

Council Forms Sales Tax Study Committee

During last spring's Community Conversations, people said they wanted better open space preservation, more downtown parking, quality policing, improved bike and pedestrian facilities downtown, and a revitalized Park Theater. As a next step, this fall the City Council will form



a special committee to study those objectives and tackle the question of whether an additional sales tax increment is needed to fund them.

Lots of Projects

During the last several years, Lafayette has convened several community-based processes to develop priorities and a long-term vision for the City. The Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) – the result of five years of study and more than 120 public

meetings – calls for Lafayette to pursue certain high priority goals, including:

- Build more customer and employee parking
- Provide new downtown parks and other public spaces
- Move City Offices to the Central District
- Introduce art in public – not private – spaces
- Ensure adequate funding to maintain public facilities

Likewise, last year, after months of meetings, a group of volunteers focused on improving the eastern end of Mt. Diablo Boulevard concluded that the public facilities in the East End District need significant capital upgrades and better maintenance. Funds for fixing this area, however, are dwindling as an old assessment district has failed to keep up with rising costs. The group concluded that, absent new funding, the East End will get worse, not better.

Finally, as noted above, about 1,000 residents participated in last spring's Community Conversations and suggested that the City's top priorities should be to acquire and protect Lafayette's remaining open spaces, provide excellent police service, build more parking facilities, revitalize the Park Theater, build better bike and pedestrian facilities downtown, and add more downtown events.

Not a Lot of Money

At its July 27th meeting, the Council confirmed that, going forward, Lafayette's top priorities should be to provide more parking, protect and acquire Lafayette's remaining open spaces, and improve and maintain downtown Lafayette. The challenge, of course, will be how to pay for them.

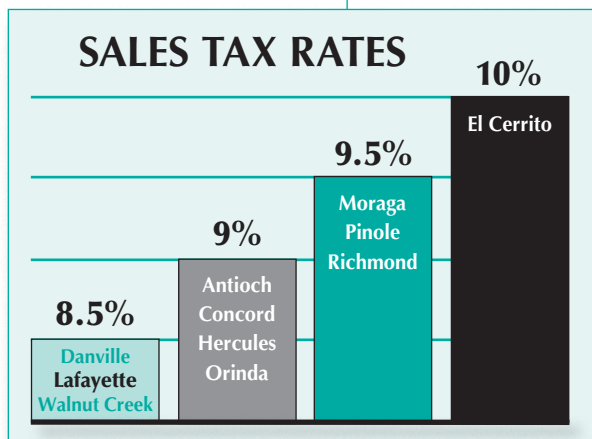
Most of the ambitious downtown projects that Lafayette has completed in recent years – including the Lafayette Library and Learning Center and the Veteran's Memorial Building – were paid for by the City's Redevelopment Agency. To balance the State's budget, however, Governor Brown recently eliminated the local redevelopment agencies. Given the loss of redevelopment, there are few or no resources for funding the City's ambitious programs. Absent new revenue, it is unlikely these goals will be achieved.

Meanwhile, faced with similar issues, voters in both Orinda and Moraga (along with many other Contra Costa and California cities) have recently approved and implemented ½-cent and 1-cent sales tax increments, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce has indicated that it would not oppose such an effort in Lafayette.

The timing seems ripe to ask whether a sales tax increment would work for Lafayette.

The mission of the new committee is to consider current and future budget sources and uses, coordinate a public conversation regarding citizens' willingness to pay a sales tax increment, and advise the Council on the reasonableness of placing a sales tax increase on the ballot for the 2016 election. The work will include the development of expenditure options for the proceeds and a recommendation regarding what percentage increase, if any, the Council should place before the voters.

The Committee will meet bi-weekly and have seven members and two advisors, as follows:



- One representative from each of the Open Space, Crime Prevention, and Circulation commissions;
- One member from the Lafayette Community Foundation;
- One representative from the Chamber of Commerce;
- One public member with a finance background;
- Two councilmembers.

If you're interested in serving on this committee or otherwise participating at its meetings – all of which will be open to the public – please check the City's calendar at lovelafayette.org or other-

wise contact Financial Services Manager Jennifer Wakeman. She'll let you know when and where the committee will meet.

Community Considers Changes to LEIGH CREEKSIDE PARK

The lovely Leigh Creekside Park, on Moraga Boulevard at Fourth Street, sits in the shade of one of Lafayette's grandest and most ancient oaks. Relatively undeveloped, the parcel has for years served as a peaceful respite from the busy downtown, a perfect place for a picnic, or a quick water stop for those on bikes. Several people have asked, though, whether the park's users would benefit from a more active profile, and the City is now working through a community process to make that determination.

The City Council acquired Leigh Creekside Park in 1999 and a year later approved a master plan that called for the huge valley oak to serve as the park's centerpiece. Pathways of soft materials, low open fencing, a meadow-style lawn, two picnic tables and native plantings were installed to create a "natural park" with lots of shade and views into the adjacent creek.

Thirteen years later, the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission was approached by a local resident who, as a grandmother wanting a more varied play experience in the park for her grandchildren, asked the City to install a children's play structure. To gauge whether there was support for this proposal, a neighborhood survey was conducted. Fifty-eight people responded, with nearly three quarters supporting the new improvements.

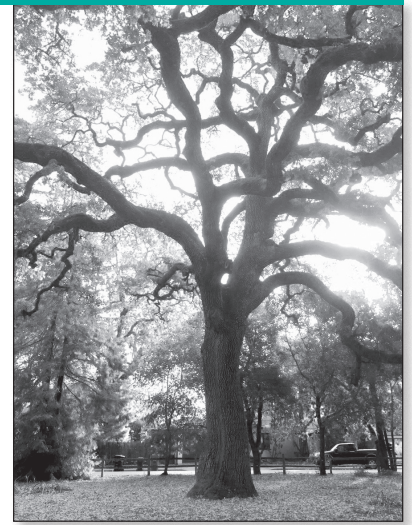
Given those results, the City Council convened a public scoping process to consider the changes to Leigh Creekside

Park. Architect James Dixon volunteered to work on the project and was subsequently hired to prepare a themed solution.

Called "Time in the Park," the new plan proposes to install play equipment along the southern and western edges of the park that would allow kids to explore various historical themes including "Ice Age Time," "Saclan Indian Time," and "Pioneer Time."

The new concept has generally met with support but, this is Lafayette remember, and so a wide variety of opinions have been registered. To sift and sort through them all, the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission will continue to review the plans, with the ultimate goal to determine whether the Leigh Creekside Park master plan should be amended or not.

Do you have an opinion about the future of Leigh Creekside Park? If so, send it to Parks, Trails, and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell at jrussell@lovelafayette.org. Otherwise, you can stay on top of the matter by subscribing to the Parks Trails and Recreation Commission agendas at lovelafayette.org.



NOT ONE BUT TWO CITY-WIDE BOOK CLUBS

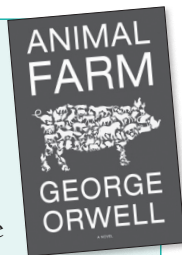
Did you know that Lafayette has two city-wide book clubs that are open to anyone who wants to participate? It's true! Both clubs present great opportunities to read new material and meet new and interesting people.

The Lafayette Book Club focuses on interesting and newly released material. Participants recently read and discussed Sue Monk Kidd's *The Invention of Wings* and *Orange is the New Black* by Piper Kerman.

Meanwhile, members of the Classics Book Club read – and reread – great pieces of literature from the ages. Most recently, the group read and discussed George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Both clubs meet monthly, and you can find out when by clicking "Book Clubs" on the Calendar page of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation at www.lllcf.org.

What's up next? In November the Lafayette Book Club will be discussing *The Care and Management of Lies* by Jacqueline Winspear, and in January the Classics Group will discuss James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.



MAKING NUMBERS TRANSPARENT

If you like numbers, you'll like this: as of September 1st, Lafayette residents can use the internet to see exactly where their government money is being spent. The City's new financial transparency effort – supported by OpenGov – provides quick and easy charts that break down the city budget. You can view it under the Open Government tab at www.lovelafayette.org.

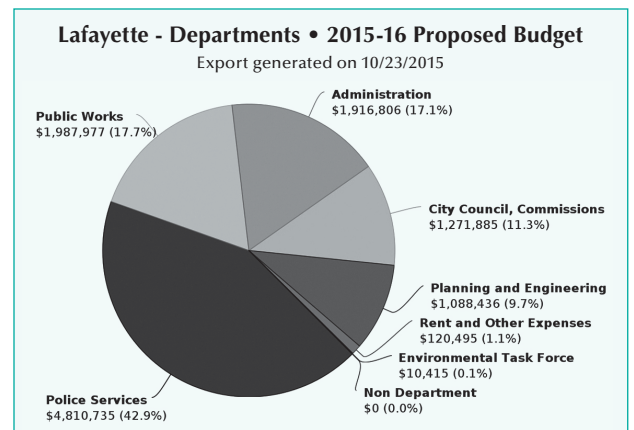
Financial transparency isn't new for Lafayette. "The budget has always been an open book, but that book can be several hundred pages long and hard to understand," says Financial Services Manager Jennifer Wakeman.

While residents can still download the entire budget if they choose, the City's platform now provides the data in a more easy-to-digest manner.

Interactive bar charts, pie charts and line graphs are user-friendly and should help residents digest the city's complex budget.

With this tool, data can be filtered by fund, department or account type, and historical expenditures are available, too. In the past, if a resident wanted this information, they had to visit the City offices or library and pore through old budgets.

"Now, the monthly expenses will be updated each quarter and posted to OpenGov, allowing residents to see how much has been expended to date," Wakeman said. "We're really happy – and proud – to make it this easy for people to see where we spend their hard earned tax dollars."



IN THE PIPELINE – SIXTY SIX CONDOS AND A RESTAURANT

Lennar Homes' application for a mixed use project at Dolores Drive and Mount Diablo Boulevard has cleared the Circulation Commission and is currently before the Design Review Commission. In an effort to attract empty nesters, nearly half of these for-sale units will have three bedrooms. There will be ample parking in a basement garage with access from the boulevard. The 4,000 square foot corner restaurant will be larger than Yankee Pier and just a wee bit smaller than Chow. The next and final stop is at the Planning Commission and those hearings are expected to take place later this year. Info at lovelafayette.org.



From the City Manager's Notebook

THEY'RE SUING THE WRONG SUBURB

Irritated by the region's high housing prices, the San Francisco Bay Area Renters Federation (SFBARF) recently launched a campaign to "sue the suburbs" for not producing enough housing, and said it would start with Lafayette. That's too bad because, when it comes to housing, Lafayette is among the more progressive cities in the Bay Area.

The evidence? Lafayette has a *General Plan* that encourages multi-family development downtown, and a *Downtown Specific Plan* that calls for diverse, transit-oriented, multifamily residential neighborhoods and housing units within walking distance of BART. The City spent \$5 million during the last ten years on affordable housing and has, for decades, required downtown developers to make up to 20% of their units affordable to people with low and moderate incomes. The City also recently partnered with Eden Housing to deliver the all-affordable 46-unit Belle Terre project near Brown Avenue.

These policies, combined with low interest rates, have led to a multifamily construction boom. 412 multifamily units were recently completed or are in the development pipeline, and the City soon expects applications for about 100 more.

The results are notable. Lafayette's non-white population has doubled over the last twenty years and 25% of the City's housing units are now occupied by renters. This has created discomfort for some, and for that the City's leadership has been pilloried in letters to the editor and some social media circles.

And so it was a big surprise when SFBARF threatened to sue the City for rezoning a grassy hillside near Acalanes High School instead of approving an apartment project there – despite the fact that it is located more than 1.5 miles from the BART station.

Smart planning demands great architecture, preservation of open space, and – so as to reduce traffic congestion and carbon emissions – the placement of denser housing near transit stations. These have been Lafayette's core planning principles for forty years and, as a result, the City has become one of the most desirable "complete communities" in the Bay Area.

SFBARF's push to indiscriminately build housing in every suburban location, regardless of history, use, context, or community opinion, runs against 50 years of intelligent land use planning. While it may have a point to make with its *Sue The Suburbs* effort, SFBARF started in the wrong place and is wasting its time and money suing the wrong city.

DOES DOWNTOWN GROWTH IMPACT SCHOOLS?

Yes. But not as much as you might expect. During the recent construction boom, four new multifamily projects have been completed in downtown Lafayette. Two of them – Merrill Gardens and Belle Terre – are reserved for seniors, and therefore have no school aged occupants. A demographer for the Lafayette School District looked into the twenty three new Marquis townhomes (formerly the Hungry Hunter site), and learned that six children live there – three elementary kids and three middle schoolers. And, in an August inquiry, the sales manager of the Woodbury (the condos behind the Veterans Memorial Building) informed the City that, with almost half of the 56 units now sold, there are three new school-aged residents and they will likely attend private schools. So, in total, this recent burst of multifamily construction in downtown Lafayette has delivered – so far, at least – 163 new units and nine new children.

LEASE-PURCHASE OK'D FOR OLD LAFAYETTE LIBRARY

In August, the City of Lafayette signed an agreement with the Lafayette School District that allows the District to lease the old library building, located at 952 Moraga Road, for \$8,333 per month. The deal also allows the District to purchase the property for \$2 million provided that it does so before the lease expires on April 1, 2017. Since the property is nearly surrounded by



Lafayette Elementary School, the decision to transfer the building from the City to the District was obvious and straightforward. School administrators will now decide whether to use the space as a district office, for classroom space, or for other purposes. To help with that decision, this autumn the District convened a series of meetings to discuss facilities master planning – including uses for the old library building – at various school sites.



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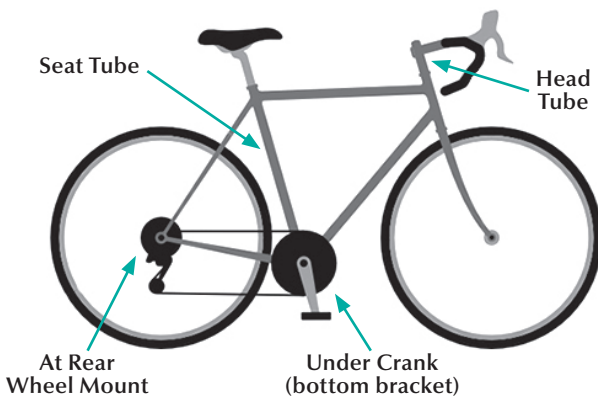
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BIKE REGISTRATION THAT WORKS

Many cyclists in the Bay Area know the pain of losing a bike to thieves, but far fewer have experienced the joy of being reunited with their stolen bike. You can increase the chances of recovering your bike by registering it before you ride.

BikeIndex.org, a free, easy to use online bicycle registration service, is the most widely used bicycle registration service in the world. To register your bike, you will need to locate the serial number. Most serial numbers are located under the bottom bracket where the two pedal cranks meet. Simply turn your bike upside down and record the number. If there is no serial number there, then check places like the headset at the front of the bike or the rear stays. The diagram below indicates the four most common serial number locations. If you just can't find anything, then you can either engrave your driver's license number or describe the bike the best you can when registering and take a picture with it to prove ownership.

Common Serial Number Locations



You Can Thwart Bike Thieves by:

- Registering your bike at www.bikeindex.org
- Using a quality lock. A U-lock, or a U-lock combined with a cable lock, is best.
- Securing the frame, both wheels, and the seat. Take removable items, such as lights and bags, with you.
- Locking safely. At BART stations, use Bikelink lockers and rooms for just 3-5 cents per hour. Order a keycard at BikeLink.org or call 888-540-0546.
- Not leaving your bike outdoors overnight.

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	299-3203
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning & Building Dir.	299-3206
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
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Parks, Trails and Recreation

Jennifer Russell, Director	284-2232
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Senior Services

	284-5050
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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

Better, Quicker, Faster Solar Permits

We dedicated the cover of last month's *Vistas* to solar energy, and recent developments now make it easier than ever to put the sun on your roof.

Assembly Bill 2188, passed last year, requires California local governments to streamline the permitting process for small rooftop solar energy system projects, provided that the system is smaller than ten kilowatts, conforms to all building codes, and is installed flush-mounted on the roof.

In July, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors adopted the expedited permitting process and now, so as to be consistent, Lafayette also allows all small residential rooftop solar energy systems to bypass the City's zoning plan check.

We'd love to see you but, instead of stopping by the City offices, you can go directly to the Contra Costa County Building Inspection Department or to Contra Costa County's e-permitting website for approval.

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