

ALL LAFAYETTE RESIDENTS

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APRIL 23, 2015 TOWN HALL MEETING 7 P.M.

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What's Next for Lafayette?

By Nick Marnell



Lafayette residents gather at the March 19 Community Conversation meeting to discuss the future of their city. Photo courtesy Steven Falk

Nearly three dozen Lafayette residents provided feedback on the direction of the city at the March 19 Community Conversation held at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. The workshop, hosted by the city council, offered the community a chance to share its vision and aspirations for the next 20 years over such priorities as affordable housing, parking and crime surveillance. "What are the next things that will capture the imagination of the city?" asked Mayor Brandt Andersson.

Suggested priorities were outlined on a survey posted on the city website, and those same topics were listed on sheets distributed to the workshop participants and hung on the front wall of the meeting room. "They are things to get the juices flowing," said council member Mike Anderson. "We want your comments and refinements for what we have listed up there. And we want to hear your new ideas, too."

Maybe the free chocolate cupcakes inspired everyone. Maybe the solar flares sparked a burst of creativity. Or maybe the Lafayette residents who participated in the workshop are simply passionately in tune with their city. Because for over an hour, the room buzzed. Six groups of total strangers discussed and argued their vision for the city

while council members drifted into and out of the sessions. A spokesperson for each work group summarized the findings. They closely matched the results of the online survey, which has garnered nearly 400 responses so far.

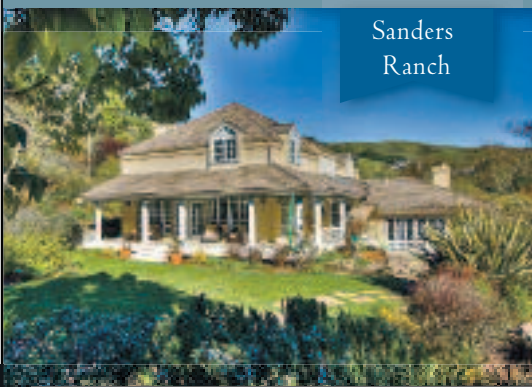
Preserving the city's open space ranked as the first priority in the online survey and it was the only topic that each work group listed as a top priority. Traffic circulation and parking ranked as high priorities both on the survey and by the workshop participants.

One notable difference between the survey and the workshop results related to policing. In the survey, crime surveillance and increasing the size of the police force ranked among the top three priorities. The work groups gave neither item a single vote. Whether that result was skewed by Police Chief Eric Christensen standing in the back of the room, in full uniform, was unclear. A topic that wasn't listed on the survey received a dozen high priority votes from the participants: housing for the disabled. "Make downtown accessible and affordable," said a workshop spokesperson.

"That wasn't really front and center on our radar," said Andersson, who praised the engagement of the workshop participants.

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