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## Downtown Plan Rolling Toward Completion

*By Cathy Tyson*

By the looks of the Planning Commissioners, they are tuckered out by the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP). Going on five years at this point, it's nearing the final portion of the review process; the Planning Commission will deliver its recommendations to the City Council in the coming months. Last week's Planning Commission meeting was dedicated to reviewing the final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Plan, and considering mitigation measures. Patience for the discussion was exhausted at 10:00 p.m., the meeting was finally adjourned, but the fun continues on March 19.

The Lafayette Homeowners Council has had concerns about the Downtown Specific Plan throughout the process. In its latest letter to the Planning Commission, it notes the multiplicity of documents that comprise the Final EIR - the January 2010 Draft EIR, the August 2010 document titled "Final EIR" the EIR consultant's November memorandum and more. In addition, nineteen pages of very specific comments were attached.

Mitigation measures described in the environmental report, and discussed at the meeting, are challenging - even using sophisticated modeling analysis for anticipated traffic, air quality and parking impacts - especially without an actual building or buildings to assess. Most importantly, the worst case scenario is used for analysis. While there is generalized concern about the impacts of future growth, depending on the economic climate in the years to come, development may happen more slowly than anticipated.

Current and future developments already are required to go through the design review process; that won't change if the Downtown Specific Plan is, or isn't, adopted.

"The methodology is very conservative - it doesn't take into account the discretionary process and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) review. There are already mechanisms in place that the city has always used," said Community Development Director Ann Merideth. To clarify the proposed DSP, Commissioner Mark Mitchell asked, "So the DSP has no greater impact than the (existing) General Plan?" Staff answered, "Yes."

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