

OPINION

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So many questions about the Gateway Area Plan

After listening to the presentation about The Gateway Project (TGP) that was given to the Arcata City Council in December, 2021 I attended the Open House at the Community Center on Saturday, Jan. 22. I was told this project has been in the planning stage for five years. While I'm an avid reader of all local papers, I missed it somehow. I am concerned about what is anticipated in TGP and urge the Council to go slow before approving any steps towards its initiation until more people learn about and understand the significance of what it will mean and cost residents of our city.

The enormous size of 138 acres being rezoned entirely residential for 3500 NEW HOUSING UNITS, instead of mostly industrial as it now is, first surprised, then puzzled me. It is so hard to describe that I urge the large map be posted outside City Hall so that people can view it even when the building is closed. The 200 page document should be available for checkout in

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the library and elsewhere; it is impossible to comprehend quickly.

What would happen to Wing Inflatables? Not evicted, of course, but could it expand if need be? The hurdles it would face cannot be underestimated; probably, not permitted. There are other companies within this parcel. Many are small and might relocate if a suitable, affordable space could be found. How do these businesses view this project? I was told there were email/letters sent to all parcel owners. TWELVE were personally interviewed. I failed to ask how many were supportive or not. I was given the paper copy of TGP when I asked if I could buy one.

Throughout the document there is reference to this being a BIKE/PEDESTRIAN community. There will be parking space for approximately half the actual number of residential units planned. These will include all sizes from single room occupancy space (SROs) to pent-

houses, and all number of bedrooms so that, presumably, families with children can be accommodated. Bike racks, two lane bike paths, six foot wide sidewalks in some areas, a few new streets, lots of trees and some buildings EIGHT STORIES HIGH. Only developers who include certain amenities will be permitted to construct the higher buildings.

The issues of affordable housing exists, statewide and nationally. But for a town of under 20,000 people undertake this without greater input from the community is unwise, in my opinion. I read nothing about soil tests to ascertain where subsoils to support multifloor buildings exist. What about rising sea levels? I HAVE read a lot about that in various papers recently.

The COST of the new streets, water/sewer, utilities and fire protection was not discussed. Who pays for that? It is expected that there will be restaurants and other small businesses, as well as, presumably, developers willing to invest in to-be-rented housing contributing. Will that be enough? If not, issuing bonds, increasing sales taxes, property taxes, fees of all sorts might fill

in the considerable gap.

In closing, I appreciate the work done by Dave Loya and his Planning Department. His staff never heard of a colossal failure of "planners" in the mid 50s called Pruitt-Igoe Housing outside of St. Louis, Mo. High rise apartments for low income families. Within two years there were problems; in less than 20 years they were imploded, and not yet paid for!! Maybe things have changed, but I doubt it. People need space.

Councilmembers, please GO SLOW.

Sincerely,
Sara Turner
Arcata

Evocative reading

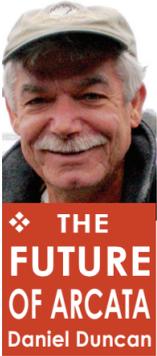
I cannot recall more pleasant, evocative and insightful column-inches in the *Union* than the two parts of "The Future of Arcata."

Daniel Duncan is a multi-faceted gem. I look forward to whatever else he may contribute to these pages.

Chip Sharpe
Bayside

By the time 08 landed, the wheeled suitcase had become universal and cheap, a thing so practical that even a senior citizen could navigate a transatlantic airplane ride with one of those compact gizmos fully loaded and riding snugly in the compartment above his seat on the airplane, ready to follow its master around like a personal valet with a retractable arm that shot up on command.

My goal was Montargis (pronounced *Mon-TAR-zge*), located in the middle of France, one hour 20 minutes from Paris by train. That meant first getting from the airport to the Gare de Lyon, where the train to Montargis originated. It was midmorning and I was in no particular hurry. Sally lived in a 200-year-old farmhouse that had already become everything it was ever going to be. I had been there once before and I knew what to expect: a one-story fieldstone off-white stuccoed building, its



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roofline sagging in the center, its inner rough hewn beams old as time, and beautiful as the now. After Googling directions, I climbed aboard a swift modern train to the closest metro stop in the city to the Gare de Lyon. The train traveled above ground from the De Gaulle airport through green fields, the same farmland that had fed the French people for a couple of thousand years — and fed them well — since the Pre-Roman days when it was called Gaul. Somewhere outside the spreading city grid, the speedy train dove underground. At the Saint-Germain-des-Prés station, I got out, carried my suitcase upstairs by its leather top-handle, and stood at the intersection to get my bearings. I tried consulting my smart phone but the strong sun-glare on the phone's screen made that impossible, so I put it away and looked around.

Then a strange thing happened. Everything I had done to get here, it seemed, evaporated in my brain like some dream that had outlived its purpose and was no longer relevant. I was suddenly wide awake to *that out there*, all those citizens going about their business, waiting at the light, crossing the street, buying a newspaper at the kiosk, lounging against the metro iron railing smoking a cigarette, accelerating by on a motor scooter, people of every type striding down the crowded sidewalks in every direction, *that was reality*, not me or my insignificant transatlantic flight to get here, Nobody paid *any* attention to me. For all they cared or noticed, I could have been standing there just like them, or not. I just happened to have showed up. This was the

What Arcata can learn from Paris

End and the Beginning of everything that would matter from now on.

As if I were an empty vessel, my entire body began to fill with intense feelings about this Parisian streetcorner. Without doing anything, without expecting anything like this, I became instantly — I cannot say it any other way — *happy*. When you're happy like this, you become fully *there* — where you are — and you can't change it and don't want to. The feeling on that street corner

had a lot to do with the bright sunlight pouring down from the luminous blue sky and landing on the sidewalks, sliding along the old buildings, bouncing off the cars and scooters and bicycles going swiftly by, energizing the foot traffic, from the most well-dressed and fashionable to the plainest bum, or casual tourist like myself. I was definitely a part of this scene. I was not outside looking in. I felt the warmth of sunlight down to my bones. Like everybody else, I inhabited this light and it inhabited me. It felt like an invisible tissue that was continuously in motion, entering life and non-life in all its forms, turning into the individual being of each thing, of each one of us, of every brick and cobblestone and iron railing and doorway and shopkeeper and scrap of paper lying in the gutter.

I had planned to take a bus or some public transportation to the Gare de Lyon but I just started walking instead. Almost helplessly, I put myself in motion along the wide Boulevard Saint-Germain sidewalk, suitcase trailing behind. Fortuitously, I had landed on one of the city's most famous streets, and justly so, and I was in no hurry. My smart phone had reported — I read this in the dark before I climbed out of the metro — that it was 18 minutes to the Gare de Lyon train station. I didn't know it at the time but the screen was registering the taxi mode, not the guy-walking-down-the-street mode. So I was off by an hour or so. I had a ways to go, which I would eventually discover, but that hardly mattered. For I didn't want this spontaneous and unique event in my life ever to end.

It seems that almost everybody has been to Paris, or at least experienced it in movies. I don't need to tell you about all the little flower shops, the outdoor cafes, the larger ones with indoor seating separated by "French" wood doors that opened like accordions, the bookshops, fruit-sellers, the bakeries with their pungent odors spilling out, the elegant clothing storefronts, the side-

walks wider than the streets of many other cities, the motorcycles and scooters lined up side by side along the curb and still leaving plenty of room for pedestrians. I walked along taking it all in. *happy*. That was me, this traveler from a little town in Northern California named Arcata, located not far from the second-most beautiful city in the world, San Francisco.

How the hell does Paris bring off this miracle when most cities in the world, including if not especially New York, feel so choked

ings fronting the sidewalk was not interrupted once by one of them rising taller than its fellows into the sky, sticking up its imperial head and taking all the light for itself. Yes, Paris has *one* skyscraper within the city limits, the Montparnasse Tower, but it was a mistake and everybody hates it.

You can see where I'm going with this, my friends in Arcata.

We are not alone in the struggle to keep our skyline low in order to let in every bit of light that we can get, for it is a precious commodity here in Humboldt

For that is what matters. That is what keeps people bound together in a fluid medium. It's natural light that energizes people and somehow makes us considerate of each other, as if to be fully human, and to treat other people right, a "space" must be left around each individual. Space for personal atmosphere. Space for light. Space for movement. That is the secret.

up with people and are oppressed with ugly buildings that crush the soul? What does Paris do that other cities don't do? Is it the cafes? the weather? the extraordinary hub-with-spokes radiating pattern of the boulevards, the many parks and museums? the rich and long history?

I stopped at one of the cafes and sitting outside (naturally!) ordered an omelet which the efficient waiter delivered promptly with toast, coffee and a slice of tomato (why a tomato? I don't know. It's a French thing. Did I ever have a better tasting tomato in my life?) I was leaning back in my chair looking up the Boulevard St-Germain. And there, I saw the reason. It was this very thing that was everywhere: *The light*. All that light pouring down into the street over the building tops. Everywhere, throughout the entire city. *Light*. How was that possible?

No skyscrapers in Paris, that's how. Just uniform six-story architecture everywhere, not one of the buildings sticking up to *block the light*. For that is what matters. That is what keeps people bound together in a fluid medium. It's natural light that energizes people and somehow makes us considerate of each other, as if to be fully human, and to treat other people right, a "space" must be left around each individual. Space for personal atmosphere. Space for light. Space for movement. That is the secret. I saw it when I looked up the block and my vision of the mass of build-

County. Paris also has had to fight to keep its low skyline and that fight has been going on for centuries and continues today. (For more on this topic see traditionalbuilding.com/opinions/paris-without-skyscrapers.)

But before I go, I want to tell you what happened on the bridge. My destination to the Gare de Lyon lay across the River Seine. The arched stone roadway of the bridge had lanes for cars in the middle and wide sidewalks on each side for the pedestrians. For Paris, as everybody knows, is nothing if not a walkable city. My body was starting to get tired and I began to wonder why it was taking me so long to get to the train station, but my mistake had not yet dawned in my consciousness.

I stopped on the bridge and looked up the river. There were bends but I could see a lot of the city. Of course, just to make the romance of the moment more perfect, the Notre Dame Cathedral rose up in the horizon, its towers pointing to the Higher Realm. Just up the sidewalk leaning on the rail, a pair of lovers embraced in a passionate kiss, a sight you don't see in America. But here in France, expressions of affection in public are as common as they are natural. That's another reason to love this so human place called Paris.

Hearing the clop-clop of horses, I turn, and (borrowing shamelessly from *Midnight in Paris*) sitting in the lane across from me a Louis the 14th imperial horse-drawn carriage idles. It

has stopped in the center of the span, barely 25 feet away. How beautiful it is, its golden frame glowing and magnificent in the midday sunlight. In the box sits a woman in a bright green dress with a dark cape with blond hair the color of wheat streaming over her shoulders. She holds the reins of four white steeds who stand still, quivering with strength and power. She looks ahead, her profile revealing a bold and straight nose with thin everted nostrils exhaling power and energy like the steeds she commands. And I know immediately it is Artemis, the huntress, and her passengers are important personages.

Gazing out the two windows towards me are the faces of two very old men whom I have seen before, but I can't remember where. Both are smiling as if to express their fondness for a person like myself, as if they wanted me to know that they saw me standing there and they knew what I was thinking and feeling. Then I recognized who they were.

The man on the left was Frank Lloyd Wright. The man on the right was Plato. The door opened and Mr. Wright waved me towards the carriage, while Plato looked on.

"Come, Dan, and sit with us," said Mr. Wright.

His companion, Plato, added in an encouraging voice, "Won't you ride with us to the Land of the Blessed?"

I smiled and shook my head. "No thank you, Immortals. I am on my way to visit my friend, Sally. She is making fish for dinner and she'll be disappointed if I don't show."

Wright nodded and the carriage door clicked. Plato leaned out and gave Artemis the signal. She snapped the reins and off the carriage flew. I think it went up into the sky and disappeared into the golden light over the city. I remembered Plato talking about such a possibility in The Phaedrus and Plato, if anybody, would have the best knowledge of the Realm of Being.

I grabbed the handle of the suitcase and pulled it along behind me the rest of the way across the bridge, continuing down the other side of the River Seine towards the train station.

My back started to hurt from so much walking. That was when I realized I had made a mistake in my calculations, if mistake is the right word to describe my stroll down the Boulevard St-Germain and what just happened to me back there on the bridge.

Maybe it was just Truth Itself alighting momentarily in the human realm? Paris does things like that to a person.

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