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Conversation-Coffee-Treats

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Coffee Talk

Every second Saturday of the month

Next workshop April 12, 2014. 2p-3p.

Location: Lafayette Veterans Memorial Building



Dominique Millette



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## Traffic Calming Approved in Burton Valley

By Cathy Tyson

It all started with neighbors concerned about the dangerous combination of speeders, lack of sidewalks and bike lanes and the many children who walk and bike to school every day, along with adult recreational use. Over the past year, a group of residents formed a volunteer Neighborhood Action Team to identify and evaluate concerns and consider options to tackle these issues for the Merriewood Drive and Silverado Drive areas.

Like most neighborhoods, not everyone agrees on the problem or solution, but eventually volunteers with a range of viewpoints came together to address traffic speeds. "The City's program is designed to bring differing points of view together to develop a plan with the intention that the outcome of the process will be a compromise and not result in any extreme proposals that benefit one group at the expense of another," wrote Leah Greenblat, transportation planner.

A plan that had been approved by the Neighborhood Action Team was presented to the Circulation Commission in February; while there was some disagreement among residents in attendance, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend the plan to the City Council for approval. The Level II plan that focuses on easily implementable and relatively low cost features such as striping and signage – there are no physical changes to streets – included reinforcing school crosswalks and existing speed limits with new signs and stencils, and added striping to enhance pedestrian safety at intersections.

Moving forward, the plan was presented to the City Council for final approval at its March 10 meeting; many Burton Valley residents filled the auditorium to express their concerns, some taking issue with the traffic calming process that is rather convoluted.

Some urged council members to stop the plan altogether and address clarifying the rules first. Others, like Jorge Torres, encouraged the adoption of the Level II traffic calming solution, calling it "very basic – a constructive approach." There had been some disagreement on the interpretation of rules that could have derailed the effort and sent organizers back to square one.

Gina Ney, who has been working on the effort for over a year, suggested that would be disheartening, after all of the community meetings and effort that has gone into the project thus far. In her opinion the process has been fair, "evenly split - which is why we have this compromise plan."

Ultimately, the City Council agreed. Councilmember Brandt Andersson has had the unique experience of being hit by a car going roughly 30 miles per hour. "I wouldn't recommend it," he said. He was confident there was a problem in the neighborhood and supported the recommendation to approve Level II improvements and was optimistic that Level III, a much more involved process, wouldn't be necessary.

Councilmember Mike Anderson agreed with many of the public speakers that perception of speeding is an issue. He, like many of his fellow council members, described his concern about the process and suggested that city staff re-evaluate traffic calming guidelines.

With city leaders agreeing that the changes seem reasonable and modest, the measure was approved, with added stipulations that city staff review the traffic calming process and mayor Don Tatzin volunteers to go out with the Burton Valley Elementary School bus driver to take a road test to examine the practicality of a proposed paddle sign in the middle of the street near the school entrance on Merriewood Drive.

## Affordable Housing Project Opens Doors in Lafayette

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"It's like heaven – really nice," said Connie Yoo who moved in to her third floor unit with husband Hanseop Yoo on Feb. 1. The couple attended an information meeting last fall and were struck by the many interested people vying for apartments—"I'm lucky," she said. They filled out all of the required paperwork and were approved and with help from family they moved the few blocks from their previous Lafayette apartment to their brand new, light filled space. "It's like a family already," she says of her neighbors. "We appreciate the government, they helped us."

New tenant Evora James couldn't be happier. She enjoys the brand new

apartment and its convenience to downtown. Although she doesn't own a car, she is able to walk to the grocery store and even BART. When the project was in the planning stages, there was some concern about adequate parking, but many of the residents don't own cars, so the underground parking area is roughly half full, with plenty of available spots for visitors.

There will be an official grand opening party with a ribbon cutting on May 16 to wrap up affordable housing week; Belle Terre is the showcase project. The mayor is expected to speak along with political luminaries. Another Eden project is under construction in Orinda.

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