

# Lafayette Residents Help Define Vision For Downtown At Workshop

By Cathy Tyson

About 100 people gathered for the first Community Workshop as part of the Strategy for Downtown Lafayette at the Community Center last week. The purpose of the Strategy is to guide Lafayette so that it remains true to its past and still progresses forward.

Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) the consultant firm selected for the task has sent out surveys to all residents and businesses in Lafayette.

This is a many-phased project, anticipated to take about 18 months to complete, funded by Lafayette Redevelopment Agency funds. By California state law these redevelopment funds cannot be used for road repair, schools or police services. Right now WRT is working on Phase I - define issues and visions. To that end there have already been three meetings of the Citizen's Advisory Committee and WRT will continue to meet with them as they move forward.

Jim Stickley, Principal in Charge and Team Leader for WRT addressed and guided the workshop. First WRT looked at existing factors and analyzed them. Understanding physical land use like parcel size and ownership patterns, natural factors and open space and how they contribute to downtown's character, like building setbacks, parking locations, ground floor transparency and landscape character.

As an example of looking at what's already in town, he received an audience chuckle with "Lafayette has the nicest Jiffy Lube in the country." Continuing, "what cues can we take from existing automotive uses?"

A transportation specialist explained the firm took traffic counts and looked at parking patterns on a Friday afternoon. They differentiated between morning, late afternoon and mid-afternoon peak congestion times.

Another presenter spoke about the city's demographic profile, in a nutshell, "Lafayette is affluent, family-oriented with an older more highly educated population." WRT will look at downtown multi-family housing, residential development opportunities and especially mixed-use development.

Workshop members were asked to consider three questions, first, as the downtown continues to mature what type of uses should be incorporated. Second, are there key street segments or zones that need a different land use, and

third, will tomorrow's downtown be able to serve the needs of future downtown residents?

Attendees were asked to brainstorm goals for downtown improvement, prioritize their top three goals, and indicate where actions should occur to achieve these prioritized goals. Every large circular table had a huge map and a collection of colored markers to note suggestions. A WRT facilitator helped each group stay on topic and encouraged considering what to do with the east and west ends of town.

At the end of the evening, table representatives came to the podium to summarize their top three findings.

One table suggested increasing mixed-use development downtown, increasing public gathering spaces, specifically turning La Fiesta Square into a pedestrian piazza and finally enhancing creeks and pedestrian walking trails, making them safer.

Tablemate Ruth Sechler, a 34-year resident of Burton Valley noted, "Lafayette is a wonderful place to live with terrific citizens who care." Other tables had similar, yet slightly different concerns. One group suggested 1) define and develop the center of town, 2) redefine and develop smaller areas for peace and pleasure with fountains, trees and benches and 3) make Lafayette more pedestrian friendly with a free shuttle.

Another table wanted to 1) define mixed retail and housing - at a maximum of three stories tall, 2) have more gathering spaces - specifically La Fiesta Square and 3) beautify creeks and walkways.

Finally another table decided to 1) work on the aesthetics and give downtown more of a Danville like feel, 2) traffic concerns - have easy and convenient places to park, and 3) pedestrian access with new walking trails to follow creeks.


There will be more community workshops in the future; residents are encouraged to attend.



Bill and Joanne Robbins attend the Lafayette Community Workshop  
Photo Cathy Tyson



Joe Garrity, Erling Horn and Bob Russell attend Lafayette Community Workshop  
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