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Mayor Hosts Housing Element Workshop

By Cathy Tyson

At the first of three special workshops to update the community on the current Housing Element, city leaders started from the beginning with a primer of what a Housing Element is, and how it works in Lafayette. De-mystifying this state-mandated requirement isn't easy.

Mayor Don Tatzin, using a power point presentation, along with a panel to answer questions made up of city planners, Councilmember Mike Anderson, and Diana Elrod the city's housing consultant, started with the basics.

"Every jurisdiction in California is required by law to have a General Plan, and every General Plan must contain several elements, including the Housing Element," explained Tatzin. The current Housing Element covers 2007 to 2014; the updated element will cover the period from 2014 to 2022.

The document, which requires approval from the state's Department of Housing and Community Development, contains information on the housing needs of the community, with some of the needs determined by the state-mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation or RHNA.

For the current 2007-14 cycle, Lafayette's RHNA total is 361 units. For the upcoming cycle that number is 400 units. Those units are broken down into categories that include very low, low, moderate and above moderate income classifications. What

many in the audience seemed perplexed by, was the requirement that the city simply provides the potential for those units to be built, and can't place any barriers in the way. "The city is only required to show that there is enough land zoned at appropriate densities to accommodate this need, should a developer want to build these units," stated a handout available at the meeting and also available on the city's website.

Streamline review, density bonus pros and cons and understanding default densities were also discussed. Questions from the audience covered a range of topics including the authority of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and services like schools and emergency services that would be needed if more housing units were built.

Further Housing Element workshops are scheduled – the next is on Tuesday, May 13 at the Lafayette Elementary School Gymnasium and will focus on housing sites inventory, the density bonus ordinance and density adjustments. A final workshop will be held on Wednesday, May 28 at the Lafayette Methodist Church, Fireside Room to discuss policies and programs including identifying governmental constraints. For more information, go to the city website at www.love-lafayette.org, click on Hot Topics, then go to the Housing Element Update. The Frequently Asked Questions link is full of details on the subject.

No Survey

On the agenda of the April 28 Lafayette City Council meeting was a report looking at options to have a potential survey that would analyze voter priorities. Three areas were investigated: conducting a telephone survey, employing a web-based outreach type of survey offered by Lafayette's information technology vendor Granicus, and considering an online public response tool. After some discussion, council members decided the timing was not fantastic for any of the options, and perhaps more importantly as the budget picture is becoming more finalized, it potentially isn't as bleak as originally thought. Bottom line according to Mayor Don Tatzin: "We will not conduct a survey at this time."

C. Tyson

Green Award Winners Recognized

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Scott Thomsen took the Green Building Award for connecting architecture to the environment via his work at Ward-Young Architecture and Planning for designing the Fresh Connection building that includes numerous elements of sustainable design.

Erika Pringsheim-Moore won the Green Award for schools, for teaching the next generation to value our resources. She's the leader of the Lafayette School District Green Team and has focused her energy on a demonstration garden, campus composting and partnered with the district and PG&E to swap out old gym lights, saving \$30,000 annually.

Ahmed Shibli and Maria Gastelumendi, owners of the Rising Loafer Café, won for serving as a model green restaurant in Lafayette. They feature organic and locally grown ingredients, some coming from their own garden, bio degradable to-go containers and environmentally

friendly cleaning products; the tables in the café are made from re-purposed doors.

For local environmental law firm Hunsucker Goodstein PC, Philip Hunsucker and Marie Montoya were recognized for their commitment to protecting the environment. They have reduced waste, hardly use any paper in the office (even then its recycled paper that is printed on both sides) and organize an annual clean up of the Lafayette Reservoir.

Sharon Lingane, manager of The Friends Corner Bookshop, accepted the Green Award for her community organization for reducing, re-using, and recycling. Everything in the store is donated, from the roughly 25,000 donated books, CDs, puzzles, notepads and shopping bags to the labor of 135 volunteer staffers. The profits benefit everyone in the community by going to support library services.

C. Tyson



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