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Dreaming About Golden Gate Way

By Cathy Tyson



A group of residents point out their suggestions for future development on large maps of the Golden Gate Way and Plaza Park area. Photo Cathy Tyson

A standing-room-only crowd of residents came together to chime in with their visions for the look and feel of the Golden Gate Way neighborhood twenty years in the future.

"Golden Gate Way could be like Rockridge or the Peal District of Portland, Oregon – it's an amazing opportunity" opined one resident at the last workshop for the Revised Draft Downtown Specific Plan.

"This is your chance to dream about the future," instructed Niroop Srivatsa, Planning and Building Manager. She encouraged attendees to define the character of the area and make suggestions for improvement, giving attention to Lafayette Plaza and Plaza Way, The Park Theater, parking and natural features like the creek corridor. The area doesn't seem like the thriving, pedestrian friendly, cultural and civic area on most residents wish lists at the moment. Containing a mish mash of apartments, the Library, auto body shop and convenience store and the usually empty Gazebo – a strategy to guide future growth could be a good thing.

Planning Commissioner Chair Tom Chastain defined the

Golden Gate Way area and the Shield block as real assets to the community. Both the Shield Block, named for its shape, bordered by Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Lafayette Circle and Golden Gate Way share a unique character and have potential for redevelopment that retains and enhances the spirit of Lafayette.

Four very large tables were set up in the Community Hall for business owners, property owners and concerned residents to add their two cents to often rambling conversations about the future plans for the area. Expanding the existing small Plaza Park at the corner of Mt. Diablo and Moraga Road to include what is now the 76 gas station, a recreation center and live-work lofts toward the gazebo were just some of the ideas discussed.

Lack of parking was a recurring theme of the evening that loomed large over most everyone's "vision." Complaints about parking in the area are real and justified. Srivatsa spelled it out: 1009 spaces should be available for parking, yet only 681 actual spaces exist.

While there was lots of neighborly brainstorming, not

everyone agreed on a preferred plan. One person commented that there was not a lot of character on Golden Gate Way right now; a tablemate said, "I totally disagree." There was agreement however, regarding diversity of retail types and staying away from chain stores.

Greg Woehrl, one of a group of owners of the Park Theater, addressed the group, "Here we are again – parking, parking, parking. If the Theater reopened we would need 88 spaces – we have 10." He has asked neighboring business if their parking lots were for sale – all said no. Inquiring at the 76-station, he learned that they just signed a 25-year lease. "We can't do it alone," he said.

According to Woehrl, "Until we solve the parking problem – there can be no development." He urged the City to address the issue now. Looking for a way to make the Park Theater a vibrant hub of activity, Woehrl is open to suggestions; contact him at wirly3@aol.com.

Of the many suggestions bandied about only one table came up with something concrete. Table spokesperson Larry Blodgett reiterated that it's all about parking, "Because this is a special district – it could have its own parking regulations. He described it as a carrot versus a stick approach that would include a multi-level parking structure between Mt. Diablo and Golden Gate Way.

For those interested in participating in the civic process, On December 1 there will be a workshop for the City's Feasibility and Options Study of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Pathway along the EBMUD Aqueduct right-of-way, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Community Hall at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Giving Thanks at Chamber Breakfast

By Cathy Tyson



Steve Falk received a standing ovation for his presentation on Lafayette Photo Andy Scheck

Although it was gray and drizzly outside, inside the cavernous meeting space at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, the at-

mosphere couldn't have been more warm and inviting for the 31st Annual Community Thanksgiving Breakfast, sponsored by the

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce.

A bountiful crowd of dignitaries, Chamber members and friends enjoyed breakfast by Green Lantern Catering Co., words of wisdom by Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson and an impressive, heartfelt presentation accompanied by a clever slide show from City Manager Steven Falk, who should be Lafayette's honorary poet laureate.

Reflecting on how Lafayette becomes a home, Falk asked at what moment was it clear that this is where you belong, "Was it perhaps when the hills go gold under azure skies in the summer?...Or enjoying the finest glazed donut in the land?" Adding personal experiences from prom paparazzi, watching his kids' blossom at school and in the community, and making connections with neighbors, Falk clearly resonated with the audience. He encouraged all to, "Be conscious of the many treasures here."

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Christmas in November for Grant Recipients

By Cathy Tyson



From left, Nate Welcomer, Bob Athayde, Lucy Portnoff, Tom Carter (President of Generations in Jazz Foundation), and Lafayette Community Foundation Board Members Ann Denny, Teresa Gerringer, Anita Rama and Cheryl Noll. Photo Doug Kohen

The Lafayette Community Foundation recently awarded a generous grant to the Generations in Jazz Foundation that will be passed along to the Lafayette Summer Music Workshop (LSMW) for a shiny new keyboard, a drum set and amplification equipment.

"This gift makes us able to help other people. If you have it - share it - don't hoard it. Students are motivated if they have good instruments to practice on," said Bob Athayde, Stanley Middle School Music Director and LSMW Director. The items will be used for the week long Music Workshop in the summer, and then shared with schools in need during the off season.

This grant is just one of six awarded during the Lafayette Community Foundation's (LCF) fall funding cycle. Other lucky recipients are: the Muir Heritage Land Trust, Town Hall Theater, the

Lafayette Art and Science Foundation, the Lamorinda Spirit Van and Las Trampas.

Supporting projects that promote and enhance the civic, cultural, educational and environmental health of Lafayette is what the Lafayette Community Foundation is all about. These recipients were chosen because they all, in different ways, do just that.

Grant requests are reviewed by the LCF's Grants Committee, in the spring and fall. "We try to make the money work for the most people possible," said Cheryl Noll, Grant Chair of the Lafayette Community Foundation.

"On behalf of everyone at Las Trampas, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Lafayette Community Foundation for their generous grant in support of the AccessArt program for adults with developmental disabilities," said Bonnie Peacock, De-

velopment Director. "AccessArt is an art program providing a supportive learning and work environment for people with developmental, physical and emotional disabilities." Artwork ranges from the backdrop for a fashion show to watercolors to key chains and beyond.

Looking to encourage and sustain creative development and work skills so that clients are more fully able to function as active members of the community, this grant provides Las Trampas with materials and supplies for drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, jewelry photography and more. "This came in the nick of time," said Ron Kilgore, Associate Director, adding that they are running low on almost everything.

For more information on the Foundation check their website at www.lafayettecommunityfoundation.org.

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