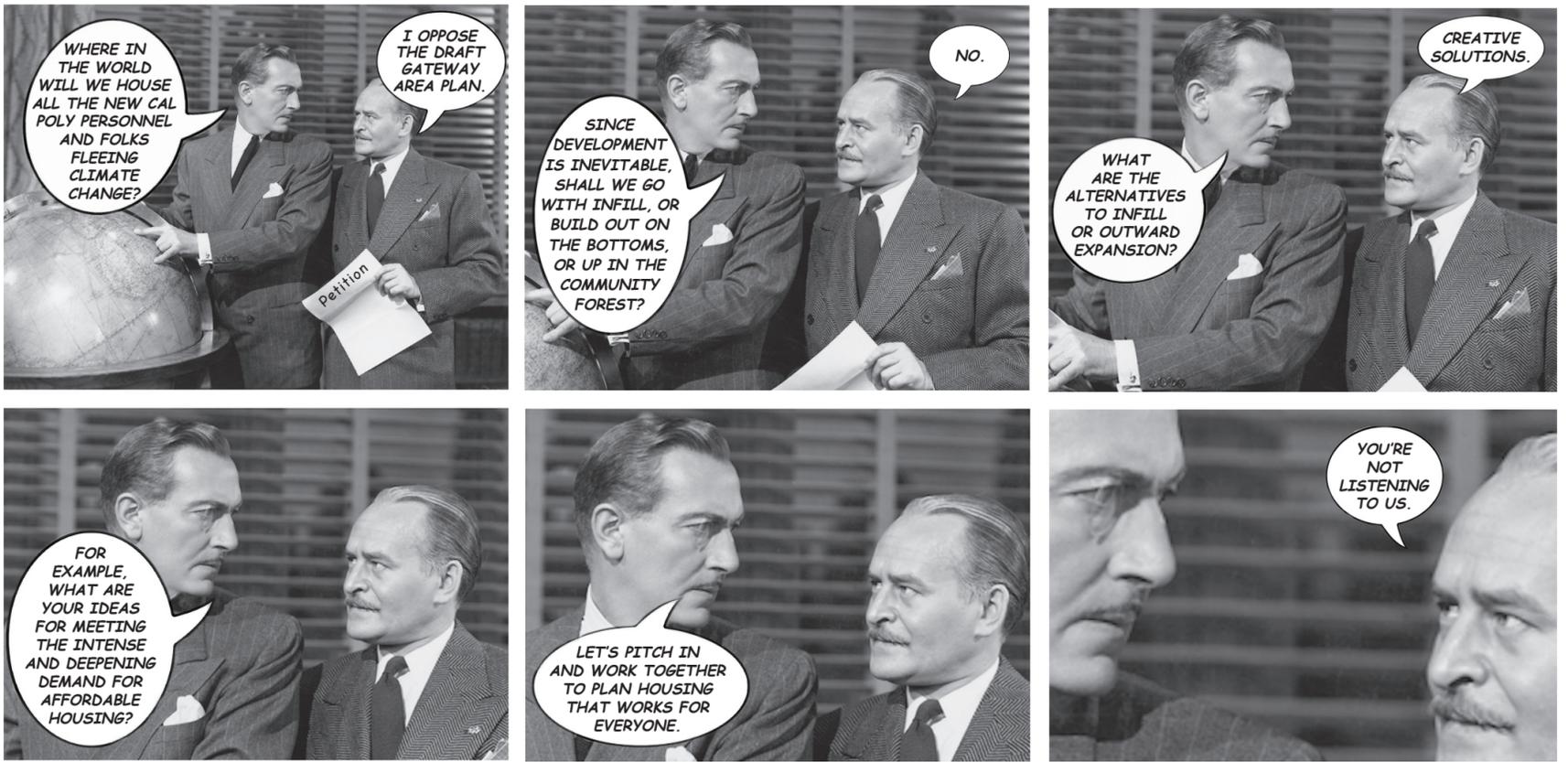


OPINION

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This week's episode: "I support infill, BUT..."



NEWS ITEM: Gateway Area Plan debate follows Arcata's classic slogans-over-seriousness playbook.

Creamery Row – a meh mishmash of missed opportunities

I ran into Dave Hooven when I went out to talk to the two young workers prepping my driveway for paving. Hard-working fellows, both of them competent, good-natured, and even though we were political opposites, they listened to my ancient carpentry stories attentively with the fascination they deserved: total absorption.

Ha! They knew who was in charge around here. I mean, it wasn't me but Dave, their boss, standing there next to his pickup when I came around the corner, looking up at me with the blue eyes of a little boy, not the glare of a CEO.

"Aren't you the guy who used to do my backhoe work decades ago?" I asked. "How's your dad?"

"Yep, that was me. I was 18 then, a worker just like Bud and Pete here. I was telling them just now not to take the owner of this project too seriously, but to be careful because he was a fussy SOB when he used to actually work." His grin said he meant me. "My dad's doing great."

One thing led to another, and when I asked Dave, who had taken over the excavation business from his father, my peer, Art Hooven, if he ever saw Rob Flint, who used to work for me, he answered, "Every day." It turned out they were co-contractors on the AHS field then under construction and he mentioned Rob was building a house down on 13th Street that Hooven & Co had done the site work for.

That's how I found my friend and former worker Rob again. He was standing in the middle of a gigantic two-story house in the framing stage that he was building for himself. He wore his old sagging tool belt, and was presently cutting the stringers of the interior stairs. He stood there alone. Not a co-worker in sight.

"I get tired of being around carpenters and sub-contractors all day," said Rob, whose day job was supervisor for a large construction company, namely the one that had built the project across the street.

I looked out through the grid of two-by-fours of Rob's exterior wall, and a little further on through a screen of the chain link fence mounted at the edge of his property to find the north side of Creamery Row staring down at me, my view of the elevation

complete except that it was being obstructed at the moment by a sizable plumber's crack presenting itself at the fender of an old pickup parked at the curb in front of one of the units, the clear demarcation of which no amount of innocence of a sagging belt line could account for in this particular neighborhood.

It was my first encounter of Creamery Row and it was not a good one and the more I learned about it the less its most prominent features did to improve that first impression.

But let's start at the beginning.

Creamery Row

Creamery Row, a subsidized-income residential development, contains about the same number of units as Sandpiper Park, 18. The development sits on over an acre of land (the two single-story houses on the O Street side are not part of the new development... but that's another story.) As a whole, the Creamery Row development occupies practically an entire block. On the east side, however, it's not a paved street but a creek and railroad right-of-way, a detail which is significant.

Typically, a residential block would contain back to back single-family residences, in this case one facing 12th street, the other



ROW ROW ROW YOUR HOME Creamery Row. VIA CITY OF ARCATA GIS

street side that faces south, the first elevation you come to on O Street, there is a split level effect with the upper story projecting over a cavity below containing the entry and allowing enough depth for one-half of one small car, the other half needing to stick out over the sidewalk. This façade has a cross-gable effect in the roof and a small shed extension has been placed on the first floor that hangs down like some

sides of this block contain a row of identical two-story units facing each other with the variation from the 12th Street version that the front-facing gable is missing. Otherwise it's one unit beside the other with paint color the only distinguishing variation and the same feature of cars in driveways sticking into the sidewalks.

The visitor to this section of the complex faces the narrow alley-like street with residences on both sides and no exit at the other end due to the creek. How does one turn around? Where's the cul-de-sac? Did the developer leave out that small detail? Evidently, since it looks like one must back into the driveway of the last unit on the block in order to turn around. Rather perplexing dilemma, so let's move on.

'Death Row'

Across the street from Rob's house, the north-facing side of the 13th street façade of Creamery Row (aptly named, it seems, as this development appears to be the "death row" of any recognizable Creamery-inspired design) evinces a return to the cross gable look of the 12th Street row except a longer porch-like flap has been added as if extending the length of this feature gives it a greater reason to exist at all. Otherwise the elevations are identical, with the color of each unit being its only distinguishing feature.

But here we must give the developer some credit, for he created 18 habitable residences for low-income families in Arcata,

U.S.A. Sandpiper Park created 16 tiny houses plus three apartments for single or married folks in the same city about the same time... both responding to the pressure to create housing for the priced-out category of Americans today.

Criterion for comparison

It may be fruitful to compare the two projects using the design categories from a previous article.

- **Criterion No. 1, Light:** Sandpiper Park's one-story building design allows the maximum amount of light to reach all areas of the development. Creamery Row cancels the light for every north-facing unit (half of them) on its property.

Winner: Sandpiper Park

- **Criterion No. 2, Site development:** Sandpiper Park takes .6 of an acre in a neglected neighborhood of Arcata and situates 17 buildings to maximize the use of space and create an orderly and attractive complex. Creamery Row uses twice as much space in a prominent neighborhood of Arcata to plow down a poorly designed crowded apartment complex that offers little more than maximum use of space for the maximum number of people.

Winner: Sandpiper Park.

- **Criterion No. 3, Quality of life:** Sandpiper park provides a neglected group of low-income residents with an attractive and well-maintained place to live. Creamery Row also provides a group of low-income residents who need more space than a tiny house to carry on from day to day and maintain their families in respectable housing in a respectable neighborhood (the one tenant I interviewed said that "it was a good place to live and the residents here are happy." She had been there six years, since it first opened.)

Winner: Neither one, a draw.

Rob takes issue with the above judgment as he believes, "The Creamery Row development offers solidly built units for families who can afford them. They are different demographic than the one Sandpiper Park serves — so, it may be that you (meaning me) are comparing apples to oranges."

- **Criterion No. 4 Replication:** The winner of this category does not need further discussion, for it appears that the developer of Creamery Row, Danco Builders, in this case at least, "hardly even tried" to deal with it gracefully.

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❖ THE FUTURE OF ARCATA Daniel Duncan



RANDOM FLAPLAND Spectacularly nominal housing. KLH | UNION

facing 13th street, with adjoining back yards. What the developer did was put a row of small units facing both 12th and 13th streets and fill what would have been the backyard areas of the single family houses with a double row of units facing each other across a narrow "street," each of these rows backing up to its brother row of units facing the other way (the 12th and 13th street elevations.) Just in case you wondered why the word "row" appears prominently in the name, here's one clue.

The designs of the two-story part of the complex are identical, though they vary somewhat from row to row. On the 12th

sort of random flap apparently to suggest a "porch" but without giving any reason for a person to actually stand there, since the entry door is underneath the overhang several feet away.

The design of the structure looks like it came from a novice in his first drafting class in high school. The only thing distinguishing these four units is the paint job; each one rendered in a different pastel color. So much for creative variation of units.

Onto the next street or "street-like" opening in the complex (officially, it's an alley, but it looks and acts more like a street.) Both