



THE LONG & WINDING ROAD

It's been a long, tough slog, but in 2020, after a twenty-five year effort and about \$100 million spent, Lafayette will finally bring all of its public roads up to a minimally acceptable standard.

While not quite as gripping as the latest "beach read" by Grisham or King, the story of Lafayette's quest to repair its 93 miles of roads has had its fair share of twists and turns.

The Starting Line

Most of Lafayette's streets were built by the County prior to Lafayette's incorporation in 1968. Because Lafayette was originally a "no property tax" city, there was little money available for regular maintenance and repair. As a result, by the early 90's many streets had reached the end of their useful life and were failing.



Recognizing the problem, in 1995, the City Council placed a funding measure on the ballot and local voters approved the road and drain bond. While the total need was much greater, the public agreed to tax themselves to the tune of \$13 million, and the Lafayette City Council pitched in another \$2 million from the General Fund. These funds were then used, exclusively, to fix Lafayette's major arterial streets and boulevards.

Five years later, thanks to the efforts of the City's engineering team, Lafayette's biggest and busiest streets were free of potholes and safe from

flooding. There wasn't enough money in the pot, however, to fix the city's smaller streets and cul-de-sacs. As a result, by 2001 the funding gap to repair Lafayette's remaining roads was estimated to be more than \$20 million – a figure that would grow over time. Given this dire prediction, the City's all-volunteer Capital Projects Assessment Committee (CPAC) urged the City Council to seek a new revenue source to pay for residential road fixes.

Three Flat Tires on the Straightaway

Given the successful 1995 ballot measure, the City Council hoped voters would again tax themselves for better neighborhood roads. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. California's 2/3rds voter threshold for tax measures proved too steep a hill to climb, and voters turned down three consecutive measures.

The first failure was in 2004. By then, the backlog of failing local roads had risen to 185 streets, with costs totaling \$27 million. The Lafayette City Council thus asked voters for an annual tax of about \$15 per \$100,000 in assessed home value. Measure N failed, garnering 58% of vote, well short of the required 67% supermajority needed to pass.

To keep the pavement from further deteriorating while figuring out its next move, the Council released \$2 million from the General Fund Reserve to accelerate "rescue" repairs and treatments of local roads.

In 2007, believing it had crafted a fairer tax, the City Council asked voters via Measure C for a flat tax of \$150 per resident/year. That measure also failed – but only barely this time – with 63% of the vote.

Encouraged by that near-miss and hoping that the third time would be a charm, Lafayette put a third measure on the ballot in 2011. Measure G proposed a flat tax of \$89 per year, and the Council promised that if the measure

was approved the City would match the tax proceeds with an additional \$3 million from the General Fund reserve. Though, once again, more than half the voters favored it, the measure failed when only 57% of the voters checked "yes" on their ballots.



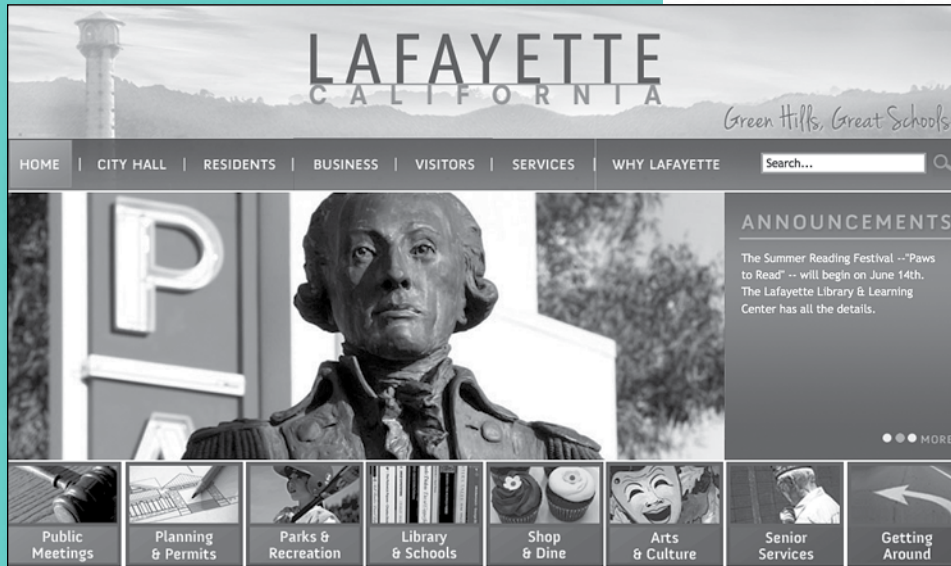
The Checkered Flag! Um, Five Years from Now!

The City Council, while disappointed, refused to give up. Rather than withdraw the matching offer of \$3 million, the Council instructed CPAC to develop a stretch plan that would use those and other funds to fix Lafayette's roads over a longer period.

The City began implementing that plan in 2012. To extend the life of certain poor-condition-but-low-traffic streets, Lafayette applied a chip-seal treatment that can delay the need to repave roads for up to five years. Meanwhile, CPAC also recommended that the Council increase the City's contribution to road reconstruction funding by 40% for each of the next five years.

The road has been long and winding; there have been several failures along the way; the streets haven't been fixed as fast as many would have wished; and there has been less money available for police, planning, recreation, and parks. But the upshot is that Lafayette is now on track to bring all of its roads, including residential streets, up to a minimally-acceptable standard by 2020.

LOVELAFAYETTE.ORG



RECOGNIZED AS TOP CITY WEBSITE IN CALIFORNIA

We're proud and pleased to announce that at the annual conference of the California Association of Public Information Officers (CAPIO), the City's new website was awarded the CAPIO Award of Distinction for Excellence in Communications for 2014. This is the top award that a municipal website can receive in California.

Launched in July 2013, it was these features that apparently captured the jury's attention:

- **The website promotes transparency**, and includes a landing page with links to every council, commission, committee and task force meeting. From this page, residents can get agendas, staff reports, and minutes for all the City's public meetings, and can also listen to streaming audio and archived recordings for Council meetings and other selected board meetings. The website's e-notification page allows users to control which agendas, emails, event notices, news releases, and city manager communications they wish to receive.
- In what we believe to be a first in California, the City has an **Open Government** button directly on the homepage that links to a variety of information dedicated to transparency including budgets, audits, staff compensation, disclosure forms, and procedures for public records requests.
- The overall aesthetics of the site **celebrate Lafayette's natural beauty**. The color scheme represents the blue of the Reservoir sky, the green of the Briones hills, and a splash of orange for the wild poppies that decorate the landscape in spring. The graphics were chosen so that the site is immediately recognizable as "Lafayette." For instance, the

top banner (which mimics the masthead of the City's Vistas newsletter) features the City's iconic reservoir tower, and the photographs on each of the front page buttons were all taken in Lafayette. Indeed, much of the "real estate" on the front page is devoted to a rotating set of hometown images that change from season to season and emphasize the City's natural beauty.

■ The City acquired user-friendly URLs – **www.lovelafayette.org** and **www.lovelafayette.com** – which are easy for residents to remember because they mirror the popular "Love Lafayette" bumper stickers distributed at community functions.

■ **The architecture of the site is designed to allow users to quickly get where they want to go** – ideally within

a maximum of three clicks. To do so, there was a conscious effort to use "flat" navigation rather than the more typical "deep" scheme.

- **The webpage puts the most popular stuff up front.** News, Announcements, Open Government, Hot Topics and Calendar serve as a primary method of public outreach, with most information just a click or two away.
- The site aspires to be a portal for **all things "Lafayette"** – and not be just restricted to government functions. There are links to schools, religious institutions, clubs, youth sports, theater and music venues, the library, and other public resources and services not provided by the City. The calendar, too, is community – and not just city-oriented – and people can now find details all in one place about a play at Town Hall Theater, a concert by the Gold Coast Chamber Players, a program at the library, a lecture about how to raise chickens, or even a Planning Commission meeting.
- The **Map Room** is one of the most visited pages on the site. Here residents find detailed property information about zoning, flood maps, fire zones, private streets and even street sweeping schedules.
- The website functions as a tool for **economic development**. Using embedded, customized Google maps, Lafayette businesses are dynamically updated thus eliminating the need for staff to manually input the data. One example is the map of Lafayette's many eateries on the Restaurant Page, which highlights the City's regionally recognized "Restaurant Row" and solidifies its reputation as a locale for excellent casual and upscale dining.

Since its release last summer, the site has received over 88,000 unique visitors, and it averages about 400 visitors per day. More than 900 people have subscribed to the e-notification system, and we've noticed a decrease in the number of phone calls received at the City since the site was launched – presumably because residents are able to get most of their questions answered by going to the website first.

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Terraces Update

The O'Brien Land Company has submitted updated plans for "The Homes at Deer Hill," which is the new name for the old Terraces of Lafayette Project. The developer chose a new name to distinguish it from the 315 unit apartment project that caused such a ruckus last year. The new plans propose 44 single family residences, a multi-purpose athletic field, dog park, playground facilities and parking; to see the plans, check out: www.lovelafayette.org/terraces-pa. The environmental impacts of the project will be analyzed this summer and fall, and there will be a series of public hearings on the project that all members of the public are welcome to attend. To receive notification of public meetings on the project, please visit the city's **e-notification page** and check the category "Project – Terraces of Lafayette." Please contact **Greg Wolff**, Senior Planner (925) 299-3204 with any questions or comments.



Woodbury Breaks Ground

The Woodbury, a 56-unit luxury condominium complex that will be located behind the Veterans Memorial Building, has broken ground. The first phase of the seven building project is expected to be completed next year and, when completed, the development will have Mt. Diablo views, a vegetable garden, a fire pit, and a broad swathe of landscaping between it and the Veterans Building. Sales won't start until early 2015, and since the developers have yet to set prices or distribute marketing material they are telling prospective buyers to sit and wait for a few months. They have, however, uploaded some renderings to their website, www.branaghdevelopment.com, under Current Projects.

How Will Lafayette Address its Housing Mandate?

Earlier this year, in May and June, about fifty people attended three community meetings to discuss how Lafayette should respond to the State's requirement that the City update the Housing Element of its General Plan. The Mayor demonstrated an impressive command of many arcane facts and laws while demystifying the complex State requirements. He noted, for instance, that, while the State 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 audience then considered key questions such as whether the City should (1) pursue a streamlined process for the update or initiate a longer, comprehensive review; (2) adopt a Density Bonus Ordinance (or just comply with state law), and (3) adjust residential densities in the downtown.

It's not too late to get involved! After receiving input from the Planning Commission, the City will prepare a draft Housing Element and hold public hearings in the fall. It will then submit the draft to the State for review and comments. After receiving comments, the City will complete the final draft and again hold public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council. We anticipate that this will take place in January 2015. If you have any questions about the Housing Element Update, please contact lchan@lovelafayette.org or go to "Hot Topics" on the website.



Final Design for New Manzanita Room at Community Center Underway

Readers will recall that the City Council decided, last year, to raze the old Manzanita Building at the Lafayette Community Center on St. Mary's Road, and build a new one. The design is now complete, and the project will go out for bid this summer, with an autumn ground breaking.

A New Guide for Downtown Development

After two years of public meetings, the City Council has adopted new Downtown Design Guidelines. These guidelines describe principles and tools that will control architecture and development in downtown Lafayette. The Guidelines promote the informal character of the downtown and encourage variety in design, height, setbacks, upper story step-backs, and spacing between buildings. Are they important? Yes, indeed, because the new rules will shape the way that new and renovated downtown buildings in Lafayette will look in the future. In addition to the Guidelines, the Council also adopted strict new findings to grant an exception to exceed the maximum allowable height. For more information and to view the Guidelines, please visit www.lovelafayette.org/DDG, or contact Planning Staff at planner@lovelafayette.org or (925) 284-1976.



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Introducing Jennifer Wakeman

We are pleased to welcome Jennifer Wakeman as the City's new Financial Services Manager. Jennifer has big shoes to fill since she is taking over the reins from Gonzalo Silva, who retired in March after serving the City well for 23 years. Jennifer came to Lafayette from Walnut Creek where she was a Senior Accountant, but her roots are deep in Lamorinda. Jennifer was previously the Finance Manager for Moraga and she lives in Lafayette with her husband and two young sons – who are fifth generation Lafayette residents!



Welcome Code Enforcement Officer Adam Foster

The Planning & Building Department is happy to welcome Adam Foster as our new Code Enforcement Officer. Adam was the Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of Danville and brings both enforcement and planning experience to our team. Adam lives with his wife Kate and 2-year old

daughter Emma in Concord. He is a great advocate for alternative transportation and rides BART and his bike to work every day. Don't be surprised if you see him making his downtown code enforcement rounds on bicycle in the near future.

Fi\$cal Fitne\$\$

In the wake of the recession that pushed many California cities into or near bankruptcy, the League of California Cities determined that some cities had little or no idea how precarious their financial situations were until it was too late. And so it asked policy wonk Michael Coleman to develop a fiscal health diagnostic tool that municipalities could use to understand just how good or bad things are. Coleman worked for a year on this project and, after consulting with experienced finance professionals and academics and researching other similar tools, he recently issued a "beta" version of the diagnostic for cities to use. The output of the tool is a thirteen point report card that grades the City's near term financial health. Cities that take the test get a green light, yellow light, or red light for each of these indicators.

Here in Lafayette, our new Financial Services Manager Jennifer Wakeman recently completed the diagnostic which you can view at the city's website. Lafayette scored well, with green lights on eleven of the thirteen indicators, and yellow lights on the remaining two. Those two areas of concern – "the city has recurring general fund operating deficits" and "general fund reserves are decreasing over multiple consecutive years" – show up because the Council decided as a policy matter to move, over a two year period, \$3M from its extra-large reserve into the road repair program (see article on page 1). However, the City still has a \$6M reserve, equal to 50% of the annual general fund budget, way above the recommended 5 to 15% reserve that is recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association.

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

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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

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