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## Council approves Housing Element EIR budget augmentation

By Jennifer Wake



The Lafayette BART parking lot on the north side of the station will be included as part of the Environmental Impact Report. Photo J. Wake

The Lafayette City Council at its July 12 meeting approved a budget increase of \$161,248 to ESA's initial contract price of \$312,400 to conduct an Environmental Impact Report for the 6th Cycle Housing Element, bringing the total budgeted cost to \$473,648. The majority of the budget increase stems from mandatory requirements under CEQA including transportation analysis using Vehicle Miles Travels (VMT), evacuation analysis and incorporating the second scenario throughout all aspects of the EIR, according to a staff report presented by Planning and Building Director Greg Wolff, Senior Planner Sarah Allen, and Housing Consultant Diana Elrod.

"If the Downtown-Only scenario were evaluated like a traditional project alternative under CEQA, it would be analyzed at a more qualitative level compared to the Distributed Scenario and would not require the full scope of transportation and air quality modeling set forth in the revised scope," according to the report. Staff also met

with ESA and Fehr & Peers regarding new requirements under state law related to evacuation analysis. "Staff and residents are understandably concerned about the risk of wildfire in the community and the ability to evacuate, if necessary. It is important to understand the existing conditions, the potential impacts from new development, and measures that could be implemented to mitigate those impacts. It should be noted that public safety and wildfire mitigation/preparation are two of the City Council's top priorities this year."

ESA described Program EIRs as not only assessing the potential impacts of proposed general plan amendments, specific plans, etc., but also giving city decision-makers and the public an opportunity to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures as envisioned in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(b).

During the meeting Council Member Carl Anduri asked if the EIR will identify evacuation problems if an additional 822 units are added at the BART station parking lot locations. Fehr & Peers Senior Associate Ellen Poling said while it's unclear what level of granularity will be included, there will be an analysis of developments in high fire risk areas, including three evacuation scenarios to model how these high fire risk areas would be evacuated. The evaluation would look at capacity of the routes operationally such as number of lanes, choke points, and alternate routes for evacuation and come up with strategies to fine tune evacuation plans the city already has in place. "We could proceed with the high-level macro simulation approach, and if we see questions that arise out of that," Poling said, "we can talk about boosting the effort for that scenario."

Council Member Gina Dawson asked how closely ESA works with utilities regarding micro-grids they're putting in and whether new development will overload the existing infrastructure. ESA Project Manager Luke Evans said, "The question is would the project waste energy. We have to make sure we're not speculating on some future scenario, some future development on the energy grid, etc. As part of the utilities analysis, we reach out to the service providers and ask them if we're going to build more units in Lafayette as proposed, what would be involved in increasing capacity."

Mayor Susan Candell wanted to double check that the city will have information provided to council for policy consideration prior to July 2022, since that is the deadline to rezone the BART parking lots. Evans said the big thing that drives timing is the traffic analysis. Candell asked that Fehr & Peers prioritize the Distributed Scenario first since it involves the BART parking lot development and the Deer Hill corridor. Dawson and Vice Mayor Teresa Gerringer agreed that prioritizing the Distributed Scenario is a good idea. The council voted unanimously to approve the revised scope and budget augment transferring \$161,248 from the General Fund to the GPAC fund.

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