

Prices jump at Scotts Valley mobile home park

Park opened to families

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Already escalating mobile home prices have jumped higher at a Scotts Valley mobile-home park that opened to families six months ago.

"It's supply and demand," said Dawaine Terrell, manager of Vista del Lago.

In response to federal anti-discrimination legislation, owners of the 202-space park on Whispering Pines Drive opened the park to all ages. Previously, it was limited to persons 45 or older. Terrell said the Southern California owners

notified him just days before the law went into effect last March that the park would open to families. Owner Bill Schweinforth of Better Park Management in Glendale was on vacation and could not be reached for comment.

The law, known as HR 1158, was passed by Congress last year and signed by President Reagan in November. It was aimed at preventing discrimination against families in housing, said Bob Taren, chairman of the Santa Cruz County Mobile Home Commission.

Mobile-home parks had to declare themselves either open to all ages, open to persons 55 or older, or to persons 62 and older. Taren said there is some ambiguity over the 55-year-old distinction, whether it means all residents must be that age or just the coach owner. It has not been tested in court, he said.

Terrell said residents were worri-

ed the park would be overrun with families and young children but "there has been no big exodus coming through the gates as we anticipated."

"There were lots of horror stories but it hasn't turned out that way," said Colleen Terrell.

Dawaine Terrell said a "very, very minute number of disgruntled residents left." Other residents sold for other reasons but the turnover has been small, he said.

"It's worked out real well," he said. "It's good to have young ideas in the park."

What has happened is that sellers received top dollar for their coaches. Terrell, park manager for three years, said prices were in the \$50,000 to \$60,000 range two years ago. They rose to the high \$70,000 range, then jumped to over \$100,000 after the park opened to all ages, he said.

Joan Allen, manager of neighboring Spring Lakes Park, said prices there have escalated as well. Two or three residents have moved from Vista del Lago to the 223-space Spring Lakes Park after the age restrictions ended, she said. Spring Lakes formerly was for ages 50 or older. It changed to 55 and older in March under the new regulations.

"Homes sell very fast when they come on the market," she said.

Lee Boyce, a mobile-home salesman for nearly 17 years, said the local housing market affects prices more than anything.

"It's crazy," he said. "Look at real estate, what can I say." Boyce who sells new and used coaches at Mid-Way Mobile Homes Sales in Soquel said coaches in an open park will fetch more than those in a 55-and-older park. Prices will be less in a park for ages 62 or older, he said.

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— Dawaine Terrell, park manager

The reason has to do with the higher earning capacity of younger dual-income couples, he said.

Boyce said he was surprised when Vista del Lago opted for all ages. "It shocked the heck out of everybody," he said.

The Santa Cruz County market will continue to climb, Boyce said. "Everyone wants to come to Santa Cruz. No matter what you think of the politics, the weather keeps you here."

Taren agreed that prices will climb. "Housing is such a premium in Santa Cruz," he said. "There's not a lot of family parks. There's a great demand that's really bulging."

But Taren also said he thinks prices for coaches in different parks will pull closer. "I can't believe in the long run there will be that much difference between prices," he said.

REFERENCE