



Meet Lafayette's New Mayor

By Cathy Tyson

Mike Anderson: Assistant General Manager Planning/Stewardship & Development of the East Bay Regional Park District by day, Mayor of Lafayette by night. If keeping an eye on 97,000 acres of parks, spread over two counties, with 1,100 miles of trails wasn't enough, Anderson is busy at his night job, attending countless meetings for the benefit of Lafayette.

He started on the General Plan Advisory Committee a number of years ago, moved onto the Planning Commission, then served three years on the City Council, last year as Vice Mayor. This will be his fourth year of service on the City Council and first year as Mayor. The pay rate for all this hard work? Some would say it's priceless, but actually there is no monetary compensation, just all the coffee he can drink and the sincere thanks of residents.

In a wide-ranging discussion at Papillon, Anderson covered many topics to be addressed in the coming year.

First and foremost is the Lafayette's Downtown Strategic Plan, which will determine where to allocate funds to invest in projects downtown. After holding community workshops, public meetings and tabulating survey responses from over 2,000 residents, the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee which Anderson chairs, will have a meeting in late February with Wallace, Roberts and Todd, Lafayette's urban design consultant. Anderson noted, "There should be some interesting ideas and options" for the City. "We need a plan for the downtown that is sustainable," especially considering the City's current financial situation.

"I'd like to have a downtown that has a certain amount of walkability. To be able to park your car, walk to a coffee shop, do errands - this enhances a sense of community. We have a real opportunity with the Strategic Plan to make these things happen. The challenge is to find a balance between residential and business uses." Anderson believes everyone can win, by encouraging businesses that would benefit residents and increase the tax base at the same time.

Also a priority is the, "Budget goal-setting process, I want to break down and re-assess all services for discretionary money within the budget, and encourage public involvement." When asked what would happen if 500 people showed up at the February 4 meeting, Anderson responded, "that would be great, that level of interest." If the Lafayette Community Center couldn't handle the crowd, he suggested the meeting could be re-scheduled at a larger venue.

Noting the recent video posted on the City's website, www.love-lafayette.org, Anderson encourages residents to get involved and educated about the limited amount of discretionary budget dollars the city has available. As part of the budget process he wants, "a chance for people to talk about what's important" regarding where discretionary money is allocated.

Lafayette's roads are also major concern. Explaining that the current process emphasizes the maintenance of the better-quality roads over the reconstruction of the poorer-quality roads, Anderson believes that the reconstruction of the poorer-quality roads needs to be a priority. "We

need to find a reasonable way to apply funds fairly and best use our resources."

Especially in these lean times, Anderson sees a crucial role for volunteers, noting that there is a lot of experience and knowledge among the residents in our community. Quite a few folks already serve on Design Review, Circulation, Parks and Recreation, and many other commissions. More volunteers are always needed and appreciated.

Finally along the same lines, the Youth Commission is run by local teens who could be a great resource for employers in the City. Currently they raise money through events, using the money to fund a haunted house, high school dance parties and an annual retreat. "My point is that these are sharp kids, who have really bright futures, a wonderful asset of the community. I'm working with the Chamber of Commerce and the Youth Commission to create an opportunity for internships, shadowing and other job experiences in Lafayette. Young people would benefit from a job that lets them learn about work, and hopefully they'll be coming back to the area after college."

Throughout all of his service to Lafayette, Anderson would like to thank his very patient wife, Courtney, for being supportive.



Mike Anderson