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**Local father, son present proposals to preserve Lafayette Reservoir tower silhouette**

**By Elaine Borden Chandler**

The Lafayette Reservoir tower can be seen everywhere in Lafayette, from the logos of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and Lafayette Strong, to the websites for Love Lafayette and the Lafayette Historical Society, to the banners along Mt. Diablo Boulevard, to the seasonal October flood of Lafayette Res Run shirts. Matt Bertics forwarded news of the proposed retrofit for the tower to his son, Andrew Bertics, who immediately thought, "We've got to do something."

The East Bay Municipal Utility District started building the Lafayette Reservoir and Dam in 1927, including a reservoir tower to act as a spillway. Partway through construction

in 1928, the earthen dam cracked and settled. It was redesigned to be 33 feet lower but the tower was not, leaving it a striking 40 feet taller than necessary. Starting in 2005, EBMUD has conducted studies showing that the tower's height and weight make it likely to suffer serious damage during large earthquakes. On Jan. 9, EBMUD Engineering Manager Elizabeth Bialek presented to the Lafayette City Council on the Lafayette Reservoir Tower Seismic Retrofit Project, featuring a tower shorted by 40 feet with a parapet and a crane. Responses were mostly centered on the tower's change in appearance. "We were warned that it was going to be ugly, but I was not considering it to be quite this ugly," said Council Member Susan Candell. Lafayette resident and

structural engineer Matt Bertics read a Lamorinda Weekly article about the proposed changes and texted it to his son Andrew Bertics, an architectural designer. Andrew suggested that recreating the removed portion of the tower with a steel framework would solve the seismic vulnerabilities while keeping the silhouette of the original tower.

"He asked some questions of me as a structural engineer on feasibility of the design and impact on the seismic issues, and then he has taken the ball and run with it," described Matt. The father and son often talk about architecture together, but have never worked on a project before. "When we read about the seismic issue, saw EBMUD's proposal, and saw the city's dilemma, coming up with our own solution was a



Photo rendering of proposed steel framework design.

no-brainer. It was a perfect collaboration opportunity. We've been talking about the tower nonstop, much to my mother's chagrin," says Andrew.

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**Lafayette e-lending program allows residents to try induction cooktops or electric leaf blowers**



Photo provided

From left: Anna Tolle, Maria Gastelumendi, Ashley Louisiana, Brenna Shafizadeh, Nancy Hu, Jonathan Katayanagi, and Colleen McCormick

**Submitted by Brenna Shafizadeh**

Are you interested in using an induction cooktop or an electric leaf blower? Now you can thanks to a new e-lending program offered by the City of Lafayette's Environmental Task Force. Items can be borrowed by Lafayette residents for up to two weeks.

Induction cooktops offer increased health benefits, and greater precision in cooking. And they are available in all price points, from portable units under \$100, to high-end models. But for residents who would like a "try before you buy," the city is lending, free of charge, induction cooktop kits that include a portable induction cooktop, a pan, and a magnet with which to test your other pans. Induction cooking heats food via magnetic induction, and so you can tell which of your pans might work by testing them with the magnet. If you are a Lafayette resident (over age 18) and would like to sign up to borrow an induction cooktop,

visit [www.lovelafayette.org/cooktop-lending](http://www.lovelafayette.org/cooktop-lending)

Electric leaf blowers offer a cleaner, quieter, and less destructive option compared to gas-powered leaf blowers, which emit high levels of toxic pollution, as well as noise pollution. Ironically, gas-powered leaf blowers can be harmful for the long-term health of a garden in that they are destructive to the topsoil, which is an important component for healthy soil and plants. For these reasons and more, gas leaf blowers will no longer be sold in California as of Jan. 1, 2024. If you are a Lafayette resident (over age 18) and would like to sign up to borrow an electric leaf blower, visit [www.lovelafayette.org/leaf-blower-lending](http://www.lovelafayette.org/leaf-blower-lending)

Rebates may be available if you purchase an induction cooktop or an electric leaf blower:

- for rebates on induction cooktops, go to <https://switchison.org/>
- for rebates on electric leaf blowers for professional use, go to <https://californiacore.org/equipmentcatalog/>



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