

OPINION

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Access Humboldt is on the move

That's right we're finishing up our final year at Eureka High School and packing up to move to our new space at College of the Redwoods!

Access Humboldt recently announced that we will be moving to expanded studio space to better serve our community of youth and adult volunteers, viewers, and listeners. We are seeking donations and grants to cover the cost of moving and the replacement of worn out and outdated equipment.

Founded in 2006, Access Humboldt is Humboldt County's only nonprofit public, education, and civic community media center. We operate four cable TV channels and KZZH-FM-96.7 FM community radio with programs also available as podcasts

LETTERS

and streamed over the Internet.

Our new studio at College of the Redwoods will be the hub for staff and volunteers to continue to create and broadcast local productions and public affairs programs that are by, for, and about our unique and beautiful county.

Our fundraising goal which we plan to raise in the next three months is \$30,000. As one of our campaign donors you will be recognized on our television and radio broadcasts and we look forward to any and all collaborations we could host in the near future once we're settled!

Some ways to support our move are....

- Give a monthly donation through one of our Patreons
- Renew your Access Humboldt Mem-

bership

- Underwrite KZZH and our local programming
- Spread the word that we're collecting donations

Find accessible ways to do all these things linktr.ee/support_accesshumboldt or contact me directly for more information or to set up a meeting.

Sincerely,

Monique Harper-Desir (She/Her)
Director of Admin & Development
Access Humboldt
Wiyot Ancestral Land
Eureka

Steven Seward for judge

After over 40 years as a Deputy District Attorney, Chief Assistant District Attorney,

criminal and civil litigator, and a partner in one of Eureka's law firms, I have practiced before each and every Judge in this county.

Although elected judicial vacancies are rare, I must observe that this time around, we are blessed to choose between two truly highly qualified candidates for this open judgeship.

While both candidates are qualified and capable. I'm voting for Steven Steward for Judge. Mr. Steward is honest, fair, hard-working and well balanced. His broad, competent experience, coupled with his calm and steady temperament, makes him the best choice to fairly administer justice as a Judge of our court. Steady and steady fast,

Steven Steward will be an extraordinary Judge.

Michael K. Robinson
Eureka

The Sorrel Place that is and the one that might have been

Once upon a time, the city of Arcata had its own Ford/Mercury dealership. It was called Isackson Motors and it stretched the entire block along I Street from Sixth to Seventh.

That's right. Downtown Arcata featured a business with brand new cars and pickup trucks, complete with a full service department beside the showroom. The used car part of the franchise covered the north side of the lot. There was a tiny sales office perched in the middle of the used car lot—and I mean tiny, an 8-by-10-foot building big enough for a desk and a couple of chairs and with the world's smallest wood porch terminating at the three or four wood steps leading down to the blacktop.

There seemed to be always one salesman, sometimes two, sitting (standing?) inside the "office" who, when he spied a customer through the window down there ranging among the cars, would pop outside the miniature office to answer any questions and strike up a deal if possible on a fine used automobile.

That was then. Isackson Motors today is no more, having gone the way of the many family businesses that used to service small towns throughout America; they just died (Isackson closed up shop in 1999.) The showroom morphed into various retail shops over the years including a used furniture store. The service department turned into a car repair shop (it's still there).

The used car mini-office either became itself a take-out burger joint (I can't quite remember) or it was hauled away and replaced by a food truck, the expansive paved lot offering plenty of room for parking. I remember there was at least one apartment above the sales office wherein lived in the 1970s a friend of mine, a tall and slender, eccentric, ex-hippie man of many trades who lived alone and who much loved his cheap, high-ceiling digs.

Fast forward to today. On the north side of the Isackson block sits the newest, tallest building in Arcata (outside of Cal Poly Humboldt's five-story Behavioral & Social Sciences building) stretching from I Street to J Street. On the south side of the block the auto repair shop is sandwiched in between two rather large cannabis outlets, one of them located in the former Isackson showroom. The food truck has moved on (it is now located next to the D Street Neighborhood Center) and the house where my friend Janice used to live before she was relocated to Plaza Point got demolished and hauled off to the dump.

No doubt many of you experienced, as I did, the many months of the Danco Construction Company's work to produce the four-story building, Sorrel Place.

It started with a big hole being

excavated deep into the ground and backfilled with truck load after truck load of gravel, each layer compacted with a gigantic roller, reminding me of the skyscraper projects I used to see in NYC: they had to dig deep into the rocky base of Manhattan to support their towering structures. This phase of the building project was the delight of my 3-year-old grandson each time we went by, sometimes stopping to watch. He loved to stare at the heavy equipment, especially the backhoe which he called a "tractor bubba." You can imagine that his grandfather wasn't hanging out at the construction site just for River. Old contractors love watching buildings go up, any building, because that's their soul-brothers wearing hard hats out there laboring all day long. And when the construction boss of the project is named Rob (yes, that Rob), it makes the experience all the more personal.

Sorrel Place is now complete and moved into. On 7th Street, it exhibits a single façade broken up like Plaza Point into smaller units. Surprisingly, unlike Plaza Point, Sorrel does not feature a retail first floor, but apartments occupy all of its four stories. The metal industrial type siding, finished in various shades of green, is either horizontal or vertical with two of the sections having a masonry covering painted black. On the west-most section facing J Street, the vertical siding accentuates its four-story verticality with a dizzying effect as one's gaze, while standing under the wall, follows the upward climb of the narrow grooved pattern from sidewalk to roof.

The recessed sections for the decks are small indentations with extended platforms like miniature viewpoints to overlook the street life below, encased by black metal railings (Plaza Point's railings are wooden). The ground floor patios have the same open metal railing design but the patios seem too close to the sidewalk to give the occupants any privacy and the immediate view from these patios is of the parked cars on the street.

The best view of the façade is from the northwest corner of Seventh and I streets. The stunning design pattern of the streetscape emerges in the rhythm of the pairs of windows marching down the façade, complementing the different block widths. One views an orderly repetition of decks and railings, the repeated indentations and extensions within the narrow and wide sections, and the unified design of this elevation cannot be anything but impressive.

The main public entrance, two-thirds of the way down the block, is defined by a high horizontal rectangular bar elbowing down to the ground like a mechanical extended arm, offering a distinctly modern touch. Since the entranc-



COMPUTER RENDERING Sorrel Place.

VIA DANCO COMMUNITIES

es for the tenants are on the other side of the building, one presumes that this one is for the public, that is, for visitors.

The south side elevation is more or less the same as the north, except sunnier. The parking lot for the complex is wide enough for one row of cars extending along the building front under a steel-framed carport with solar panels entirely covering its shed roof. At the end of the parking area is a one-size-fits-all outdoor playset complete with a slide. This area is the one of the two parts of the property with open space, although I could find no chairs or benches for outdoor seating or for casual gathering of the tenants.

The east elevation of the building, fronting I Street, has its southeast corner cut-away as if to

Architecture.

• *Light.* Four-story Sorrel Place, at least half the year (winter,) will cast its shade over the entire seventh Street block. (When I rode my bike down Seventh Street to the bike path in February, I turned left at I Street and went around the block to avoid that dark, cold shade and to stay in the sun.)

• *Site.* Sorrel Place hugs the maximum of its lot with a building, then plunks down a carport on another quarter of its open space, that is, it creates even more shade (OK, solar power is good, but does it have to be on the ground floor?) Its gesture to a playground is just that, a gesture. One imagines that a pleasing outdoor seating arrangement in this area, perhaps surrounding a fountain, would at least serve a meaningful purpose

new Gateway Area dedicated to similar Urban Intensity?) would have a more natural fit.

It would be useful at this point to speculate how Sorrel Place might have been different and become a better fit in its location. It could have eliminated the first floor apartments and given space for retail shops to offer pedestrians a reason to walk down that block instead of avoiding it due the perennial shadow it casts. It could have made itself a three-story structure and used its fourth story to construct some attractive roof forms that could give the building an appealing lid or lids and also have served as space for the solar panels thus rendering the obtrusive carport unnecessary (this is California, for Christ's sake. Who needs a carport?)

These changes would have resulted in more sunlight on Seventh Street as well as opened the entire south side to the sky like Plaza Point did. The tenants who come and go every day on this, their main entrance, would do so in natural light instead of having to walk under a heavy-feeling, unnecessary carport roof.

Yes, by making such design changes the builder would have sacrificed one-half of its subsidized housing units, but Sorrel Place isn't going to be the last structure in town to serve this demographic.



NORTHWEST VIEW A look out over the Gateway Area from Sorrel Place.

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create a plaza, but in the opening there was only a "lawn" of chips (perhaps the plaza is coming later?) At one side, a covered recess contains outdoor furniture facing inward. A sidewalk leads to the entrance of a rather large recreation room that takes up the entire northeast corner of the first floor. The siding on this cutaway is horizontal metal with white windows which presumably open onto the apartments at that end of the building.

The lack of any design accentuation on this elevation indicates that it wasn't important enough to warrant special attention. When you approach the Seventh and I streets intersection from the south, this is the elevation you come upon and one would expect to encounter a commanding statement of its unique architecture like the formal entrance on the other side, but no such thing is present.

The findings

Let us consider Sorrel Place using the criteria applied to other developments in Arcata: Light. Site. Quality of Life. Replication.

for the tenants and visitors. For a better playground experience, the kids can trek over (or be driven over by their parents) to the nearby Community Center where they will find a terrific playground, lots of open space, and an abundance of other kids to play with.

• *Quality of life.* The resident at Sorrel Place whom I interviewed was very happy with her apartment.

• *Replication.* The repetition of elements in the north façade, mentioned in the above description, is highly successful in my opinion.

• *Architecture.* Sorrel Place is well designed (for the most part) and adequately serves its purpose to provide good subsidized housing in Arcata. The one problem I see is this: it's modernistic design makes no effort to relate to any of the other buildings nearby. Where Plaza Point generates a village atmosphere that fits well in a small town, Sorrel Place suggests an introverted urban intensity that Arcata, at least the Arcata of today, does not evince anywhere else. Perhaps Sorrel Place, in another location (somewhere inside the

Perhaps the four-story height limit should be revised by the Planning Commission not upward to eight stories, but downward to three stories, as our neighbor, McKinleyville, has done.

A building has to do more than just fill one need, i.e., in Sorrel's case, to provide housing for 44 families. In the end, all of us, citizens, architects, builders and design review boards, must ask ourselves: How important is light to us? How necessary is beauty in architecture? How much are we willing to sacrifice to achieve a high level in both categories?

As space becomes available in town for more expansion of its core and more opportunities for urban design, let's try to ensure that we do this with all due urgency and speed, yes, but not so fast that we end up with buildings that we don't like all that much but that we have to learn to live with once they're there.

Daniel Duncan ran Small World Construction in Arcata from 1986 through 2007. Contact him at dduncan362@gmail.com.