

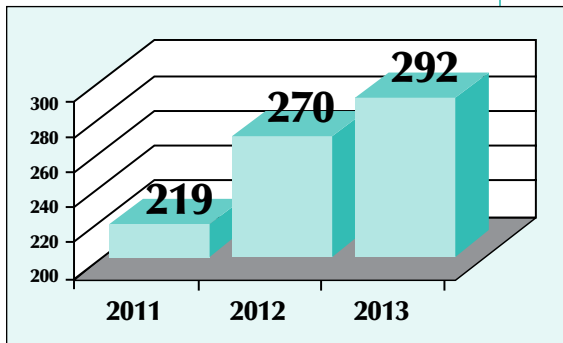
MIXED CRIME RESULTS FOR 2013

There were mixed results in the annual crime report that Police Chief Eric Christensen delivered to the City Council in February.

To be sure, Lafayette continues to be a safe place to live and work, with a very low number of so-called “crimes against persons.” In 2013, Lafayette residents experienced a total of six assaults, eight robberies, and two sex crimes city-wide.

Property-related crimes are up, however, and in some cases way up. While residential burglaries dropped from 70 in 2012 to 61 in 2013, commercial burglaries increased from 38 to 52; stolen vehicles rose from 29 to 37; and auto burglaries jumped from 84 to 118. All told, property crimes in Lafayette are up 33% since 2011.

Property Crimes in Lafayette



The reasons for the increase are myriad and difficult to assign with any precision, but the lingering recession has something to do with it, as does California’s new prison realignment policy which shifts the responsibility of custody, treatment, and supervision of individuals convicted of non-serious felonies from the state to counties. Many low level offenders have been released as a result of the policy, and some of them are back on the prowl.

As Chief Christensen has said on many occasions, the best way to prevent a property crime at your house is

to keep the windows and doors of both your car and your house locked – every time you leave! Burglars, for the most part, are opportunists looking for the easiest and fastest way in; don’t give them that opportunity.

What To Do

If you’re headed off for an extended trip, do these things: (1) Limit the number of people that know you are gone; posting on your Facebook page that you will be away from your home for a month is not a good idea. (2) Have a neighbor check your home and pick up your paper every day. It’ll cost you a souvenir or two, but it’s worth the peace of mind while you are gone. (3) Stop the mail. Yes, that is still a safe thing to do. (4) Set the lights on timers throughout the house, and maybe even turn on a radio to make noise. (5) Block the side garage door so it can’t be kicked in; this is one of the most common ways that burglars gain access to houses. (6) Put a padlock on the side gate. Forcing a bad guy to jump the fence is often just enough of a deterrent to keep them out of your yard and house. And finally, (7) Don’t stop the newspaper! Burglars often get a hold of those stop-circulation lists, and use them as a convenient planning tool.

Are Cameras the Answer?

Unfortunately, even all of those steps might not stop a determined burglar, and so the question arises whether residents should also install a camera surveillance system. Good camera images can be instrumental in catching bad guys, and also in locating items that were stolen. The Lafayette Police Department has used residents’ video systems on several occasions, and made several arrests as a result.

Camera systems, in fact, are apparently effective enough, both as a deterrent and in recovery efforts, that residents of several Lafayette neighborhoods have funded and installed private systems that constantly survey their streets.



To determine their efficacy and make recommendations to the City Council, Lafayette’s Crime Prevention Commission has begun an in-depth study of camera systems. Commission chair Cameron Burks recently gave a progress report to the Council regarding the effectiveness of surveillance cameras, and said that the Commission is studying three different systems -- mounted cameras that provide monitored and unmonitored recording; automated license plate readers; and cameras that can record both continuous moving and still images.

For now, the commission is suggesting that cameras be placed in neighborhoods rather than freeway entrances and exits to decrease the number of vehicles that would need to be analyzed during police investigations. But Burks said that the group would continue to study different systems, and report back to the City Council within the year.

If you have questions about crime prevention or cameras in Lafayette, please contact Police Chief Eric Christensen at echristensen@lovelafayette.org.

CREDIT THE CITY, NOT *PLAN BAY AREA*,

We've noticed, lately, some confusion around the topic of regional government. **One common misunderstanding?** Many people think that regional agencies – namely the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission – are responsible for local land use decisions here in Lafayette. Some folks also believe that regional programs, like *Plan Bay Area* and ABAG's Priority Development Area (PDA) program, are responsible for those new downtown developments.

They don't. And they're not.

In fact, it is the City Council, the Planning Commission, and Lafayette's many other volunteer commissioners that, after hearing from the public, write, approve, and implement the rules for whether and how land can be used in Lafayette. It's not ABAG, MTC, or *Plan Bay Area*.

For instance, it was Lafayette's all-volunteer General Plan Advisory Committee that in 2002 – a full decade before *Plan Bay Area* was launched – declared that:

- Lafayette's hillsides and ridgelines should stay essentially undeveloped;

- The City should “capitalize on the BART station” by establishing a downtown core that encourages a mixture of retail, office, commercial, and residential uses;
- Landscaped medians and specialty lighting fixtures should be added to the East End of Mt. Diablo Boulevard; and that,
- The City should “encourage multi-family residential uses downtown.”

Furthermore, zoning rules that allow downtown buildings up to 35 feet high, with residential densities of up to 35 units per acre, have been on Lafayette's books since 1974.

The Merrill Gardens development at Second Street and Mt. Diablo Boulevard? It complies and is entirely consistent with rules that have been in place for at least forty years in Lafayette.

These are *our* goals and rules, and they were developed by your peers, your neighbors, and your predecessors who volunteered to serve on the Design Review and Planning Commissions, or who were elected to the City Council. They were not foisted upon Lafayette by ABAG, MTC, or *Plan Bay Area*.

WHAT'S WITH ALL THAT GROWTH?

All right,” one might reasonably ask, “if the same basic zoning rules have been on Lafayette's books for decades, the regional governments aren't controlling our local decisions, and the State isn't providing any housing subsidies, what's driving all those new downtown housing developments?” Before we get to the causes, let's first look at the numbers. Below are the eight projects in and around the downtown, comprising a total of 412 units, that are either approved, under construction, or proposed:

Project Name	Location	Number of Units
The Woodbury	Behind the Veterans Building	56 Luxury Condominiums
Town Center III	Behind Pet Food Express	69 Condominiums
Merrill Gardens	2nd St. and Mt. Diablo Blvd.	72 assisted living units plus 17 memory care units
Belle Terre	Next to Bo's Barbeque	46 affordable senior apartments
Marquis Lafayette	Pleasant Hill Rd at Mt. Diablo Blvd.	23 Townhomes
Lafayette Park Terrace	Behind Blodgett's Floor Coverings	18 Condominiums
Lennar Homes	Dolores and Mt. Diablo Blvd.	66 Condominiums
Terraces Alternative	Deer Hill Rd. at Pleasant Hill Rd.	45 Homes
TOTAL		412 new units

To give these numbers context, consider that since Lafayette has about 10,000 housing units, the new developments will increase the City's total housing stock by about 4%.

Regarding the impact to schools, a demographic study recently commissioned by the Acalanes High School District concluded that all of Lafayette's new developments – in downtown and the neighborhoods – will generate 77 new K-8 students over the coming years.

So What's Driving the Development?

At least four factors are encouraging private developers to build more downtown housing in Lafayette:

- **Schools.** Families searching for homes in the East Bay are attracted to the three Lamorinda cities and Piedmont because parents, taxpayers, and businesses have done what's required to maintain excellent public schools in these communities. The Acalanes High School District, for instance, was recently ranked as the top scoring public high school district in all of California. Meanwhile, the long recession and the State's financial crisis hurt California's many other school districts, forcing some to cut classes and programs, and leading others to the brink of bankruptcy. As a result, compared to the other options, Lafayette's schools now look even better, and this has amplified the demand for housing in Lafayette.



FOR HOW LAFAYETTE DEVELOPS

Now, as is the case with almost every complex issue, there are nuances about California's housing laws that must, in this context, be addressed. The State office of Housing and Community Development does, in fact, periodically review the planning rules of every California city to ensure that local regulations do not inhibit the production of affordable housing, and Lafayette complies with that effort. There's also the State's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) program that, every seven years or so, analyzes regional population forecasts and requires each city to demonstrate that it has enough appropriately zoned land to accommodate its share of the projected growth, including demand for affordable housing.

However, while it's true that the RHNA process holds local governments accountable for ensuring that projected growth can be accommodated, it does not order the City to build affordable housing nor does it provide any money to subsidize affordable housing. The State just works to ensure, basically, that California's cities don't slam the door on affordable housing (because if every city did that then. . .).

And so: while there is a general overlay of State hous-

ing laws that apply to cities, the most critical decisions regarding housing development – height, massing, density, architecture, color, location – continue to remain with local officials and are controlled by each city's general plan. Which is the long way of saying that, if you love or loath that one new downtown building, don't credit or blame ABAG! It's on us. *All of us.*

If you're interested in Lafayette's housing policies, we hope you will participate later this year when the City updates the Housing Element of its General Plan. To receive notice of those meetings, or if you have further questions about planning and zoning in Lafayette, please contact Planning and Building Director Niroop Srivatsa at nsrivatsa@lovelafayette.org.



■ **Seniors.** Demographers confirm that Lafayette's population is aging, and many of the City's newly minted seniors, with friends and families nearby, would prefer to stay in town rather than move to a distant retirement community. Many, however, yearn for a smaller downtown condominium or townhome that would allow them walk to the grocery store or their favorite restaurant, catch BART into San Francisco for the ballgame, ballet, or symphony, and ditch the yardwork. At least three developers are currently working to deliver such "move-down" housing units in

the downtown area.

■ **Downtown.** Mt. Diablo Boulevard is vibrant, walkable, and full-service. With its excellent food stores, customer-friendly businesses, burgeoning boutiques, top restaurants, and easy access to BART, Lafayette matches just about any other Bay Area commercial district for livability. Add to that all of the cultural offerings of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center and the splendors of the Lafayette Reservoir – a 550 acre natural preserve located just a mile from the BART station – and you've got one of the finest small downtowns in California. It's no wonder that people want to live here.

■ **Pent Up Demand.** The real estate business is notoriously cyclical and for the last two decades or so Lafayette has been riding the downside of that development roller coaster. In the twenty years prior to 2014, for instance, just one large multi-family project was completed in Lafayette (Town Center II, with 75 units). Likewise, the US Census Bureau determined that Lafayette's population actually

declined (by fifteen people) between 2000 and 2010. Now, the combination of an improving economy, low interest rates, and the other factors noted herein has led to a housing boomlet in Lafayette, with developers scouring the length of Mt. Diablo Boulevard for opportunities to deliver new homes for eager buyers.

The Result? Higher Prices

Given the combination of relatively flat supply and increasing demand for housing in Lafayette, economists would predict higher prices, and the data support that conclusion. According to the Contra Costa Association of Realtors, the average sales price for single family homes in Lafayette increased almost 16% in 2013 alone, with townhome prices increasing by a whopping 23.5%.

Average Sales Price			
	2012	2013	Change
Single Family Homes	\$1,044,936	\$1,242,277	15.9%
Townhomes	\$442,731	\$578,874	23.5%

As a result, Lafayette now commands the highest average home sales price of any incorporated city in Contra Costa County, and is second only to Piedmont in the entire East Bay. It's no wonder that developers are looking for opportunities in Lafayette – it's a great place to live!

.....
 The new developments will increase
 the City's total housing stock by about 4%.



City of Lafayette
3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210
Lafayette, CA 94549

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lafayette, CA
Permit No. 161

Postal Customer
Lafayette, CA 94549

NON-PROFIT PROFILE: LAS TRAMPAS

You may never have seen it, but hidden discreetly behind several lovely Moraga Boulevard homes, on 3.5 quiet acres, lies one of Lafayette's greatest treasures: Las Trampas, Inc. If, as it has been said, our society will be judged by how we treat the least among us, Las Trampas is our community's exemplar, our light, our polestar, because the sole purpose for this remarkable organization is to help those who need the most help.

What began in 1958 as a school for children with profound disabilities has evolved into a complex and busy nonprofit that provides everything from job training skills to independent and semi-independent living. The organization manages licensed group homes, supported living services, and vocational and developmental services, and currently serves ninety-seven adults.

"Our philosophy is to integrate people in the community as much as possible," says Development Director Kathy Merchant. "While some clients live with caregivers, other live independently in one of our residences. They come here during the day for activities, and we support them in their everyday life."

Las Trampas folks give back to their community. Among other efforts, they help make blankets for Children's Hospital, keep local parks clean and green, and collect unused sundries from local hotels which they clean, repack and deliver to Contra Costa homeless shelters.

Community integration has, indeed, been critical to Las Trampas' sustainability, and several generations of Lafayette residents have stepped forward to support the organization. There's another opportunity to do so this year, and it will be pure fun, all for a great cause. You can support Las Trampas by attending the **8th Annual What's in Our Hat?** fundraiser at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa on Sunday, April 27, 3:00-6:30pm. Tickets are \$100, and available at (925) 284-1462 or www.lastrampas.org.

Your dollars will fund this vital Lafayette resource that enables individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities to expand their horizons and lead full, active lives in the community. They are our neighbors, our friends, and our own family members, and together as a community we will treat them well.



Lafayette's
DOGTOWN DOWNTOWN

SATURDAY, APRIL 12 10AM-1PM
Lafayette Library and Learning Center & Lafayette Plaza

DOG PARADE
10am (begins @ Lafayette Plaza)

ACTIVITIES
• Workshops
• Activities
• Demonstrations
• Dog Adoptions

CONTESTS
Enter your dog in one of all contests - FREE registration starts @ 9am @ the Lafayette Library and Learning Center
• Best Bone
• Best Costume
• Lovelace Best Like Owner
• Waggiest Tail
• Best of Show

MORE INFO
www.lllcf.org/dogtown/

Lafayette Goes to the Dogs

Though we've long been a pet friendly town, it wasn't until now that Lafayette formally celebrated its doggone pets. If you have a dog, or if you just love them, join us on Saturday, April 12, from 10am to 1pm for the City's first-ever **Dogtown Downtown** festival. All activities will take place at the Lafayette Library and Lafayette Plaza.

The event will include outdoor demonstrations, dog competitions, and other activities for dog lovers of all ages. There will be pet adoptions, animal rescue groups, and

educational offerings from the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.

Admission is free, but registration is encouraged, either online or at the event, so we can estimate how many will be in attendance. Be among the first to register and receive a complimentary Lafayette Dogtown Downtown canine first aid starter kit when you check in at the event, while supplies last.

For more information about Lafayette Dogtown Downtown, including the presentation schedule and registration link, go to www.lllcf.org/dogtown, or contact Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson at jay@lafayettechamber.org.

CITY DIRECTORY

For Council Members call: 284-1968

Council Members

Don Tatzin	Mayor
Brandt Andersson	Vice Mayor
Michael Anderson	Council Member
Mark Mitchell	Council Member
Traci Reilly	Council Member

Messages to **all** Council Members:
cityhall@lovelafayette.org

Administration

General Reception and	284-1968
Steven Falk, City Manager	Fax: 284-3169
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Srv. Dir.	299-3227
Jennifer Wakeman,	
Financial Srv. Mgr.	299-3213
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	299-3210

Community Development

Tony Coe, City Engineer	284-1951
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning Director	284-1976
Ron Lefler, Public Works Director	299-3214
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	299-3259

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Hansen, Program Mgr.	299-3216
	Or 299-3215

Parks, Trails and Recreation 284-2232

Jennifer Russell, Director	
Senior Services	284-5050

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	911
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	284-5010
Police Business Office:	283-3680

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

Fax 284-3169

Address 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210 Lafayette, CA 94549

Website www.ci.lafayette.ca.us

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

First Initial + Last Name @lovelafayette.org

Example: SFalk@lovelafayette.org

Want more City news? Subscribe to the City Manager's Weekly Summary and the Almost Daily Briefing at www.lovelafayette.org.