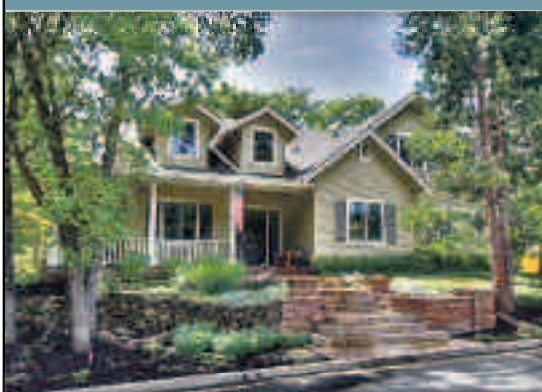




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Downtown Parking – Working Toward a Solution

By Cathy Tyson

As drivers continue to grumble and deal with parking challenges, behind the scenes volunteers and city staff are working towards finding a solution. “Managing our success” is how Tom Chastain describes working on an updated parking ordinance, due to Lafayette’s popularity with shoppers and restaurant goers who clearly are not walking to establishments. He and fellow Parking Ordinance Subcommittee members are working on how to craft rational and flexible rules to create a fair and shared parking system in Lafayette.

As part of an annual update of the work plan for the city’s Planning and Building Department, a presentation was made by the Parking Ordinance Subcommittee to the City Council as one of the many high priority projects on staff’s to do list for the coming fiscal year, now that the Downtown Specific Plan has been adopted.

Figuring out how to manage limited parking in the downtown isn’t easy, so the subcommittee, with the help of city staff, started at the beginning to assess current and proposed parking ratios but ultimately found that didn’t always make sense. Parking ratios are the number of parking spaces required based on the square footage of a proposed use – usually

based on the gross floor area. For example a large grocery store would need more parking than a small barbershop.

Non-conforming uses and management of existing parking was also reviewed. Staff helped by finding out what similar cities do; in addition, the committee met with developers at La Fiesta Square who gave helpful insight into how they manage their parking needs and accommodate the new successful nearby restaurant, The Cooperage.

Gleaned from all of the meetings was a greater appreciation to look at parking comprehensively, and to focus on flexibility. “Every single site doesn’t have to accommodate 100 percent of parking need,” said Chastain.

Employee parking seemed to be a recurring issue, suggested Councilmember Brandt Andersson, and a potential element of a solution. Mayor Don Tatzin pointed out that parking standards affect the amount of traffic; cars circling looking for parking add to street congestion, which has been documented in a variety of studies.

Further review and refinement is scheduled; the Parking Ordinance Subcommittee is slated to come up with a fresh revised ordinance by the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year.

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