



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK STIVERS

Small-town comforts

Woodland's neighborly charms draw those seeking a quieter homestead with growing options for sips and tastes

BY BRADLEY GEISER

A far cry from the busy and

increasingly arena-centric downtown scene in Sacramento or even the college hangouts of downtown Davis, central Woodland offers something more subtle for those looking to avoid a loud night out.

Locals know that it wasn't long ago when the area surrounding Main Street was mostly empty. Visitors were just as likely to see a going-out-of-business sign as they were an open one. But over the last five years, downtown Woodland has woken up, and now it embraces both its small-town setting while broadening its horizons.

Whether grabbing a glass of wine at the State Theatre & Multiplex or relaxing at one of three locally-owned coffee shops, Woodland embraces its rustic charms. People are taking note.

Located in the historic Globe Rice Mill building, Morgan's Mill is a coffee, beer and wine bar owned by James Morgan. Morgan says he's seen first-hand the impact downtown Woodland's growth has had.

"Woodland is becoming a viable option for people who want

a quieter homestead and work in the surrounding cities," he said. "And with that comes more population diversity, which is a great development for our town."

That diversity means local bars and eateries can take more risks and offer a little bit of something for everybody. CEO of Eats Partners Inc., Phil Perry, the organization that operates Woodland's Burger Saloon, sees the recent renaissance of downtown Woodland as a group dynamic where all the necessary parts came together.

"The community is very cohesive and welcoming, and there's the way Woodland is separate, but somewhat connected to Sacramento," Perry told SN&R in an email. "If folks want a relaxed, welcoming and tasty environment, downtown Woodland delivers."

Douglass Middle School teachers Sarah Pitfield and Becca Bernard said the neighborly environment makes Woodland special. "You're able to go and hang out with people and you'll get a lot of the same

people," Pitfield said. "It's just really welcoming to families and groups."

Bernard, who emigrated to Woodland from Davis, agreed. "It's a small-town feel," she said. "In Sacramento, you're going to get the crowds, and here in Woodland, you're going to get a tighter-knit community."

Even the Blue Note Brewery, which sits just off Main Street in Dead Cat Alley, offers something different. Bernard and Pitfield noted how at any given time one can see a family playing board games or a group of friends mingling over one of several locally-crafted beers.

A family-friendly environment mixed with staples of a low-key night out on the town is what sets Woodland apart. While the scene may cater mostly to locals, there's a reason why students from Davis and business folks from Sacramento sometimes choose Woodland as a place to lay low and sip a drink. □

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