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## Narrowing Options for Old Library

*By Cathy Tyson*

After meeting roughly twice per month for the last six months, the Old Library Reuse Task Force has come to some conclusions on two city-owned properties, the old library structure and the parking area and adjacent doctors' office across the street at 949 Moraga Road.

"At the end of the day it's all about money," said Tracy Robinson, administrative services director. She explained that there is an obligation to taxpayers to be fiscally responsible, and to make sure that "it makes financial sense."

Seeking the highest and best use of both parcels isn't easy. After much discussion, thorough presentations from a number of interested parties, and careful weighing of options, the task force narrowed the options down for the pair of properties.

Suggestions will be made to the Lafayette City Council later in July on the old library parcel; its required purchase, for roughly \$2 million, was part of an agreement made in the 1990s with Contra Costa County. The task force's recommendations to the council include two options: city offices or the Lafayette School District. The city currently leases space in Desco Plaza on Mt. Diablo Boulevard for approximately \$280,000 per year. "The most compelling reason to move the city offices to this location is to save taxpayer money," stated the proposal prepared by City Manager Steven Falk. "Current studies suggest net present value savings of \$1.9 million over 30 years for the purchase option."

The Lafayette School District is in the process of wrapping up a facilities study at the moment, and won't be able to determine a firm level of interest until that's complete; the district is aware that there is a sense of urgency in completing the study.

The fate of the parcel across the street at 949 Moraga Road, which contains a parking area and vacant doctors' office, has been narrowed down to three possibilities at this point, each with its own set of pros and cons: a low income housing project by Eden Housing, expanded parking - with a potential parking structure - or a boutique hotel.

One of the benefits of low income housing is that it could help the city with its Housing Element requirement to provide the potential for affordable housing, possibly family housing. A parking structure could generate revenue and provide needed additional parking inventory, including employee parking, thereby opening up spaces for customers near businesses. A small boutique hotel could generate revenue via occupancy tax.

Robinson will draft a report with specific recommendations for the city council to weigh and ultimately make a decision about what the future holds for these two properties. One interesting wrinkle is the 949 Moraga Road parcel was purchased for \$2.5 million with city parking revenue - which means that if the chosen use of the parcel is anything other than parking, an alternative location for parking would need to be found.

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