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Council revisits discussion on potential Housing Element sites

By Jennifer Wake

In its second public hearing on potential opportunity sites to be included in the sixth cycle Housing Element for the city of Lafayette, staff presented a revised draft to the city council at its May 23 meeting.

Thanks to an increase of potential accessory dwelling units (ADUs) projected following analysis showing a 281% increase in ADU permits and approvals over the past four years, upgrading density in three downtown parcels near Highway 24 that had been recommended by the planning commission was no longer required to meet the state's Regional

Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) number of 2,114 units, according to the staff report presented by Senior Planner Renata Robles, Planning and Building Director Greg Wolff and Housing Consultant Diana Elrod.

"As a result of the 240 total projected ADUs and the revised income distribution for ADUs, staff finds the PC's proposal to upzone areas of the downtown is no longer needed to meet the city's RHNA-plus-buffer for lower-income categories," the report stated. "Thus, staff recommends the downtown planning areas (1-6 and 13) remain at the current zoned density of 35 du/acre."

The revised proposed op-

portunity sites include 2 acres of the DeSilva North site at 35 dwelling units per acre, Planning Areas 1-6 in Downtown with no change in density, and the Brookdale area (Planning Area 13) with no change in density. The Housing Element sites inventory will exclude the Deer Hill Corridor and the approximately 60-acre DeSilva South property on Mt. Diablo Boulevard near Oakwood Athletic Club. Council members agreed that the BART parking lot property would be included as a potential opportunity site at 75 du/acre (the minimum units required by state law) with a 95% development yield.

Assembly Bill 2923 mandates that the BART-owned parking lots within 1/2-mile of the station will be automatically eligible for development at a minimum of 75 du/acre as of July 1, regardless of whether the city takes action to rezone the properties.

According to the staff report, RHNA is not a mandate for jurisdictions to construct the proposed units, but rather to ensure that the regulatory framework, land, and zoning enable the units to be built by the market.

Council members requested staff include detailed information in the narrative of the Housing Element about outreach made directly to BART regarding potential development, as well as how RHNA numbers were much higher per capita to



City of Lafayette sees increase in ADU permits.

Photo J. Wake

neighboring cities due to Lafayette's proximity to the BART station. Council Member Wei-Tai Kwok also suggested including written and verbal correspondence regarding the BART properties and the methodology that guided this process.

During the public comment portion of the meeting, Colin Elliott and Robert Lavoie, who have spent countless hours analyzing data and offering suggestions to help the city meet its RHNA allocation, expressed their appreciation of the staff's analysis and increased ADU numbers, noting that cities in Southern California that used this methodology had their Housing Elements approved by the California Department of Housing and Community Devel-

opment.

"I'm very pleased with the evolution of the sites plan; I think it's getting close," said Lavoie, who added that "ADUs are the real solution to affordable housing in Lafayette. People can age in place, they can allow their adult kids to stay in the community, at least until they get married, probably. Considering a two-bedroom two-bathroom condo is \$2 million, there is no affordable housing, so ADUs offer a way to keep extended members in the community."

Council members went on to offer detailed suggestions for changes to be made throughout the 60-plus-page document and staff will return with a revised draft for discussion at the June 13 council meeting.

The Lafayette City Council is soliciting applicants to fill several volunteer positions.

One vacancy on the Planning Commission. The seven-member body is responsible for matters relating to land use and development in the City. The Commission serves as an advisory agency to the City Council for administering the laws and ordinances governing the approval of general and specific plans, zoning text amendments and rezonings. The Commission also hears and decides on applications for subdivisions, variances and land use permits.

Members of the Planning Commission are required to be qualified electors of the City of Lafayette, and are selected on the basis of training, education, occupation and expertise. The Commission reviews technical reports and construction plans. Individuals interested in this key volunteer position may obtain an application from the City's website at www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/commissions-committees or by calling the City Clerk's office at (925) 284-1968. Completed applications must be received by 5:00pm on June 17, 2022.

Affordable housing impacts on Lafayette student enrollment

By Sharon K. Sobotta

If David Curtin still lived in Lafayette, he'd likely be a frequent flier at the newly renovated airport themed Brook Street Park with his soon to arrive baby sister as he eagerly awaited the beginning of his TK tenure at Lafayette Elementary School. He resided on Chestnut Street with his parents Audrey and Conor Curtin and was known for stealing the hearts and minds of those in his neighborhood with his cuteness until last summer

when his family made the difficult decision to relocate to Ireland.

"While David wasn't old enough to attend the Lafayette School District yet, when we were looking to buy a home, this was a huge factor," Audrey Curtin says. "One house we were about to make an offer on was in Lafayette but was a part of another district which meant I would've had to petition for him to attend the high school down the road from our (would've been) home. It seemed crazy to me

that we would make our housing decision based on where my less than 2-year-old son (at the time) would go to high school, but I definitely felt pressure to make sure we were in a good school district."

The Curtin family loved their neighbors and the Lafayette community as a whole, but like many they just couldn't find a way to get ahead or to put down roots here. "We both were working more than 40 hours per week.

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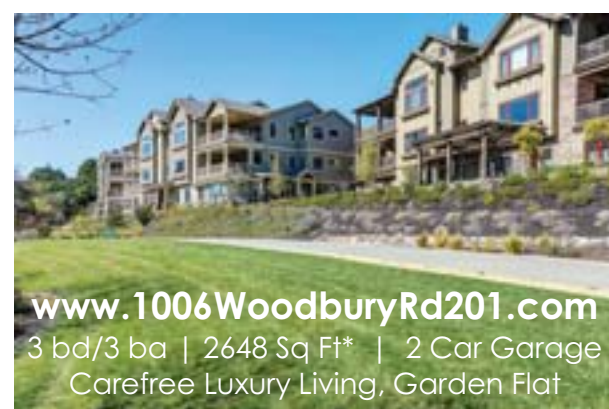
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