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## City continues fight to keep local control on housing development

By Jennifer Wake

In an effort to retain local control over housing development in the city of Lafayette, council members and staff have entrusted the help of Townsend Public Affairs State Capitol Director Casey Elliott to lobby for local control and to engage with Sacramento legislators as they push bills forward at the state capitol.

According to a staff report presented by City Manager Niroop Srivatsa at the May 10 city council meeting, since 2019, Townsend has assisted Lafayette in developing positions on over two dozen bills and participating in lobbying efforts to amend others. "This work, conducted in partnership with other cities," she noted in the report, "has

resulted in amendments to several bills and the defeat of others like SB 50 which failed to garner the required votes on the Senate floor."

Also in 2019, in reaction to the CASA Compact – the Committee to House the Bay Area, convened in mid-2017 by MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) to tackle the region's housing crisis – and the resulting housing bills, the 19 cities in Contra Costa County came together in an unprecedented move to draft and adopt a countywide Housing and Policy Framework, Srivatsa stated.

"The Framework promotes a balanced and nuanced approach to addressing the housing shortage by considering existing resources and constraints, location of

jobs, and availability of transportation and transit. It emphasizes the importance of a balanced approach to regional planning and the need to consider housing in the context of jobs, the transportation infrastructure and the environment," she said.

The city maintains a strong partnership with its legislative representatives Sen. Steve Glazer and Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan. The council also created a legislation committee composed of two council members to work with Townsend and the city manager on legislative matters, Srivatsa said.

Bills the city opposes in-

clude Senate Bill 6 (the Neighborhood Homes Act involving housing in commercial zones), SB 9 (which would change the approval process of accessory dwelling units), SB 10 (which involves rezoning in transit-rich or jobs-rich areas) and Assembly Bill 989 (which would create a Housing Accountability Committee to review appeals of affordable housing projects denied by local government). On June 1 Elliott gave the legislation committee an overview of many of these bills and addressed the timelines involved in the proposed legislation. "We will lose a little bit of time as the legislature takes up the budget," said El-

liott, who has been limited predominantly to phone calls and Zoom meetings with legislators due to COVID restrictions. "The majority of the bills will be after June 14, so council can take action."

Mayor Susan Candell, who sits on the legislation committee with Council Member Cam Burks, noted that Glazer, who abstained, and five other senators "had our backs" when voting against SB 9, which was recently approved by the Senate 28-6. "That was not an easy vote," she said.

Elliott plans to report on the proposed housing legislation at the June 14 city council meeting.

To view a summary of proposed bills, visit:  
[https://lafayette.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=&clip\\_id=5523&meta\\_id=132053](https://lafayette.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=&clip_id=5523&meta_id=132053)

## Council approves reflective beacon alert installation at St. Perpetua crosswalk

By Lou Fancher

At the May 24 Lafayette City Council meeting, consensus was reached regarding the addition of a reflective beacon alert and radar speed sign at a crosswalk near St. Perpetua School on Hamlin Road. After a roughly 60-minute discussion that included a report from Engi-

neering and Public Works Director Mike Moran and public comments, council members voted unanimously to approve funding the project with \$45,000 drawn from the city's General Fund. The council also approved adding to the agenda for the upcoming June 14 meeting consideration of establishing a proposed 15 mph speed zone in

the area.

Concern for schoolchildren using a crosswalk at a blind curve with a steep downslope approach on the road drove the community's request for additional safety mitigation measures and the council's decision to support and join in funding the project. A recent study showed that 1,850 crossings occurred



Photo provided

**Location of proposed Advance Warning Sign for RRFB (driving up the hill on Hamlin Road)**

daily during pre-COVID school days, not including people crossing to attend activities at St. Perpetua Church or to walk in the neighborhood. Officials at the school and church and

local residents requested the council partner the safety mitigation effort with approval and funding of half of the project's projected costs.

... continued on Page A8

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### LAFAYETTE HOMEOWNERS COUNCIL

www.lafayettehomeownerscouncil.org

## Lafayette Homeowners Council Position on the Housing Element of the General Plan Update – May 2021

The Lafayette Homeowners Council (LHC) recognizes and supports over 50 neighborhood homeowners' groups as well as individual homeowners within the City of Lafayette.

Whether condominium, town home, or single family home, the homeowners within the City form the backbone of residents who have chosen to live, participate, and invest in their neighborhoods and our community.

Our residents have chosen to live in Lafayette because of its natural beauty, its many amenities and quality of life available to all residents. We believe a variety of housing types and neighborhood choices are part of what makes Lafayette a very special place.

The LHC supports the creation of both owner-occupied and rental housing units available to people of all economic levels.

The LHC strongly supports inclusiveness and diversity in Lafayette, which makes Lafayette a better and more vibrant place to live.

The LHC highly values protecting our open space, green hills, protected ridge lines, parks & trails, great schools and vibrant downtown commercial district. We support increasing the quantity and quality of these community assets. The LHC supports City efforts and those by individuals and groups to limit state control of land use decisions. We believe in local control.

The City faces the challenge of meeting State mandated addition of 2,114 housing units within Lafayette. This includes the addition of affordable housing units as well as market rate units. The LHC supports and encourages the City to explore ways to reduce this excessively high number of units.

Our downtown district with its pedestrian and bicycle access to our commercial corridor, a variety of amenities, and a BART station is where the LHC recommends the majority of the new housing units be built and is most logically suited. This can provide a greater diversity of housing types, both rental and owner occupied. We see the appeal of this area growing as housing units are built. It is important to note that 943 of the 2,114 units must be produced in Low Income and Very Low Income

categories which can be built by developers using economies of scale. Therefore, apartment buildings, condominiums, and town homes are the only way to realistically create such a high number of affordable units and it makes sense to locate these units in or near the downtown core.

Outside the downtown and east/west corridor, we are a town of hills and valleys with limited access and vehicle traffic using curvy two lane, narrow roads. Several of these areas have also been identified as high-fire danger zones or are surrounded by them. Housing in these neighborhoods is mostly single family homes. This type of housing provides quieter, semirural neighborhoods that many residents desire and are part of their lifestyle choice. We support the development of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) housing in these areas but believe that multi-unit housing would significantly change the character and feel of these neighborhoods, exacerbate the access problems, and increase exposure to fire and safety risks – all without providing for the affordable housing that is required.

While not perfect, the current Terraces project is supported by the LHC because it not only provides 315 new housing units, but it also designates 63 of those units for affordable housing. The LHC also supports reasonable development of the BART parking lots. While we have concerns for development close to a high-fire danger zone area, development of this area would provide housing types close to the amenities of our downtown core area. We believe significant parking for both residents and commuters would also have to be provided as part of any development plan.

People generally have a choice of where to live and the LHC supports the need for development of increased housing stock for all income levels. But we need to be careful about changing with a broad stroke the character of our city and neighborhoods. Not all areas should try to be converted to mini-cities. Suburbs like Lafayette exist for many good reasons and should be nurtured for all they are and provide.

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