's the problem with this approach: The properties that do not fall into one of these categories can go on polluting and over-taxing our sewage treatment plant for years to come. It appears the point-of-sale option was not clear in the ordinance, which was drafted by city staff. The council now has the opportunity to correct the issues created by that portion of the ordinance.

A far better solution is to create a

geographic overlay, identifying the oldest subdivisions first, and requiring each home in Willits to have their sewer lateral inspected over the course of the next year or so.

According to our Willits city manager, replacing a sewer lateral should not cost more than about \$2,500 for most homes. I've spoken with the Savings Bank of Mendocino County and they're offering deeply discounted home equity loans that could be amortized over a couple of years and would likely end up costing about \$100 per month.

If the city fixes its sewer mains – as they have promised to do – and if all property owners with sewer service repaired or replaced leaky sewer laterals, our sewer bills could go down by \$25 per month, offsetting the cost of the repair over time.

It is in the city's best interest to find and fix leaks in sewer mains and to require property owners to find and fix leaks in sewer laterals. It would be great if sewer laterals were metered like our water, but they aren't, so without an inspection, it's impossible to know if a sewer lateral is damaged.

If the sewage treatment plant is overwhelmed and raw sewage flows into local waterways, the city will face stiff fines. By addressing this problem neighborhood by neighborhood, Willits can methodically fix the problem, and likely benefit from economies of scale, since inspectors and contractors can work efficiently, rather than moving equipment all over town.

Right now, before the rainy season starts, city employees could put a measuring stick in manholes around town to assess the current sewage flow. In January, they could measure again. If any of the locations show a change above and beyond a normal seasonal variance, they should be able to trace it back to the source: either sewer mains or sewer laterals in the area. If they're in a neighborhood with older homes, it could be either. If they're in a neighborhood with newer homes, sewer mains are probably the culprits.

I understand why the city wants to push off inspections to properties that change ownership – it's politically more palatable to say, "Hey, if you don't move or remodel, and the city doesn't happen to work on your sewer main, this is not your problem." But the truth is, polluted water is everyone's problem.

If you have questions about real estate or property management, please contact me at rselzer@selzerealty.com or visit www.realtyworldselzer.com. If I use your suggestion in a column, I'll send you a \$5 gift card to Roland's Bakery. If you'd like to read previous articles, visit my blog at www.richardselzer.com.

Dick Selzer is a real estate broker who has been in the business for more than 40 years.

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COLUMN | Numbers by Nick

Pay off credit card debt now

Neighbors, I'm not going to mess around with this topic. There is very little "good" about carrying debt. "Debt," defined, means one party owing money to another. According to Experian's annual credit and debt study, in 2017, the average American carried \$6,354 in credit card debt.

Buying a house or car via a loan is one thing – you have been approved for that loan, based on your total financial "picture" and your ability to pay back the loan on a schedule.

Credit card debt, on the other hand, is debt where an individual makes the buying decisions.

Credit card debt has very damaging ramifications

- People tend to spend money they do not have.
- Interest and late-payment fees rob you of your future financial security.
- Interest and late-payment fees cause you to pay more for the item than it costs.
- Debt is stressful – it can impact your personal relationships and can lead to medical problems.
- If you have too much debt or are late on your payments, you get declined on purchases, denied on future loans and, eventually, collectors are after you.

What to do about credit card debt

- Get an independent – someone involved – to help you evaluate your overall spending (a fiscally responsible friend, family member, person at your bank, or me, your friendly columnist and advisor).
- Identify areas to cut or reduce – have only the necessities.
- Do not carry your credit cards with you – pay cash.
- Call your credit card company and ask for the interest rate to be lowered.

Nicholas Casagrande, EA, is an accountant and a financial advisor. His firm, NC Financial Group, is a wealth management firm serving individual clients as well as small-to-medium-sized businesses. Client work includes personal and corporate taxes, investment planning, insurance, and real estate. NC Financial Group's Willits office is located at 675 South Main Street; contact 855-240-6606 or nicholas@ncfinancialgroup.com (taxes) or Nicholas.Casagrande@Ceterafs.com (investments) for more information.



Nicholas Casagrande
Columnist

Now and Then

107 Wood Street
Dairy and sheep farmer Allen Davidson was original owner



107 Wood Street built in 1906

The house at 107 Wood Street is in Queen Ann style and was built in 1906 for Allen Davidson. Davidson was a rancher who had come to Little Lake Valley in 1872 and first engaged in dairying, though he later turned to sheep raising.

The house has an unusual roof line in Willits. It has a gabled roof that also covers and "L" shaped recessed veranda. A one story gable to the west front of the corner lot house marks the end of one side of the veranda and a second gable, with a dormer window on the School Street side of the house, marking the other end of the veranda.



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\$859,000

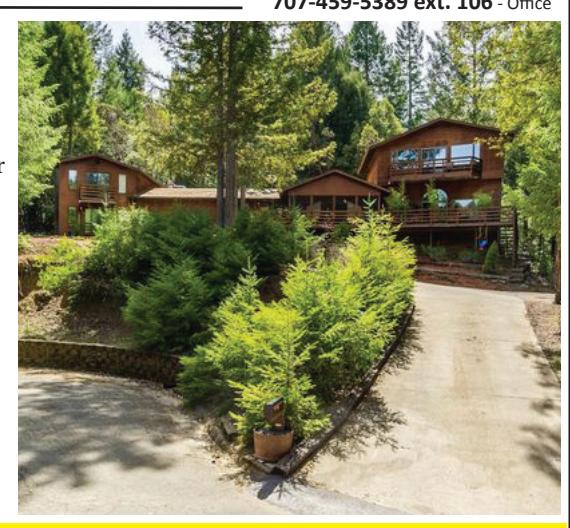
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This sprawling 3800+/- sq. ft. home is perched above Lake Emily on a quiet cul-de-sac location. Multiple features that make living easy. Spacious Master Suite with views of the lake features multiple closets, large walk-in, and vaulted ceilings. Separate wing in the home features 2 bedrooms, bathroom, decks, and exterior access that would be great for offices or a guest unit. Main living space is an entertainers delight. Come see for yourself! \$450,000



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70 +/- Acres Gentle Land in Laytonville
This parcel borders the town of Laytonville and Branscomb Road. Zoned RR1 could provide for future subdivision with many nice building sites. Some work has been done. Ten Mile Creek runs through the middle. Lots of nice mature trees with some open meadows. Power is on the property. City water hookups are available. All town amenities are close.
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Smith's father, Ottis Smith, along with some partners, bought the strip mall that abutted the then-much smaller Safeway to the north and south. The south side became a department store, and Ottis Smith created Willits Furniture on the north.

This was the year, 1968, that his son, Mike Smith, graduated from Willits High School and went off to study physical therapy at college. When he completed four years of school, Smith came to work with his dad "for a little while," he said. At that time, Safeway needed to expand their store, so Ottis Smith built the current building on the lot that he already owned, eventually coming to regret not buying more of the lot in order to have more room to expand.

Back then, the store was doing floor and window coverings, which turned out to be a good niche for them, even in rough economic times. Twenty percent of their business was appliances, but they found they wanted to concentrate on what they were best at – and they did not have the facilities to service the appliances – so they decided to focus more on furniture and home furnishings.

Around 1980, Willits experienced a severe economic downturn, and people were converting their gas and electric heaters to wood in order to save on the burgeoning costs of utilities. Mike Smith, his father being out of the business at this time, found another niche by providing a line of woodstoves called Blaze King, which turned out to be an excellent, popular and efficient product.

Eventually, Willits Furniture had to stop offering woodstoves after receiving a letter from their workman's comp company declaring the delivery of the product to be too dangerous, and threatening to raise insurance rates some astronomical amount.

Mike Smith married his wife, Margie, also a Willits local, in 1993 and, eventually, she ended up handling the day-to-day office tasks at the business that Smith says he was not strong in. It turned out to be an excellent partnership, and the business continued to grow. Now, in his 42nd year with Willits Furniture, Smith still believes in providing quality to the customers and realizes the importance of good employees and keeping them with the business.

When one of his employees went to

Afghanistan, Smith let it be known that he would always have a job when he returned. This led to the creation of a second store, La Bodega, as he needed a place for two of his employees to work, as well as wanting to carry some items that would not fit in the main store. La Bodega ran for five years until the employees left the area.

"I've always considered mattresses to be our No. 1 product," Smith said. "Upholstery [sofas, recliners, loveseats] is almost equal in sales. We buy mostly from companies [like Flexsteel and La-Z-Boy] that are in the country, so we can offer customized designer products and a wider variety of styles and colors. The big thing now is reclining with power."

Smith went on to explain how the technology has advanced in order to be able to offer recliners with separate foot, head and lumbar motorized adjustments, with batteries that allow you to place the recliner anywhere – without a power cord. Many of the new models offer USB ports as well, as an added convenience.

Smith's family has always believed in giving back to the community whenever possible. His dad was a Mason, and his mom an Eastern Star member who was instrumental in getting the community swimming pool built at Willits High. Smith helps support many of Willits' more altruistic causes as well as the arts.

His main project is the Seabiscuit Therapeutic Riding Center, where his daughter has been both a client and a volunteer. He has seen the program grow and flourish, partially through the help of the Willits Rotary Club, of which he is a long-standing member, and their annual Claws for a Cause dinner.

Willits Furniture also offered special discounts to survivors of the Redwood fire last year, and held a

"Redwood Complex Fire Victim \$10,000 Giveaway" this spring, asking for nominations of people who'd lost their homes in the big 2017 fire. The complete suite of furniture was won by Jasmine and Daniel Blanc of Redwood Valley.

Stop in and say hello – or "Happy Anniversary!" – and check out all there is to see in the store, and take advantage of the special anniversary sale prices. Willits Furniture is located at 775 Central Avenue, 459-4224, and is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm.



At left: A wide selection of reclining sofas and love seats are set up in mock living room arrangements.

Above, from top: The store is full of whimsical metal sculptures like this biplane. Mike Smith relaxes on one of his state-of-the-art reclining sofas. Willits Furniture offers recliners with separate foot, head and lumbar motorized adjustments, with batteries that allow you to place the recliner anywhere without a power cord.

At right: Mike Smith's fantastical sculptures from Mexico are on display outside the front of the store.

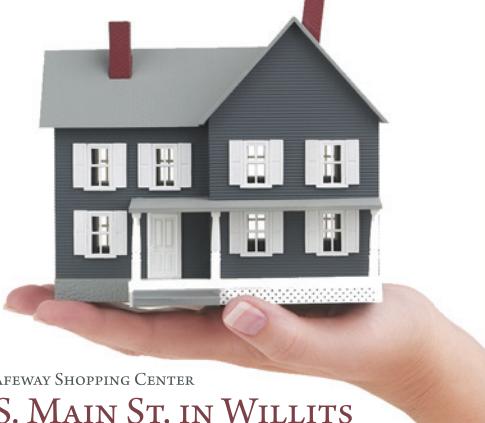


Photos by Mathew Caine

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