

Gateway Area Plan/Strategic Infill Redevelopment Program Playhouse meeting

January 25th, 2022

- Goals for the evening
 - come to an understanding of the Plan
 - how it affects those here, how it affects the community
 - wrap up with intentions for how the group will move forward (ex. letter to the editor in *Mad River Union*, direct communication/connection with City staff, etc.)

- Kash Boodjeh: has long-standing relationship to the Creamery District/was involved with the founding, was part of the PlanWest planning team (as was Jackie, both departed the team in August of this year—Kash has utmost respect for staff developing the Plan and thinks there is only positive intent represented there, but cites differing of professional opinion re: what's best for the area)

- Kash wanted to clarify “Plan” noun vs. verb—noun=detailed proposal for doing/achieving something, verb=design or make a plan of something to be built—CA is substantially lacking in latter (CEQA makes this difficult), and it inhibits community ability to visualize what detailed proposals will mean for the community tangibly

- Prompt discussed in small groups: from what you understand the Plan to be, what does the Gateway Area Plan mean for the City of Arcata in terms of arts, life, and culture as a whole?
 - Have not heard much about arts involvement—more about housing & traffic; curious to learn about arts involvement
 - Attended the Community Center, felt the information there was vague & difficult to digest—the arts only vaguely mentioned
 - Space for input in Community Center also noted to be “cool”
 - This is an infill project, what are we filling? What are we putting inside? Quality things hopefully—concerns not so much with actual structures, but human behavior and relationship in new spaces; “shouldn’t we change our behavior before we change the neighborhood?” —esp. where behavior relates to movement & transition to post-fossil fuel transportation; the Plan speaks to form & design, but not “what happens to humans confined to apartments”
 - Reading this Plan through pro-housing, pro-environmentally friendly transportation options perspective—public spaces woven throughout are still under development, and that is largely where art & artists factor in
 - Rooftop spaces; if there’s denser residential spaces, those can feel islanded from community life; rooftop spaces on tall buildings with restaurants/venues can support community interaction
 - Interest in community benefits table in Plan that shows how density in development is permitted—greenspaces, bike/sustainable transportation infrastructure, etc.
 - Artist housing referenced here; community benefits/amenities as a place where artists can weigh in and influence—communicate what artists

envision (concern also voiced that the arts are being leveraged in a way that will help developers jam through projects)

- It was asked (from folks' tones) if people thought that density in and of itself is negative; answered not necessarily, hope voiced that this brings down housing costs
- Are there established numeric goals for no cars by 20__ etc.?
- Categorization of those opposed to/concerned with high-density living as "NIMBYs" when they may have concerns about "what this style of living does to humans & human relationships to space"
- How are different developers attracted? Are there developers even willing to/fiscally able to work with what this Plan asks of them?
 - How do artists create visions that developers can actually work within? Perhaps the role of the artist is dreaming big and providing a vision to aim for, not in being entirely practical/limiting to practical realms

Back to the larger group, share outs & collective discussion

- A lot of what we love, the City is offering as "amenities" the developer can choose to comply with or not—these amenities need to be requirements; we are going to be a popular region, we shouldn't have to make any concessions: "we shouldn't have to give away the farm"
- Noted need for housing (and student housing specifically)
- "Arts & culture cannot be planned, it is iterative and responsive"
- Charm of the Creamery District being diverse uses, spaces, architecture etc.—fear that some of this may be lost
- Concern for gentrification, do not want to see "Brooklyn-izing"
- How do we support healthcare for artists, senior housing, artist housing, artists in schools, etc. —looking at artists as parents, families, aging artists, etc.—how do we build into this infill structure the way that artists can be supported in a robust way rather than just a sculpture on a corner?
- Tomorrow, HSU will likely become a Polytechnic—enrollment will double in seven years; we already do not have space for the students that are here now; we need places to live and cost of living down; it is painful, Jim Woglom noted that he has students living in their cars so that they can come to his "silly class"—how do we make this happen "without the sort of neoliberal steamrolling that often comes with design"
- Kash: It is the choice of residents to decide what their community looks like—citizens of communities have the right to decide what the design of their city should look like—referenced the design of old European cities: they are "the more attractive option" because citizens retain these rights
- Quality of life is subjective; what some might see as a crappy apartment to some may seem like a dream to a family living in their car; some may oppose tall buildings, some may be thrilled to live high up
- High-density housing; should be practice spaces for musicians and other noisy artists/corner or out of the way apartments reserved—written into contracts that you can practice there

- Noise is part of the dilemma of high-density housing; Septentrio currently going to Planning Commission to hopefully have live music until 10PM every day
- Noise of artists in the Creamery District is part of the vibrant Arcata feel we all hope to build/maintain
- Light pollution in the night sky; light can increase feelings of safety, and take us out of a more natural environment (light pollution in Arcata is “already terrible”)
- Suggestion that there should be ways that developers have to work with artists; artists should be hands-on in the creation of artist-housing, families should be hands-on in the creation of multi-family housing
 - How does this happen when artists do not have time to be on the Planning Commission/families may not have time to come to evening meetings?
 - Engaging people in sneaky ways; not “hey, come to a meeting,” but “hey, we’re having an event”
 - Our society doesn’t have enough respect for the arts
- If everyone can be considered an artist, how do we designate artist housing—how do we reserve housing for a specific segment of the population? How do we make the call on who it is/isn’t for?
- It takes more work and money to get away from cookie-cutter planning/design and that is it does not happen; “expediency trumps virtue”
- Love voiced for plazas and courtyards of all kinds—public, private, semi-public—gradient of size, different things can happen in smaller courtyards vs. larger plazas—how do we get from one building to another, straight lines or winding paths?
 - These aspects of community well-being, developers often say “will never pencil out”; can there be some sort of fund that makes them pencil out?
 - The Pattern Language (book); designing spaces based on people’s living; the 12 thing that would be the core things that artists would have in an artist-centric pattern language that could be put into an RFP
- Are we having a housing problem, or is the issue equitable housing? What percent of housing is owned by what percentage of people? Is it a supply issue, or is it people moving to Idaho and keeping their homes for their children? How do we distribute the housing stock we do have more equitably (perhaps before creating more)? This issue is bigger than Arcata, system-wide & national
 - Vision what you want your community to be like, for our children, don’t be reactive to the conditions/challenges of today because these will change; reach out to the City Council with this vision and ask them to direct the planning department to implement these changes in the Plan
- “Creamery District” no longer an identified geographic zone in the Plan, the name and boundaries established engulfed into “Gateway Area”; this is a point of concern for artists/this group
- Who do we think about as “the community” when we ask what “the community” wants? What would those not here yet, but who we are planning for, ask of us?
- Developers should be required to invest in Arcata’s future

- Noted that once this Plan is adopted, it will allow for “by-right” development; developments will not go to the planning commission etc.—the community will not have the opportunity to speak about specific developments
- The Creamery District has specific development standards, the Gateway Plan provides different sets of development standards—doesn’t erase the Creamery District, just overlays
- The future requires us to adapt behaviorally, behavior change must come before we build things, we should host a bike festival and paint crosswalks—make it obvious that we know the future will be different and we have to adapt

Moving toward wrapping up/intentions & ideas for what to do with this feedback

- Letter to City Council addressing wants & needs of artists
- Arts-specific demands to developers—perhaps fees/taxes that go to a community wellbeing/arts trust fund (need the word “arts” in there or it will be pushed out)
- A deliberative, consultative body of artists that speaks with developers/provides feedback on proposals
 - We can call anyone an artist, we need to define to some extent what “artist” means in these contexts
 - The Playhouse has had some plans for a while as to a consultative body to guide its work as the Local Arts Agency
- Keep the Creamery District as a named entity in the Plan
- Address housing equity/inequity
- Plan events that inspire alternative behavior

Anyone interested in working on these things should contact the Local Arts Agency; City Council will hold a study session on the draft (perhaps 4-6 weeks out), the group is planning to have a formal communication into them before that time