



LET THE SUN SHINE IN: Going Solar in Lafayette

Take a drive around Lafayette and you'll see more and more homes with solar panels up on the roof. You might have even considered them for yourself but you weren't sure if solar panels work for you. Fortunately, three new tools can help answer that question.

Project Sunroof

The first is an impressive new mapping application launched by Google in mid-August called *Project Sunroof*. Tapping its trove of satellite imagery and the latest in artificial intelligence, the company's new online service instantly estimates how much you'll save by installing a roof full of solar panels.

After creating a 3-D model of your roof, the application calculates how much sun will hit those solar panels during the year and how much money the panels will save you over the next two decades. The service is now available for homes in the San Francisco Bay Area, including Lafayette.

In analyzing satellite images of your home, Google uses "deep learning" networks to separate your roof from the surrounding trees and shadows. Project Sunroof also simulates the shadows that typically cover your home on any given day and it tracks local weather patterns. You can further hone that company's calculations by providing how much you typically spend on electricity.

So: fire up your computer, run the application for your address, and see just how much you might save over the long run by going solar.

PACE

"But, wait," you say! It's precisely "the long run" that inhibits my interest in solar. "Not only is the upfront amount of \$20,000 or \$30,000 needed to install the system a challenge, but I'm not sure I'll live in this house long enough to reap the benefit."

You fear that you'll be making loan payments long after you have moved.

Cisco DeVries came up with a solution for that. He was working for the City of Berkeley when, after hearing time and again from people who feared moving and being stuck with solar payments, he came up with what *Scientific American* would later call one of the "world-changing" ideas of the year: attaching the loan payment to the property tax bill.

That's right: The *PACE*, or *Property Assessed Clean Energy*, program allows qualifying home and commercial property owners to finance solar installations and other energy efficiency and water conservation upgrades by borrowing the up-front costs and then repaying the loan as a line item on their property tax bills. By using *PACE* financing to pay for the costs of solar, homeowners get clean power for no cash up front, and pay it off over a 10-, 15-, or 20-year period. If the home is sold, the responsibility for the payment transfers to the new property owner.



Last December, when the Lafayette City Council authorized CaliforniaFIRST to deliver the product to local residents, Lafayette became one of the first cities in Contra Costa County to offer *PACE* financing to its residents. Subsequently, the City has added four more *PACE* Programs, including California HERO, California Statewide Community Development Authority Open *PACE* Platform, Figtree Financing, and Ygrene Energy Fund. For more information, check out www.lovelafayette.org/pace.

You can make your solar loan payment via your property tax bill

East Bay Sunshares

OK, now you've determined, using *Project Sunroof*, that solar panels make sense for you and you've also arranged for *PACE* financing. Who should install your solar system?

Here's an option: the City of Lafayette has recently teamed up with the nonprofit *Vote Solar Initiative* to launch a new solar bulk buy program for homeowners. This program pools the power of multiple buyers to get the most competitive pricing from solar companies.

It's called **East Bay SunShares** and, if you're interested, act now because it's available only until November 6th. Homeowners will receive up to 15% off the current market price of solar through this program. This is in addition to the 30% Federal Residential Renewable Energy Tax Credit that is still available. Note that this tax credit is slated to sunset on December 31, 2016.

For more information, search the internet for "east bay sun shares" or otherwise check out lovelafayette.org under "Hot Topics."

The combination of advanced solar mapping, federal subsidies, transferable financing, and cheaper installations has led more than a quarter million Californians to install solar panels on their rooftops. **Will you be next?**

THE JENNIFER RUSSELL BUILDING

*She did it with a collaborative spirit,
great integrity and a generous sense of humor*

Earlier this summer, after having selected the contractor to build the new \$2.5M recreation pavilion at the Community Center, the City Council decided to name the building for Lafayette's longtime Parks Trails and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell.

Hired in 1979 – just ten years after the City incorporated – Jennifer was Lafayette's first permanent recreation employee, and she has managed our parks and recreation programs ever since.

With more than thirty five years of service under her belt, she's got more tenure than any other Lafayette employee.

Among scores of accomplishments, Jennifer Russell oversaw the acquisition and conversion of the old Burton School into the Lafayette Community Center; facilitated the purchase and development of the Lafayette Community Park and Buckeye Fields; helped establish Lafayette's extensive trails program; organized the purchase and improvement of Leigh Creekside Park; and created and delivered recreation programs appreciated by tens of thousands of happy participants over many decades.



Jennifer Russell circa 1980



Working alongside commissioners, councilmembers, mentors, volunteers, and co-workers, Jennifer helped create the parks, trails, and recreation department that Lafayette enjoys today, and she did it — and continues to do it — in a collaborative spirit, with great integrity, and with a generous sense of humor.

We hope you'll join us – and Jennifer – on **October 1st at 5:30 pm** as Lafayette celebrates the grand opening of the **Jennifer Russell Building** at the Lafayette Community Center. 500 St. Mary's Road.

CLEAN YOUR CREEKS! *El Niño on the Way*

By now you've probably heard the predictions regarding this year's El Niño. Indeed, according to an August forecast by the Climate Prediction Center, the El Niño brewing this year in the equatorial Pacific is on course to become one of the strongest — if not the strongest — such system on record.

What that means for drought-stricken California is not entirely clear, but the odds increasingly favor a wet winter for the state. And it could be very wet.

During the last large El Niño year, in 1997-98, the San Francisco Bay Area received 47.2 inches of rain. That's more than the last four years combined.

December 1997 was already one of the wettest months on record in



Lafayette when a massive tropical storm arrived. On New Year's Day, 1998, clouds dropped more than ten inches of rain in the City in less than four hours.

During that storm, Lafayette recorded fifty-six separate flooding incidents and the soil became so saturated that a house up on Quail Ridge Road slid down its hill and was completely destroyed. When it was all said and done, Lafayette spent more than \$1M on storm cleanup and was a recipient of FEMA emergency assistance.

Experience tells us that the threat is real, and the biggest danger for local residents during El Niño storms is presented by clogged creeks. When local waterways back up, the water will flow wherever it can go — which is often over roads, yards, and into your house.

The best way to prevent this is to keep Lafayette's creeks clean and clear of debris. This, of course, is a team effort! One errant picnic table or upstream log jam can create havoc for others living downstream.

If you live on a creek, please take some time this autumn to pull out any furniture, trash, or debris that might collect and inhibit the flow.

By working together we can keep the water flowing. . .and the City safe.

HOMES AT DEER HILL

Years of Debate Come to a Close

We've written several times about the controversial development planned for the large 22-acre parcel off Deer Hill Road near Acalanes High School. In August, after more than four years in front of Lafayette's review boards, the City Council greenlighted a 44-home housing development that replaces the earlier plan for 315 moderate-income apartments.



This, despite last-minute protests from local residents concerned that the development – though scaled down – will generate too much traffic, and housing advocates insisting that the earlier all-affordable plan should be adopted.

The decision caps years of vitriolic debate over what should go on that hillside.

The approvals will allow The O'Brien Land Company to build a clustered single-family neighborhood on the western end of the property, but also require the developer to deliver a playground, a full-sized all-weather soccer field, restrooms, pathways, and a 78-car parking lot on the eastern side. As a bonus, the project will include a 3-acre dog park on the north side of Deer Hill Road, with expansive views to Mt. Diablo and Las Trampas Regional Park.

Construction is scheduled to begin next spring, with completion sometime in 2018.

ROUNDAABOUT FOR OLYMPIC BLVD.

After more than a year of study and loads of public input, the City Council recently adopted a comprehensive plan to improve traffic safety and circulation along the Reliez Station / Olympic corridor. Among other improvements, the plan will add a modern roundabout to the intersection at Olympic Boulevard and Pleasant Hill Road.

The project will also add two traffic signals – one at the bottom of “snake hill,” and a second at the tricky Reliez Station / Las Trampas / Richelle intersection to solve safety problems related to pedestrian crossing and lack of sight lines from the side streets.

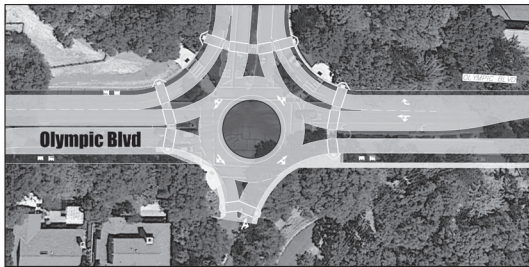
The plan is the result of a detailed analytic study and several community workshops.

A roundabout for Olympic Boulevard was selected over a traffic signal because the roundabout will better reduce speed through the intersection,

reduce delay and improve traffic operations during offpeak hours, has lower operating costs, and provides an appealing visual aesthetic that is more compatible with the semi-rural character of the area.

At the final community workshop, two-thirds of the public members present favored the roundabout solution.

The estimated construction cost for all of the recommended improvements is roughly \$1.4 million, and the project will be funded by Measure J regional sales tax revenues. The project will likely get underway next summer and be completed by year end. Watch lovelafayette.org for upcoming opportunities to provide feedback on the final engineering design.



BETTER OUTLOOK FOR FIRE STATION 16

No area presents a greater risk for catastrophic fire in Contra Costa County

The northwestern area of Lafayette presents a greater risk for catastrophic fire than any other region in Contra Costa County, yet it has been without a continuously operated fire station for the last four years.

That may soon change.

Buoyed by stronger finances, the Contra Costa County Fire District is considering reopening a closed fire station in Lafayette and scrapping a partnership with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District that would have built a new facility on the Lafayette-Orinda border.

In August, County supervisors acting as the fire district board directed ConFire Chief Jeff Carman to explore overhauling and reopening Fire Station 16 on Los Arabis Drive in Lafayette's west end. The station was closed in January 2012 due to budget cuts.



If supervisors move forward with rebuilding Station 16, ConFire will save millions of dollars it would have otherwise spent on building and staffing the joint station. Compared to the joint station, “Fire Station 16 seems advantageous for us right now,” Carman said. “We can open the station for less money than it would cost us to build a new one, in less time, and with fewer operational costs.”

Lafayette city councilmembers, along with members of the City's Emergency Services Task Force, have long urged the County to move forward with reopening the closed station as soon as possible, warning that residents are growing impatient with the lack of protection during a high fire season that has already seen its share of blazes.

Carman is scheduled to make a final recommendation to the Board in mid-September regarding the matter.



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IS THE OFFRAMP SIGN CROOKED? NO!

Ever since the City installed its new (and beautiful, we might add) entrance signs near the freeway offramps earlier this year, we have heard suggestions that the sign along the Oak Hill Road exit is not level and should be fixed. Well, we couldn't help but check for ourselves. As you can see from the photo on the right: the sign is not crooked!



GREEN POWER CHOICE?

During the last year or so, the City's Environmental Task Force has investigated the feasibility of joining or forming a so-called Community Choice Aggregation, or CCA, that would give Lafayette residents a choice regarding where their energy is sourced.

CCAs purchase energy from a variety of alternative sources – many of which are green – while PG&E remains responsible for power delivery, power line maintenance, and monthly billing.

The closest CCA is MCE Clean Energy. Several Contra Costa cities have already joined MCE and are now giving their residents the option to purchase non-polluting wind or solar power for their homes. It currently costs about \$5 dollars more per month to buy energy from 100% renewable sources.

In August, the Lafayette City Council asked MCE to conduct a membership analysis for Lafayette. Once accepted, the Environmental Task Force will return to Council with an update including full details of the cost to join and an outline for the next steps.

For more information, visit "hot topics" at lovelafayette.org.

CITY DIRECTORY

For Council Members call: 284-1968

Council Members

Brandt Andersson	Mayor
Traci Reilly	Vice Mayor
Michael Anderson	Council Member
Mark Mitchell	Council Member
Don Tatzin	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
Tony Coe, City Engineer	284-1951
Niroop Srivatsa,	
Planning & Building Dir.	284-1976
Mike Moran, Public Works Dir.	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
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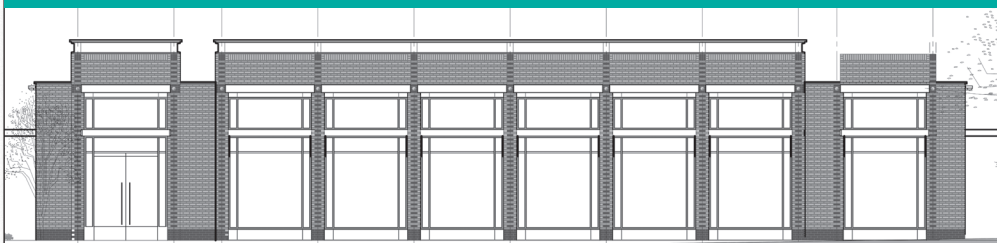
Website www.ci.lafayette.ca.us

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

Chase Bank Coming to Dewing Avenue



It took a couple of years, and there was a robust discussion about whether Lafayette needs more banks along the busiest stretch of Mt. Diablo Boulevard but, once the dust settled, the application for Chase Bank was approved. The new one-story, 4,100 square foot bank building will sit on the now-vacant corner just in front and east of Diablo Foods. The building will have a brick façade and glass and aluminum storefront windows.

Want more City news? Subscribe to **The Weekly Roundup** and the **Almost Daily Briefing** at www.lovelafayette.org.