



“ YOU CAN FEEL THE ENERGY AND ... WHAT PEOPLE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT, ALL UNDER ONE ROOF.

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Painter Jose Di Gregorio takes a break from working on a piece for an upcoming art show at his Warehouse Artist Loft on R Street last week.

Complex helps foster artistic collaboration

BY BLAIR ANTHONY ROBERTSON

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Among the rules and regulations in place to make the Warehouse Artist Lofts run smoothly is this one regarding noise: Make all you want until 10 p.m. in order to fulfill your artistic needs.

Those noises include drumming, sawing, dancing, sewing and more. If you're an opera singer practicing an aria, go ahead and hit those high notes. If you're a musician mastering the guitar, plug into an amp and no one gets in trouble. Those who like to write or paint in silence have to learn to cope. Or buy a really good set of headphones.

This mixed-use, mixed-income community is far from a place where artists create in quiet contemplation. Spend some time in the renovated 100-year-old Lawrence Warehouse - with its art in-

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Mixed-use, mixed-income complex, open less than six months, has inspired idea exchanges among residents

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Singer James Cavern, who was on "The Voice," works on a mix on his computer overlooking R Street at the new R Street lofts in Sacramento.

stallations, performance hall and dance studio - and you'll hear residents working, intermingling and exchanging ideas. Opened less than six months ago, this unusual collective along Sacramento's R Street corridor has inspired a new way of living for those lucky enough to get into the 116-unit complex, which offers subsidized rents for artists.

Scores of tenants from a wide range of pursuits and age groups say that in addition to the new-found creative freedom cheaper rent gives them, they are making friends fast and finding all kinds of inspiration. Many already have joined forces to collaborate on new projects. That often happens after meeting a neighbor on the elevator, in the parking garage or on the rooftop patio.

"This is probably the best living situation any of us will find ourselves in in our lifetimes," said James Cavern, a singer who made a splash on the hit TV show "The Voice" and a WAL resident. "Beyond the design, we're living with a bunch of artistic minds and people of the same mindset. That is something that is rare."

Cavern is in the process

SEE LOFTS, 3B

that long. And then there was Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom. Normally looking too cool for school in a suit and tie, he was sweating in jeans and a sweat-shirt last Friday at a packed playhouse in Garberville. Newsom, long supportive of legalizing marijuana in California, wanted to come to the

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of course, was mostly waged on blacks and Latinos.

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SEE SMITH, 3B

Ex-deputy in retrial over gun sales case

Ex-deputy returns to court on weapons charges

First federal trial ended with jury deadlocked

BY DENNY WALSH AND SAM STANTON
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No one disputes that Ryan McGowan had a thing for guns.

The onetime Sacramento County sheriff's deputy bought 41 handguns from 2008 through 2011, including high-powered weapons that were unavailable to the general public.

"He loved to collect firearms," McGowan's lawyer, Chris Cosca, explained in documents filed last week in federal court in Sacramento. "He loved to look at, hold and shoot firearms."

Federal prosecutors say the gun purchases reflected much more than McGowan's affinity for firearms. They allege the former deputy was part of a secret - and illegal - gun-dealing operation that involved three other officers from three different area law enforcement agencies.

McGowan 34, is charged along with a Sacramento firearms dealer with conspiracy to circumvent federal firearms laws to run a weapons bazaar.

The case, which began four years ago with undercover operatives and wiretaps, went to trial Monday before U.S. District Judge Troy L. Nunley in the latest step of what has been a twisting legal path. It's the third trial stemming from the investigation since the case spilled into the open in June 2012.

At the time, the region's

SEE GUNS, 3B

41

Handguns bought by one-time Sacramento County sheriff's deputy Ryan McGowan from 2008 to 2011

25

Of those were later sold, including five within a month of McGowan buying them

33

Were purchased through Robert Snellings gun business

legally possess them. One sale included a buyer who converted two firearms to assault weapons and ended up in a six-hour siege with a

and agreed to testify against McGowan, his former colleague and friend, in exchange for leniency. The case against McGo-

three years and eight months in prison; he got a 90-day jail sentence. Online court records show he served 30 days on the sheriff's work crew.

the men abused McGowan's position in law enforcement to enrich themselves - an assertion that failed to convince a jury in the first trial. Jurors

trial brief. "McGowan then resold the guns at an inflated price on the private party market in California because the off-roster firearms could not

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Tresa Honaker, a 49-year-old dance instructor who was paralyzed after falling during an aerial dance practice, holds Clipper in her lap in her R Street loft living room Wednesday. "I find it kind of thrilling to hear my neighbors and know that they are there," Honaker says.

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LOFTS

of making new music with some of his neighbors. They'll get together in his loft, work out new material and record sample tracks, often while Cavern's dog Sadie sleeps nearby. Next door, Annie Rose designs and sews clothes, filling online orders for her business, Deranged Designs, which caters to the goth and alternative apparel market.

"It just feels really cool that somebody who had the power to make a building like this actually decided to do it," said Rose, 26, whose loft is filled with sewing machines, patterns and fabric. "It's just kind of surprising that somebody would care enough about low-income artists to do this for us."

Until recently, Rose had been living in shared quarters, a midtown "punk house" where musicians played at all hours. During the WAL application event this past fall, she arrived at 4:30 a.m., determined to secure a place to live that would help her take the next step in her career. Her application was the 39th submitted. Now she lives in a place where the noise is far more manageable, paying \$608 a month for a one-bedroom loft with a small balcony. That's about half of market price.

"I was ecstatic because I could finally afford to move out of that house after seven years," she said. "I'm so happy I have a way to move my business forward."

Despite his national TV

exposure, Cavern is still vying to make it as a touring musician. His annual income fell to less than the \$28,000 or so to qualify for subsidized rent. The federal government allows an affordable housing building to screen for artists as a special needs group if they meet predetermined income guidelines. Cavern lives on the second floor of a new building - also a part of WAL - that mirrors the renovated Lawrence Warehouse. He pays \$450 a month for an 800-square-foot loft that features large windows, 18-foot ceilings and stainless steel appliances.

Appreciative of his digs, Cavern said he believes subsidized rent is not something to be taken lightly. "I genuinely feel that those of us who are lucky enough to live here have a responsibility to show Sacramento and the rest of the country that this is something that can work, that this is something that should happen in every city," he said.

As housing developments go, WAL, at the corner of R and 12th streets, is one of the more novel housing concepts in the country. While other cities have artist communities offering subsidized rents, WAL differs in part by making 30 of the 116 units available to anyone at market rate. It also features ground-floor retail space that includes a public market with locally owned eateries and shops. Several businesses already have opened, including Kickville Vintage and

Vinyl and Benjamins Shoes. Others, including Bottle & Barlow - a combination barbershop and bar - are set to open soon.

In the basement adjacent to the parking garage, there is a large studio space still under construction where musicians will be able to jam until the wee hours. On the rooftop, residents have collaborated on a community garden with flowers and vegetables growing in raised beds. On the second floor, there's a dance studio with a spring-loaded floor.

Throughout the project, 25 commissioned art pieces, some incorporating materials from the old warehouse building, give the property its signature aesthetic. Tre Borden, a WAL resident, helps curate the on-site collection. Borden, who has a Yale undergraduate degree and an MBA from UC Davis, is not an artist, but he is often involved in linking artists with new business ventures. Moving in three months ago, he said the energy of the area is undeniable.

"You look at every major building on R Street, and it has been purchased," he said. "This is going to be the next hot neighborhood. The artists who live here, they're the ones pushing the culture."

And all those creative people in the same housing complex are already making plenty of art - and noise.

"I have a very talented drummer who lives above me," said Tresa Honaker, a 49-year-old dance instructor who was paralyzed after falling during an aerial dance practice. "His riffs and stuff are just outstanding. It doesn't bother me at all. In fact, I find it kind of thrilling to

hear my neighbors and know that they are there. You can feel the energy and feel what people are passionate about, all under one roof."

WAL is the brainchild of 32-year-old Ali Youssefi, who joined the family business, CFY Development, after graduating from Dartmouth and working as an investment banker in San Francisco. CFY, which specializes in affordable housing, purchased the property from CADA, which provided part of the financing. The three-year, \$41.5 million project, which includes new construction and the renovation of the century-old, six-story warehouse, qualified for \$4.9 million in federal affordable housing subsidies.

Youssefi noticed early on that this project, geared specifically toward artists, did not face the same scrutiny and NIMBY-isms that more traditional affordable housing projects often do. Given its location in an industrial corridor in transition, artists seemed like a natural fit. "The more art we have in Sacramento and the more artists we have in Sacramento, the cooler our city is going to be," Youssefi said.

Even the non-artists paying market-rate rents have been quick to find inspiration at WAL. Kimio Bazett, co-owner of soon-to-open Bottle & Barlow, began taking piano lessons from his new neighbor after moving into his \$1,200-a-month loft.

"I came in on a Sunday afternoon and heard him playing. It was just beautiful," said Bazett, who is also a partner in Hook & Ladder and The Golden Bear restaurants. "He's a classically trained pianist. So I poked my head in,

and here's this hippie-looking dude with a ponytail and beard just flying on the keys. He was like, 'Hey, sorry man.' I said, 'No, it's cool. It sounds really good. Do you give lessons?' We worked out a deal for \$100 a month."

But there is a catch to living at WAL. If an artist becomes a success - if Cavern breaks big as a musician, if Rose's clothing designs flourish - and starts to earn more than the identified income ceiling, he or she will be required to leave their subsidized lofts.

Painter Jose Di Gregorio says he finds his new place so appealing, he would be willing to pay full price if it comes to that. His sixth-floor apartment has three bedrooms, an open kitchen that flows to the living room and plenty of natural light. Newly divorced, Di Gregorio pays a reduced-rate \$844 a month. His two young daughters live with him part-time.

Like many artists, Di Gregorio found ways to decorate his apartment in style without spending much. The sofa was given to him. The chairs cost \$3 each; the two desks \$100. The larger master bedroom has become his painting studio. He sleeps in one of the smaller bedrooms.

"I really wanted this," said Di Gregorio, adding that he camped out all night to submit his application. "I was romanticizing what this was to become, the idea of a community like this. There is art permeating everywhere. My peers who don't live here are incredibly envious."

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FROM PAGE 1B

SMITH

Midwestern state where, just days after I moved to California to start work at The Sacramento Bee, legal experts were warning residents not to smoke weed while on vacation this summer. If so, the experts told one of my former colleagues, residents could face arrest or lose their jobs.

Meanwhile, my neighbor in my downtown Sacramento apartment building blazes up on a daily basis. I think I've seen as many people smoking weed here as I have drinking alcohol.

But I take comfort in knowing that despite the seeming ubiquity of a drug that's still technically illegal, there are a lot of people in California who don't know a lot about this issue and are very wary of it. That came out during the Blue Ribbon Commission's earlier forums in Los Angeles and Oakland, and might again during a forum Wednesday in Fresno.

Even Newsom, who has been studying the hurdles to legalizing pot for years, says he learns something new almost every week. Last week, of course, was that the word "marijuana" is racist.

"You have to respect people's anxiety in this," he said.

That said, legalization does seem to be the only answer that makes sense for California at this point. The drug is everywhere here, and it's not going anywhere. Why not regulate and tax it? Creating policies that work for people instead of against them is the challenge. The details will be everything.

Lawmakers should do what they can to protect small farmers who've invested their lives in the business. It's a tremendous task and, in truth, one that might not be doable. But it's worth a shot to avoid wrecking the lives of people like Jonathan Baker, a 25-year-old second-generation cannabis farmer who got up and spoke from his heart.

"Everyone who is here is here because we do not want big industry to be the only people doing this. ... I want to urge you guys to make this accessible to people like me. I don't have millions of dollars," he said. "A lot of knowledge has been created up in these hills. We just don't want to see our livelihood stolen from us." Nor should they.

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Insight



TERROR TACTICS

EXTREMISTS TURNING TO SLICK PRODUCTION VALUES TO RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS. 4B

OPINION
BY ERIKA D. SMITH

Trying to keep pot market cornered



There was the bald guy with a gray, frayed ponytail. The woman in the tie-dye shirt. The guy with a hemp sombrero. The dude who smelled like he hadn't showered in a week, and the guy who looked and smelled like he'd been smoking weed for about that long.

And then there was Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Normally looking too cool for school in a suit and tie, he was sweating in jeans and a sweatshirt last Friday at a packed playhouse in Garberville.

Newsom, long supportive of legalizing marijuana in California, wanted to come to the

heart of cannabis country to hold the latest in his series of public forums on the hotly debated topic. He wanted to get the real story.

He and others with the Blue Ribbon Commission on Marijuana Policy weren't disappointed.

Dozens of people from the Emerald Triangle of Humboldt, Mendocino and Trinity counties showed up, many of them loggers turned farmers determined to protect their livelihood.

Indeed, the county's livelihood. At least one study has found marijuana accounts for one-fourth of Humboldt County's economy. Which, if you think about it, clarifies why the Hemp Connection shop takes up prime real estate in downtown Garberville.

If people in California think legalizing pot is still up for debate, they probably don't live in

the Emerald Triangle. Even with legislation to regulate medical marijuana slogging its way through the Assembly this week, they aren't worried.

Indeed, to the tie-dye-wearing, pickup truck-driving folks in redwood country, it's not a matter of *if* marijuana will become legal for recreational use, but when. And the only thing more important than when is how.

How can California regulate pot in such a way that small farmers can keep their hard-earned share of the market in the face of new competition?

How can middle-class farmers in the Emerald Triangle compete with lobbyists throwing around money in Sacramento?

How will water rights figure into all of this?

And how can they convince lawmakers to stop using the word "marijuana"? Because, you know, there's "marijuana and

cannabis. Those are two words with two very distinctive meanings. Marijuana is a derogatory term based in racism."

Didn't know that? Yeah, me neither.

A guy named Stephen Gieder, who was wearing a "Keep Humboldt Green" T-shirt, told Newsom and the rest of us Humboldt County outsiders that. Something about law enforcement agents choosing a sinister-sounding word for cannabis to pursue the war on drugs, which, of course, was mostly waged on blacks and Latinos.

Judging by the applause from cannabis farmers, I'm guessing there's some truth to his assertions. But I'll admit most of the debate about pot and the legalization of it is new to me.

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