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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

As an Orinda native and a mother of young children in our schools, I was pleased to see Lamorinda Weekly's coverage of the movement to improve our downtown ("Petition Highlights Burgeoning Demand to Improve Downtown Vitality"). Together with other young parents in Orinda, I have recently formed a group called What's Up Downtown (www.whatsupdowntownorinda.com) to help our peers stay informed and engaged in the public planning process.

We are a generation of Orindans, many of us who grew up here like myself, who would like to see an improved downtown that serves as the heart of our community. We'd like a restored, charming downtown where people get out of their cars, connect with each other and experience great local amenities: a gourmet market, buzzing coffee shops and restaurants, a pleasant walk where we can window shop and maybe buy something we didn't know we needed. Most of us leave Orinda for all of this, which is such a shame.

The public planning process that the Petition urges cannot come soon enough. Some of the key downtown parcels are now starting to change ownership. We would like to see our community come up with a plan for what should replace them. If we fail to take this on, we will be at the mercy of private developers who will do their own planning. Orinda can do better and we think it's possible with community support.

Laura McDowell
Orinda

Editor:

Lafayette was incorporated into a city in 1968 to keep it a semi-rural town. The town motto on the City web page says "Lafayette was incorporated for the preservation and enhancement of the semi-rural character of the community." So why did the Lafayette City Council decide to put stop lights at Reliez Station Road and Las Trampas Road when that signal will start a precedent of losing the semi-rural character of Burton Valley? After reviewing the report done by Stantec on May 15, 2015, here are some facts regarding the approved signals at Reliez Station Road and Las Trampas.

1) It will increase danger to the 14,806 daily drivers on Reliez by making vehicles stop and roll backwards while going up on Reliez Station Road. [On Item 5.4, Page 5.22, Stantec says there is a concern about trucks having difficulty making stops due to the steep grade. Their solution is to monitor the situation after installing signals to determine if there is difficulty for trucks due to grades. They then suggest as a solution to "include creation of an advanced signal for trucks to stop on a section of road with flatter grades." Are they kidding? There are no sections with flatter grades plus I have never heard of advanced signals for trucks.]

2) Emergency vehicles would not get past a string of cars stopped for a stop light as there is no safe way to go around stopped cars going south on Reliez Station Road. This is dangerous and the delay could cost a life.

3) It will impede the flow of traffic by making vehicles stop for cars entering from Las Trampas. [A report in the Lamorinda Weekly, of November 18, 2015 said a \$59,000 study by Arup Principal says that stop lights in Lafayette inhibit the flow of traffic.] Personally, I think stop lights stop traffic.

4) A simple solution was proposed at a meeting that would be inexpensive but was dismissed with a wave of the hand by the consultant working for Stantec. This solution would be inexpensive and above all.....safe. [Install a "No Left Turn" sign on Las Trampas was proposed by me but I was told the residents of Las Trampas Road would not be interested in that solution and was told no further discussion was necessary.]

5) There have not been any accidents at this intersection in the past 5 years and most drivers do not exceed the speed limit by more than 5 mph. So why put in a possibly dangerous signal?

[Stantec report, Item 3.4, page 3.9]

6) An online survey said the votes suggest that pavement markings and signage was preferred by the community. [Stantec report, Item 3.4, page 3.9]

7) The Stantec report said an alternative to signals would be to install speed feedback signs for both southbound and northbound traffic plus high visibility crosswalks and the addition of warning signs at a cost of \$45,000 rather than spend \$300,000 for signals. [Stantec Report, Item 3.4, page 3.9]

8) Many studies and several City Councils have looked at this problem in the past and come to the same conclusion. The conclusion is it is too dangerous to put a stop light at this location. [City of Lafayette & MTC study 8/31/2001, Dowling Associates study 5/2/2005]

So why does the City Council want to spend \$300,000, make an intersection that has had no collisions less safe, ruin the semi-rural character of Burton Valley, and inconvenience 14,000 cars a day?

It doesn't make any sense to me or a lot of the residents of this area.

John Briggs
Lafayette

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[back](#)

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