

Lafayette

Downtown Creeks

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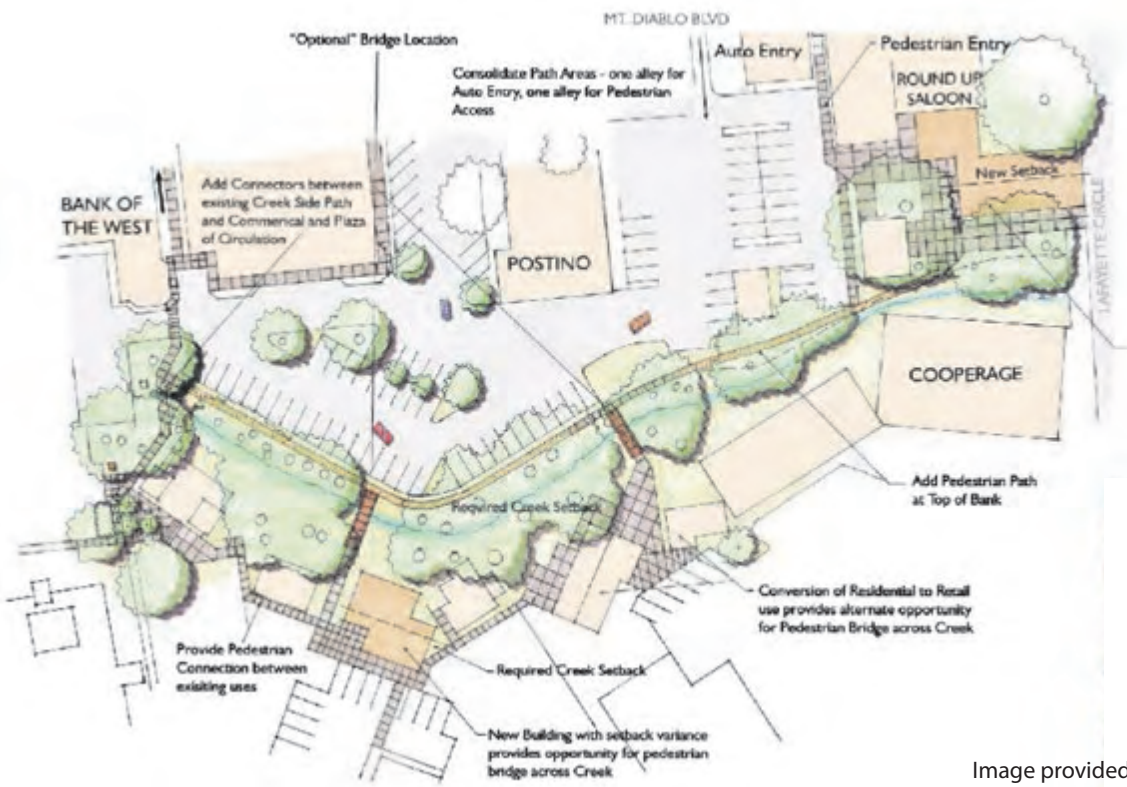


Image provided

This is an effort to craft a plan to protect and enhance them for public enjoyment.

The city, along with consultants Gates and Associates, are working together with the Creeks Committee to develop a comprehensive long-term plan that will preserve and restore the creeks.

“You can’t fix them up, if you don’t have a plan,” said Senior Planner Steve Goetz. He emphasized that having a plan in place is critical to guide future development and to provide opportunities for expanded public access.

Initial concepts for the creeks plan, according to Will Elder, chair of the all-volunteer Lafayette Creeks Committee, include storm-

water retention features, establishing creek overlooks, developing a series of public spaces and reintroducing native riparian plants.

Specifically, the Downtown Creeks Plan will address flood protection, preserve riparian corridors, guide how the creeks will flow and interact with adjacent buildings, offer physical access to the top of creek banks as well as preserve creeks as a significant contributor to downtown character. When complete, the Downtown Creeks Plan will become part of the Downtown Specific Plan.

Since August, the consultants, with expertise in landscape architecture, civil engineering and environmental restoration, have

been working on the project, doing extensive mapping and assessments, then developing concepts and ideas. Workshop attendees can check out and comment on their draft drawings.

While some of the land on the banks of the local creeks is privately owned, there are two large sections that are publicly owned, across from the Veterans Hall, and near the gazebo on the east end of town.

One “catalyst” project, as Goetz calls it—on publicly owned land restoring a stretch of Lafayette Creek near the Veterans Hall — would widen the sidewalk along Mt. Diablo Boulevard and create an overlook plaza area that would stabilize the creek bank.

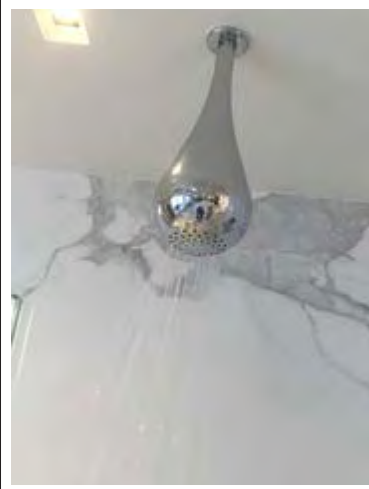
The meeting is at 6:30 p.m. April 27 at the Lafayette Library’s Community Hall. Those looking for a sneak preview can go on guided creek walks with members of the creeks committee to examine creek enhancement opportunities. The walks will start at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. from the Sustainable Lafayette Earth Day celebration on Sunday, April 24, which will also be held at the library.

For more information on the city goals of increasing community appreciation of its downtown creeks go to www.lovelafayette.org/creeksplan or contact planner Goetz at sgoetz@ci.lafayette.ca.us.

Lafayette

Going Green

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This unusual teardrop-designed shower head is low flow, and meets CALGreen standards. Photo C. Tyson

McLaughlin explained that making more energy efficient choices “makes a lot of sense,” paying for themselves in the long run and costs only slightly more. In his experience, his clients usually choose to incorporate a range of more efficient items, including lighting, windows, toilets, showerheads, insulation and especially furnaces.

There are a range of prices for all of these products, but McLaughlin believes that even relatively basic models are a huge step up from older original versions that can be found in many Lamorinda homes. McLaughlin — “Builder Bob” to his friends — said that many of his projects include new windows. Clients can choose more economical vinyl windows, or go with high-end wood windows, but both are durable, have insulation that protects from extreme temperatures and block most of the sun’s ultraviolet rays.

He acknowledged that current building regulations spelled out in the state’s CALGreen program now requires more environmentally friendly items that nudge buyers in the green direction. For instance high density insulation has to have an R-15 value, compared to the old standard of R-13, the measure of insulation’s ability to reduce the rate of heat flow. Also, at least half of all light fixtures in kitchens and bathrooms must be energy efficient, long lasting LED, and not the older incandescent type.

First of its kind in the nation, CALGreen is California’s more stringent green building code that mandates new buildings and renovations meet certain sustainability and ecological standards to improve air quality and cut down on energy and water consumption.

According to Pacific Gas & Electric, home heating and cooling typically accounts for 44 percent of an energy bill. Homeowners would be wise to consider long-term savings of updating furnace and air conditioning units.

Desiree Medler, marketing analyst for Clean Air HVAC Company, said that the bigger the home, the

bigger the benefit of a high-efficiency furnace. She adds that ducting should also be taken into consideration, since that’s where most of the heat loss happens. Furnaces have an average lifespan of around 20 years, and become less efficient over time. Check out www.pge.com for rebates offers.

Low-flow toilets are now the norm. Responding to California’s drought, the Department of Water Resources is encouraging installation of low-flow toilets with a generous rebate program. Swapping out an old fashioned model made between 1980 and 1994, which uses about 3.5 gallons per flush, with a new high efficiency model uses less than half of that amount of water 1.28 gallons per use, which saves on consumer’s water bills and gets proud owners a check for \$100.

Even the City of Lafayette has made a real effort to help citizens save energy, water and money with their partnership with Rising Sun Energy Center’s California Youth Energy Services program, which provides free home energy and water audits via their Green House Calls. It is slated to start this summer. Call (510) 665-1501, extension 5, or visit the city website at www.lovelafayette.org for more information.

As of July 1, Lafayette city leaders were the first in Lamorinda to ban plastic single use bags, and have instituted a mandatory 10 cent charge, levied by the merchant for each paper bag, to encourage shoppers to bring their own re-usable bags to tote purchases home.

In addition, residents will soon have a choice of where their energy comes from — either greener power from Marin Clean Energy or continue on with PG & E. According to Megan Canales, Assistant Planner, the program should be on-line in late summer or early fall, after an extensive outreach effort.

Residents with solar panels should note that MCE has lower rates for Net Energy Metering than PG&E. For homeowners who use more energy than their system produces, MCE charges a lower amount than PG&E. Energy provider MCE has waived the membership analysis cost, so the cost to the city to offer this option is nothing. In addition, no tax dollars are used to fund MCE, but there is a small monthly exit fee to take into account.

Because many Lamorinda residents tend to stay in their homes, and choose to remodel rather than move away from friends and family, weighing the costs and long term benefits of green home improvements is a necessary part of the equation.

Moraga

Three-lane Moraga Road

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The survey results show that a large majority of residents, about 80 percent, consider it is important to balance the needs of drivers with pedestrians and bicyclists; 65 percent consider that the road segment between Corliss and Draegger is unsafe for bicyclists and pedestrians; and 60 percent consider the traffic between Corliss and Draegger is satisfactory.

Residents indicated at an 80 percent rate that the three-lane option would make pedestrians and bicyclists safer. However, when asked to choose what new street configuration they would prefer, it was the four-lane configuration that was voted first, followed by the three-lane design.

The three-lane option had been brought to the council in January, 2015. Trotter had said that making the decision to reduce the number of lanes from four to three required a town-wide outreach, such as a survey. He was supported by Wykle. Onoda favored the three lanes option while Arth preferred four lanes. Metcalf was absent at

that meeting. A year later, the survey results seemed to support Trotter and Arth’s position. Wykle said that in his view the southbound portion of Moraga Road between Draegger and Corliss was reduced to one lane “de facto,” since one is already used for left turns and a portion becomes a right turn-only as it approaches Corliss.

Onoda stressed the importance of having a dedicated left turn lane, for safety reasons and to secure access to a new entrance to the Hacienda de las Flores.

Metcalf said he based his decision on the previous process, where a lot of people spent time studying the topic, as compared to a survey that was confusing, according to comments he had heard.

Planning Director Ellen Clark, who has initiated and led the Moraga Livable Road project, noted that the new configuration would be only striped on the asphalt with no new construction, to allow the possibility to revert to a four-lane configuration if needed.

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