

Getting styled by Diablo Barbers in downtown Lafayette



Photo Jon Kingdon

Diablo Barber owners Gabriel Colorado and Angelo Gerosolimo

By Jon Kingdon

Lafayette has once again attracted a new upscale barber shop. Located in downtown Lafayette at 3557 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Diablo Barber Co. has been in business for three months. It's has long been the aspiration of co-owners, Gabriel Colorado, and Angelo Gerosolimo to own and operate their own barber shop.

Following graduation from the Urban Barbers

School, where they originally met, and three years of cutting hair in San Francisco, Colorado and Gerosolimo began working at Sharp Barbers in Lafayette for five years. It was then that Colorado and Gerosolimo opted to make the big jump into ownership, bringing along Dustin Lowenthal who began as an intern at Sharp.

"It was just a dream for both of us; the time was right," Colorado said. "We were at a point in our career

where we were looking for what's next. We had been working with friends of ours at Sharp for a long time and had seen how they did things. We thought we could do things a little differently and we wanted to show how we would do it. The people at Sharp were amazingly supportive."

Diablo Barbers was designed by Colorado and it is still a work in progress. "I hired my cousin who's a contractor and we collaborated on the project," Colorado said.

The shop can handle all types of clients ranging from 1-year-olds coming in for their first haircut, elementary and high schoolers, businessmen and senior citizens, providing haircuts, hot towel and lather shaving. "We also will have women that will come in for a haircut, most of whom will want something more along the lines of the masculine haircuts," Gerosolimo said. "We want to stick within our realm. If somebody sits down and we know that we can't accomplish what they are looking for, we have salons that we will recommend in those instances."

In shops like Diablo Barber Co., it's far more than a new customer sitting down in the chair, asking for a haircut. "With a new client, we will have a discussion about what they want," Colorado said. "It's up to us to ask the right questions to make sure that we're both on the same page, making certain that when we finish, the haircut is what they wanted."

With the more outlandish requests, they will confirm that they are clear on what the clients are looking for. "If

we are asked to do something that, based on our professional opinion, is going to look 'off,' we will put in our two cents," Gerosolimo said. "The bottom line is that we're here to please the client. What we do is a service and we're happy to service them. Our goal is to give them what they want and to make sure that they're happy."

Another aspect the Diablo barbers are alert to is that head shapes can be unique, according to Gerosolimo. "People may request a hair style in a picture that they brought in. However, the person in the photo may have a round head and the person sitting in the chair may have a square head and a different type of hair so we have to make those adjustments to make the client see the same haircut he saw in the picture. We are also looking into getting into hair coloring and will be bringing in a barber who's already educated on color so he will be passing on his knowledge to us. People are doing a lot more with color so it's up to us to catch up and keep up with the industry and constantly learn the new things."

The shop makes available complimentary beverages for all ages, ranging from water, juices, soft drinks, beer on tap and hard liquor and, of course, a lollipop at the end.

There are eight chairs and five barbers employed at Diablo. "We wanted to create a space where we could bring in barbers and pass on our skills to them," Colorado said.

The location of the shop is just what Colorado was hoping for: "We have been averaging about five walk-ins a

day and word of mouth has been great for us. Every barber is independent, so they make their own hours. We do groomsmen packages and can travel to a local wedding or someone's house."

In Diablo, there are two main themes on the wall: sports and barber history. Colorado's in-laws owned a number of restaurants in the Bay Area, including McCovey's and Crosby's in Walnut Creek where he was able to borrow San Francisco Giants photos and a large photo of Bing Crosby, which emblazon the walls of the shop.

It was not until Colorado was attending barber college that he learned his grandfather and great grandfather were barbers. There is a big frame containing old time photos, their barber equipment, an old barber book and bow ties which they wore back then.

As with many things, the more things change, the more they stay the same and so it is in the barber industry.

"About every 10 years these trends turn over and you then get people coming in looking for other things," Gerosolimo said. "We may try and push people towards the newer trends, but we are able to do little bit of everything. Right now, we're doing, shockingly, a lot of mullets, a style which had died down in the 1990s and was something that we thought we'd never see again, but everything cycles back."

Diablo Barber Co. is open Monday through Saturday, though the hours fluctuate so it's best to make an appointment online at Vagaro.com/diablobarberco

Draft EIR for Housing Element discussed at joint meeting

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If there are any increased densities, particularly in the downtown area, Evans said there would be unavoidable impact to the visual environment and scenic vistas that people may find objectionable. Buildings can be designed to be attractive, he said, but the aesthetic changes to meet the housing requirements would be considerable. A second area of environmental impact related to air quality metrics associated with large construction projects due to emissions. Evans again said negative air quality impacts could not be avoided, even with mitigation requirements in place.

Cultural resources was a third factor with significant possible change that could impact historic buildings, although there are no prospective projects currently involving historic property in Lafayette. Importantly, buildings older than 45 years are age-eligible for designation as historic landmarks. There are no stated guarantees such properties might not be affected or would be excluded in Housing Element projects. Lastly, all future housing developments located more than a mile from mass transit hubs – in Lafayette, the BART station – now require that transportation evaluations focus on and measure vehicle miles traveled per day (MTD). Both the distributed and the downtown-only scenarios under consideration by council include projects that might result in higher MTD metrics.

Questions asked by council began with a request for specific information about operational air emissions after projects are completed and health risks rising from the sites proximate to Highway 24. Evans said the former might actually decrease and the impact from the highway

would be "diluted out" and not significant.

Asked about the three other areas of primary concern and if different locations would alter the conclusions drawn, he said the draft EIR alternative sites he analyzed showed only MTD might be affected in locations outside the BART location. The other environmental impacts would remain largely the same regardless of the choice between distributed or downtown-only scenarios.

Planning and Building Director Greg Wolff clarified that a dedicated page on the city's website allows anyone to view the draft, which was published on Feb. 18. (It is available at love-lafayette.org/ceqa.) Evans said each public comment will receive an individual response. If someone raises a comment that addresses an EIR inadequacy that proves to be accurate, the final draft will be revised accordingly.

When Council Member Susan Candell expressed concern about a ladder truck the Contra Costa Fire Protection District says it needed for emergency services to serve taller buildings in Lafayette, and that current fire stations couldn't accommodate a ladder truck, Evans said if the current fire station isn't able to accommodate a truck, that would be a separate issue the city would have to discuss under CEQA.

Vice Mayor Carl Anduri said budget increases requested of the council in July 2021 during the EIR process were in part related to evacuation analysis and resulted in \$161,000 being added to the budget. Evans said legal nuance made the issue complex, but the basic threshold for CEQA is whether or not a project would conflict with or impair an evacuation plan. The Housing Element update at this time does not interfere

with the execution of the city's established evacuation plans, he said.

Evans and city staff said decisions about allowing or restricting accessory dwelling units as well as related updates, requirements and standards will be included in the Housing Element plan but will not be addressed in the EIR specifically. Likewise, future mitigation measures such as utilities needed due to increased density or for other reasons related to new development projects are in the city's overall planning, but cannot be anticipated in detail until a given project demonstrates a need.

During the public comment portion, Eliot Hudson said the city's current housing element plans were not adequate to address increased density. He said a small fire near the Lafayette tennis courts during which an evacuation route near Acalanes High School was "nearly impassable" proved his point. "The fact that the city 'might' update its evacuation plan to be compliant with state law would have been totally meaningless (on that day)," he said.

The draft EIR, an over 500-page document, is available online and summarizes all environmental impacts in 17 categories. The draft is being shared with the public for just over 45 days ending April 4. A March 7 Planning Commission meeting accepted verbal comments from the public and Evans emphasized people can continue to communicate their comments to the city in written form at any time up to April 4.

Mayor Teresa Geringer said staff would be looking into scheduling an additional public comment meeting and information will be made available to the public.



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