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## Mixed Bag of Opinions on Downtown Strategy at Lafayette City Council Meeting

By Cathy Tyson

It's apparent that the Lafayette City Council will have their work cut out for them making a decision on the Downtown Strategy and Specific Plan, based on public input along with committee and commission findings at the first of two meetings to address the issue.

Committees were asked to review the proposed plan and present their findings to the Council. While committees had a range of opinions, generally they appeared to be in favor, however the majority of public comment clearly did not support the plan.

"We feel strongly there are a number of issues that are not addressed in the plan," said Ruth McCahan of the Senior Services Commission. "It's imperative that we provide housing for seniors in the downtown area." In their report to the City Council the Commission emphasized the housing, mobility, transportation and support services that seniors need to live independently and lead full and productive lives.

The second group to give their report was very supportive. "The Creeks Committee is nothing short of ecstatic with the Plan. We think it's a wonderful idea - daylighting the creek and have Golden Gate Way opened up - it would be a stellar addition to the community," said Scott Honnegger.

"The ideas in the Plan do a pretty good job reflecting Parks, Trails and Recreation goals," said Commission representative Jeff Peacock.

Steve Richard of the Environmental Task Force said, "The Task Force is generally pleased with the feedback and extremely pleased with the direction of the Strategic Plan opening up creeks and supporting bike and pedestrian activity."

Mike Anderson, speaking on behalf of the Advisory Committee, reviewed the five priorities that they would like to see focused on: increase parking downtown, off-site employee parking to improve vitality, shield block improvements, a library park for kids, and finally improving Mount Diablo street-scapes, fixing gaps in the sidewalk.

Having remained neutral until now, the Chamber of Commerce, "has been following this closely and for the most part we are in support of the plan," said Ann Denny, CEO Emeritus.

Kicking off the public comment of the night, the first speaker garnered a round of applause for his opinion. "This issue is so important nothing further should proceed without a vote from the community on it," said Don Lively of the Lafayette Taxpayers' Association.

Various home owners associations had definite reservations about the Plan. Bill Bucher of the Happy Valley Improvement Association said, "We have extreme concern about changing the character of Lafayette - particularly an already crowded Mt. Diablo Boulevard." Tor McClean of Secluded Valley Homeowners Association: "We are not interested in changing Lafayette."

Maeve Pessis of the Lafayette Homeowners Council said, "We already have a General Plan. We've given a lot of feedback and have gotten no response - lets take the time we need to get this plan right - low density, low height and more parking if possible."

Concern over the potential use of eminent domain especially on properties adjacent to creeks has some property owners worried. Although the plan calls for

working with a developer in a public/private partnership along creek corridors, exact details aren't spelled out.

Fifty-year resident Tom Whitten had an interesting point of view, "I propose property owners have a committee - we are the ones affected by these changes - we have no role in this whatsoever."

Joan Bruzzone, local land owner said, "I'm concerned about affected property owners. If it wasn't for Jay Lifson (CEO of the Chamber of Commerce) we wouldn't have had a meeting with the City Council. Our constitution is based on private property rights."

"I don't see the necessity to change the General Plan. I like my car. I'm afraid these plans may impede my ability to get through town," said Traci Reilly.

The second meeting for the Council to hear public input is scheduled for May 9th at 9:00 a.m. at Stanley Middle School in the Multi-Purpose room. For more information on the Plan, go to [www.lovelafayette.org](http://www.lovelafayette.org) and scroll down to Downtown Strategy News.

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