

Correction: In the Oct. 26 article "AUHSD forums address candidate funding, academic excellence," the story stated that "All of the candidates live in the district and all candidates except [Rene] Nowac have children who are either attending local schools, will attend local schools, or have graduated from local schools." Ms. Nowac has two children who attend Moraga public schools. We apologize for this error.

Slipping through the cracks: Lafayette renters struggle to stay afloat

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As a longtime resident of Lafayette who's been residing here for just under four decades, Janet Thomas says she's deeply invested in there being more affordable housing in town.

Thomas says she's been concerned about housing in the community for as long as she's lived here. Thomas recalls purchasing a modest two-bedroom house when she moved here 38 years ago and remodeling it with her husband during the summers to make room for her growing family, but she was aware that this wasn't necessarily an option for everyone she worked with.

"As (former) teachers in the Acalanes District, we were aware that most of our colleagues couldn't afford to live in this community and had to commute long distances to teach," Thomas said.

Now Thomas lives in an ADU home on a lot that she shares with her son and his wife, who would not otherwise have been able to live in Lafayette. "In replacing a free standing garage with an ADU, we've transitioned to an (intergenerational) situation that works well for us. We babysit, share a garden and patio and feel connected to our grandkids' schools. The cost was about one-fifth of a new home on a separate lot which is energy efficient and comfortable."

Thomas acknowledges that while ADUs may be a solution for those with intergenerational roots in Lafayette, they don't do much to accommodate service workers trying to live in the community and parents who may be struggling to keep their kids in the district. "Unless there's a

strong incentive for community members to build ADUs and offer them to those outside of the family at affordable prices or unless there's a big shift in our general culture, I doubt this could be used as a solution for affordable housing in Lamorinda."

So what is the solution? Thomas says it's multifaceted. "There's not one solution. Rent control that limits but doesn't freeze rent is one action the city should consider," she said.

City Council Member Susan Candell agrees that rent control might be a matter worth revisiting at the city level. "The council discussed this in 2015 and 2017 with no action. It takes strong political will to pass good rent control measures and our current council may have the will to do this," Candell said. "It will be this balance of pros versus cons that will drive our decision."

Watching her sister navigate Lafayette as a renter gave Candell an appreciation for the kinds of struggles renters face. There was an instance when her sister's rent went up by 25% causing her sister and a third of the renters in the complex to need to move to smaller, less expensive places.

"We looked at many different places in town and some that refused to rent to her because of her three boys. This is illegal but hard to enforce," Candell says. "I imagine this is a familiar story for many, and it's important for the city to better understand what is actually happening in order to figure out if there are good solutions we can implement to improve renter's experiences."

A discussion about renters' issues will be held at 7 p.m. Nov. 17 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.



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Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Nov. 14, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's
You Tube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 21, 7 p.m.
Teleconference Meeting via Love
Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Design Review

Wednesday, Nov. 23, 7 p.m. Zoom
Teleconference Meeting via Love
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