

LAMORINDA Community

Green Business Initiative in Lafayette

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Lafayette celebrates Earth Day

Photo Jay Lifson

The proposal of a green committee was presented to the Board of the Chamber and approved in December of last year. The first kick-off meeting was held at the Chamber in January.

"We had great attendance because we had the opportunity to advertise and inform our constituency widely," says Richards. The meeting gathered more than fifteen business owners who came for lunch and brainstorming about how to help businesses contribute to a sustainable living. "That first meeting was very dynamic," says Bart Carr, the other founder of Sustainable Lafayette and Chair of the Green Committee, "tons of ideas were kicked around and we decided right away to hold a second meeting to define our actions."

The second meeting was held on January 30th. The participants summarized all the ideas and four areas of focus were identified:

- the sharing of information about how to be more green

- and available resources: web site, flyers, books, classes
- a recognition program with different levels, that could be presented in a special section in the newsletter, and different ways to promote green businesses

- the organization of more complete recycling options for businesses. That area is of great interest for businesses, since they do not always have the opportunities homeowners do and recycling is not as easy as it should be
- the creation of a pilot project, in the food industry, finding out what are the specific challenges and opportunities of that sector, and what could be done. The sub-committee would then share what was learnt from the pilot with all the local restaurants and food service businesses.

This last area is of particular interest to Eichers. "The Lafayette Hotel has been working on becoming more sustain-

able for a long time," says the General Manager, "we recycle as much as we can and we use products inside that have as little negative impact on the environment as possible."

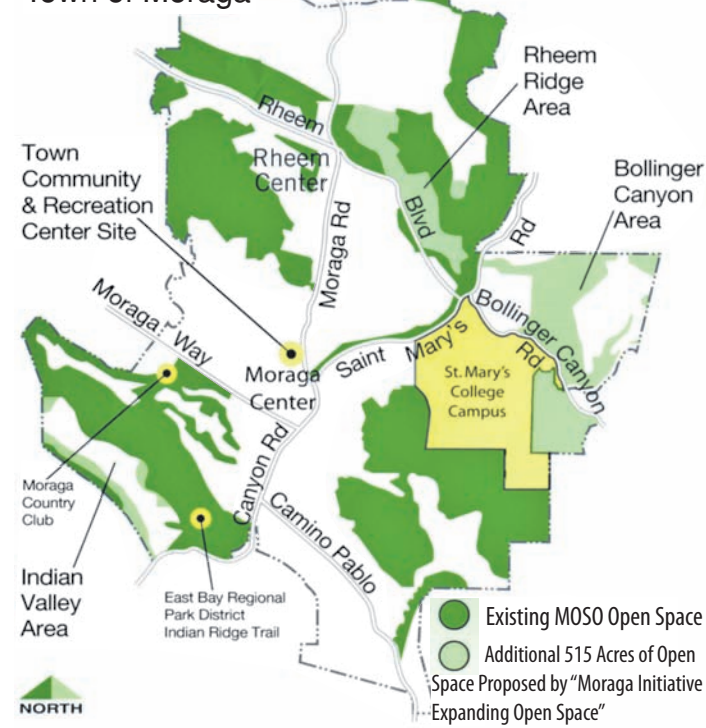
The hotel is working at this time with Contra Costa Waste Management Authority to recycle food scraps. The program is available to homes in Lamorinda but not for businesses and Contra Costa is one of the last districts that have not addressed that problem already. "The hotel will be one of the pilots for the food recycling in Contra Costa," proudly says Eichers, "we already recycle our oil, but with two restaurants and room service in the hotel, we need serious food scrap recycling."

"Our next meeting will be held on Feb 27th during lunch at the Chamber office," says Lifson. "We encourage all businesses to attend since we will decide on which projects to tackle first, their scope, and very importantly, who will work on it!"

MOSPRO 2008 on the June Ballot?

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Town of Moraga



Map courtesy: Moraga Citizen for Open Space

The document highlights the Town's obligation to put the initiative on the ballot once the signatures have been verified, whatever the results of an impact study may be. The letter suggests alternatives to meet the March 7th deadline such as calling a special meeting before that date or doing the study after the deadline.

"The Council has the inherent power to 'study' the measure even after it has been ordered on the ballot; there appears to be no compelling reason to use such a report to preclude a June election," said Bruzzzone. "The only reason to stall the initiative is likely political." Bruzzzone concluded: "It's a shame because Moraga residents could benefit greatly by a new community and recreation center and new sports fields for our kids - all items that would likely result from passage of this initiative."

There were not many dissenters present that night. The next day, Friends of Moraga

Open Space (FMOS), the group behind MOSO 2008, commented: "If the developer wanted to be certain to get on the June ballot, he needed to turn in his signatures by December 5th. That was the deadline to allow enough time for the full process under the Elections Code," said FMOS spokesperson Jon Leuteneker.

"Why the rush? The real issue is that the developer is hoping to get his measure passed before voters can vote on a true open space protection measure in November," said FMOS' Susan McNeill, who continued, "Getting this one passed first is a way to try to get the development rights carved in stone."

Mayor Deschambault expressed concerns that rushing the study before the signatures have been verified and the initiative qualifies for the June ballot, could result in staff unnecessarily putting aside other high priority issues in the Town such as the Specific Plan, Ran-

cho Laguna and resolving the traffic calming measures on Camino Pablo. "In the meantime staff has worked diligently to accommodate the Bruzzzone's late submittal, put in extra hours over the holidays, and is calling the County daily to check on its status. The potential long term impact and binding legal implications of both initiatives need to be thoroughly and completely reviewed by the Town. In both cases, that process should not be rushed."

Councilmember Ken Chew said he was concerned that rushing the process with no advance notice would not be fair to people opposing the initiative.

Vice-Mayor Dave Trotter said, "Both initiatives raise issues of vital importance to the future of the Town. To be fair and consistent and to better inform the public on what's at stake, I believe both initiatives should be the subject of an in-depth study and report from Town staff. That process should be deliberative and careful, not rushed."

Since the issue was not on the agenda, the Council couldn't direct staff to start the impact study immediately. Councilmember Rochelle Bird suggested an additional meeting at which the Council could decide to direct staff to begin an impact report whether or not the County had verified the signatures. Planning Director Lori Salamack stated that her department would be able to prepare a report, but that the amount of time they would have to do so would translate into a more or less in-depth study. On Councilmember Mike Metcalf's motion, the Council unanimously agreed to hold a special meeting tonight, February 20th. Stay tuned.

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Community Workshop Once Again Wows Residents

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"The workshop was very successful. We hope the attendees got a sense of the possibilities for our downtown over the next 20 - 30 years. In addition, we also hope that people understand that all of the options being explored by WRT are consistent with existing policies," said Ann Merideth, Community Development Director for the City of Lafayette.

She continued, "The final Strategy will also show how land use and circulation decisions can affect greenhouse gas emissions. The City is very fortunate to receive a grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to include climate change modeling in the Strategy."

There was more than one concept of what downtown Lafayette could look like if certain private and public redevelopment activities occur over the next 30 years. Because the strategy is only half way through the planning process, the final vision may be very different than what was shown at the Workshop

This particular meeting is just part of a multi-faceted process. The first phase was about defining the issues and visions and taking a look at opportunities and constraints. Phase two, what WRT is currently working on, is exploring the alternatives. Phase

three examines preferred concepts and phase four deals with preparing a strategy and developing a specific plan.

The upshot of "exploring the alternatives" is two preliminary concepts. Concept One includes minimal parcel consolidation which is easier to develop, key parks and creeks enhanced, and finally limited structure parking.

Concept Two is similar. In a nutshell it includes more reliance on parcel consolidation, expanded parks and creeks, multi-level parking structures.

Information to come to the conclusions that help form these two concepts was drawn from many areas. The responses showed clear priorities, the first being parking and traffic, the second was the need for public spaces,

parks and plazas, the third focused on a need for cultural and entertainment venues.

According to Stickley these goals led to a series of framework layers to deliver the goal. For example, parking and traffic was determined to be the most pressing concern of residents. To that end the urban planners used all the data gleaned and distilled it into a "park once" strategy. The idea being that if convenient parking was available, residents would park once and choose to walk to shops, restaurants within a five minute walking radius, thereby easing traffic congestion.

For more information, go to www.lovelafayette.com and scroll down to "The Strategy for Downtown Lafayette" for all of the materials from the workshop.

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