



NEW DEVELOPMENT OPTION FOR DEER HILL ROAD *Council to Consider 45 Unit Alternative to Terraces of Lafayette*

At a packed public meeting in early December, the Lafayette City Council agreed to consider a vastly different alternative to the hotly contested 315-unit Terraces of Lafayette apartment project. The new plan, which trims the unit count down to 45 single family homes and includes new public recreational facilities, will be the subject of two public hearings, on January 13 and 22, at the Veterans Memorial Building. All residents are invited to attend or otherwise forward comments and concerns in writing to the City.

Background and Process

Over the last two-and-a-half years the Terraces project has generated much controversy. Given the public's expressed dissatisfaction; given that the Circulation Commission and Design Review Commission both declined to support the Terraces proposal; given that the developer indicated that, if the project is denied, it will file a lawsuit against the City; and given the risks to the City presented by that potential lawsuit, City staff worked with the developer to determine if there was an alternative plan that would be more acceptable to all parties – the developer, community members, and the City.

The site map (see next page) is that alternative. At its meetings in January, the Council will gather public comments about this new plan and, if it finds the proposed development to be generally acceptable, will forward it to the Circulation Commission, Design Review Commission, Parks Trails and Recreation Commission, and Planning Commission for a full community review, with all meetings to occur during the first nine months of 2014. If, on the other hand, the Council in January rejects the agreement, then the hearings for the 315 unit Terraces of Lafayette project will resume immediately according to an amended schedule.

The Alternative Plan

As the site plan suggests, the new alternative would have three major components. On the central part of the 22.26 acre parcel would be a subdivision of 44 to 45 single family detached homes with lot sizes of 4,500 s.f. each. On the eastern side would be a community park. To the west and south would be open space.

Why was the plan organized this way? The City's goals for the alternative plan are as follows:

First: Significantly reduce the number of units on the property and, in turn, the traffic that would be generated by those units. This plan would reduce the unit count from 315 to 45 units or less – an 85% reduction compared to the current application.

Second: Deliver a development that is more consistent with the General Plan. The existing zoning for the property, which was inherited from the County when Lafayette incorporated, allows multi-family developments of up to 35 units per acre. The City's 2002 General Plan, however, seeks to limit multifamily developments to the downtown area. In its discussions with the developer, staff thus insisted on single family homes with an overall density across the 22+ acre parcel of not more than two units per acre. This is the same density that the City currently allows in Lafayette's most semi-rural neighborhoods – Springhill Valley and Reliez Valley – and it is *half as dense* as the City's rules allow in many if not most of the City's other neighborhoods, including all of Burton Valley.

At an average density of one-half acre per home, this would be the same density as the Orindawoods development, which is the only other existing neighborhood in Lamorinda that lies between the frontage road and Highway 24.

Third: Build smaller homes, clustered to preserve open space. While it is true that the overall densities would be the same as allowed in Reliez Valley, rather than spread monster homes all over the hill as has been done up and down the 680 corridor, the proposal would instead cluster the homes. Doing so will preserve open space, deliver a more attractive neighborhood when viewed from afar, and create opportunities for public and recreational spaces. The result would be an enclave of small homes, each with a height limit of 30', placed on lots averaging about 4,500 square feet and gathered together to create a relatively smaller and more sustainable footprint.

Fourth: Direct traffic to the west. The majority of the negative public comments received about the Terraces application decry the

traffic impacts of that project, and anybody who has had to sit in the Pleasant Hill Road morning commute can relate. For this reason, the new project not only reduces the number of units by 85%, but also locates the project's ingress/egress on the far western edge of the parcel, thus encouraging west-bound commuters that will live in the new neighborhood to use the central Lafayette freeway ramps, and not Pleasant Hill Road.

Fifth: Create significant public benefit. There had to be something in it for the public, and so the eastern side of the parcel has been reserved for recreational facilities, including:

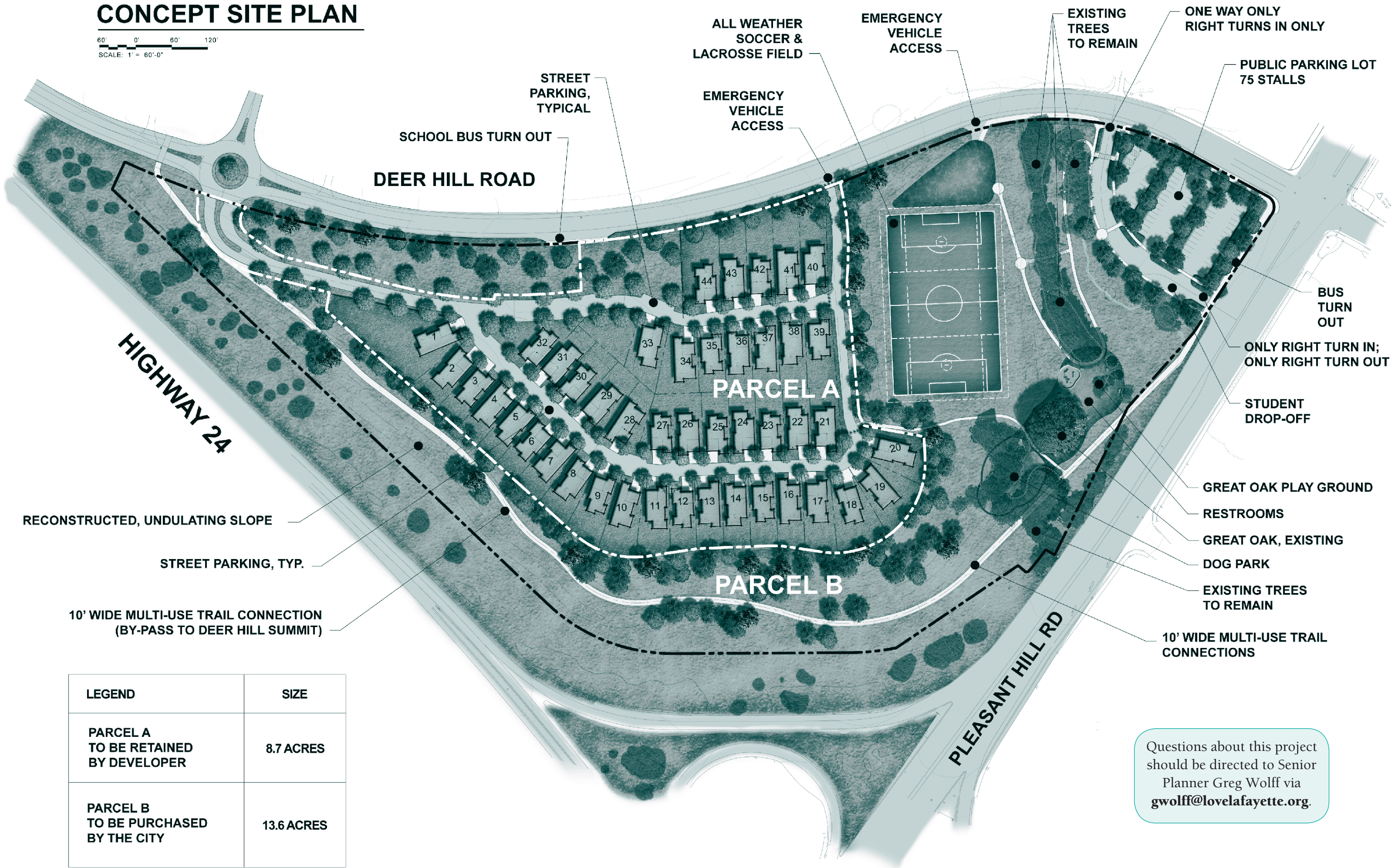
■ **An all-weather soccer/lacrosse field.** The City's 2009 Parks Facilities Master Plan says a new soccer/lacrosse field is the City's highest priority, but laments that "this facility is potentially the most difficult to achieve, given the scarcity of large, undeveloped, relatively flat sites." This alternative,

(continued on back page)

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!
Public Hearing on Alternative Development Option
January 13 & 22 • 7:00pm
Veterans Memorial Building

CONCEPT SITE PLAN

60' 0' 60' 120'
SCALE: 1" = 60'-0"



RECONSTRUCTED, UNDULATING SLOPE

STREET PARKING, TYP.

10' WIDE MULTI-USE TRAIL CONNECTION
(BY-PASS TO DEER HILL SUMMIT)

LEGEND	SIZE
PARCEL A TO BE RETAINED BY DEVELOPER	8.7 ACRES
PARCEL B TO BE PURCHASED BY THE CITY	13.6 ACRES

Questions about this project should be directed to Senior Planner Greg Wolff via gwoff@lovelafayette.org.



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New Development Option *(continued from front page)*

therefore, presents a rare opportunity to achieve this goal.

- **A new tot-lot/playground.** Lafayette, with its great schools, low crime, and good living, has always been a magnet for families with young children. However, because the City was not master planned from the start, Lafayette has had a rough time acquiring good locations for tot-lots. While it is true that the City currently owns three tot-lot facilities, they are all located south of the freeway. The 2009 Master Plan is therefore very specific in its goal to create new neighborhood parks north of Highway 24, and this alternative proposal would do so.
- **A dog park.** Dog parks have become increasingly common in California, and there has been demand for one in Lafayette since at least 2001. The park proposed here, centrally located in the community and sited underneath a magnificent oak – one of the three oldest trees in Lafayette – would be an ideal spot for this facility.
- **A 75 car parking lot.** The public parking lot indicated on the plan would serve multiple purposes. During weekdays, the crescent road would be a convenient and safe pick-up and drop-off area for students and the lot would also provide overflow parking for high schoolers. During afternoons and weekends, park users would populate the parking lot as they attend soccer games and visit the various recreation facilities. And during summertime, the parking lot would provide much needed capacity for the annual all-city and all-county swim meets that occur at Acalanes High School.
- **A Deer Hill Bypass Pedestrian/Bike Path.** Last but not least, the developer has agreed to build a 10-foot wide public path that would wind around the perimeter of the project, thus allowing bicycle riders to bypass the steep incline on Deer Hill Road. Anyone who has tried to ride their bike westbound from the high school toward the BART station knows that it is an almost impossible task. As such, students are currently discouraged from riding to school, thus adding to the traffic congestion. The path proposed here, almost a half mile long, would allow bikers to bypass the steepest parts of that hill.

The Basic Deal

How would the deal work? Who would pay for all these amenities? Broadly speaking, the alternative proposal would work as follows:

- The lot would be split into two parcels, Parcel A and Parcel B.
- The developer would complete all engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture for both parcels. The developer would be responsible for grading both parcels, for installing all underground utilities on both parcels, for landscaping both parcels, and for building the multi-use bike path.
- Parcel A, at 8.7 acres, would be rezoned to allow a subdivision of either 44 or 45 detached single family homes.
- The City of Lafayette would purchase Parcel B from the developer for \$1.8M, and the developer would turn around and use that \$1.8M to build the above-ground public amenities, including the soccer field, the dog park, the tot-lot, and the parking lot. If costs for those amenities exceed \$1.8M, the first \$300,000 in overruns would be split by the parties. For costs beyond that, the City would be entirely responsible. The deal was structured in this way to incentivize both parties to be economical and efficient.

The Public Process from Here

As noted above, the Lafayette City Council will, in January, convene two public meetings to gather public comments and opinions about the alternate plan described in this issue of the *Vistas*. We hope you will participate, either in person or in writing via cityhall@lovelafayette.org. Please make your voice heard! You can make a difference.

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	Or 299-3215

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Jennifer Russell, Director	
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Anonymous Tipline, Traffic Enforcement, Suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3230

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E-MAIL: Council/staff members can be reached via e-mail using this address format:

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Example: SFalk@lovelafayette.org

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