



Published October 11th, 2023

## Discussion continues on Housing Element opportunity sites

By Lou Fancher

| Name                          | Location          | Total Acres | Usable Acres | DU/AC | Total Units | Bedroom Units | WHEELCHAIR | SB 79 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|-------|-------------|---------------|------------|-------|
| St. Azoula Episcopal          | 482 Michael Lane  | 2.62        | 0.70         | 30    | 21          | 18            | N          | N     |
| Lafayette Christian           | 584 Glenade       | 3.90        | 0.00         | 30    | 0           | 0             | N          | N     |
| Calvary Baptist/Living Hope   | 320 Stanley Blvd  | 2.29        | 0.89         | 30    | 27          | 26            | N          | N     |
| St. Perpetua                  | 9154 Heavins Road | 16.91       | 1.69         | 30    | 51          | 45            | N          | N     |
| Lafayette-Orcuta Presbyterian | 49 Knox Drive     | 9.94        | 0.00         | 30    | 0           | 0             | Y          | N     |
| Our Saviour Lutheran          | 3033 Carol Lane   | 6.98        | 1.68         | 30    | 46          | 39            | N          | N     |
| Sun Valley Bible Chapel       | 1011 Laurel Drive | 2.58        | 1.56         | 30    | 47          | 41            | N          | N     |
| Temple Isaiah                 | 905 Ross Blvd     | 10.71       | 1.26         | 30    | 37          | 33            | N          | N     |

City staff came to the council at the Sept. 26 meeting with an updated project timeline and revisions to the Housing Element in response to Council direction from a prior discussion during the Aug. 28 city council meeting. Housing Consultant Diana Elrod said the staff report included recommendations related to a revised Housing Element Opportunity Sites Inventory, along with other information and extensive public comments from the community. Elrod, Planning and Building Director Greg Wolff, and Senior Planner Renata Robles sought the council’s direction on next steps and answers to two central questions: Should the inventory list include faith-based land or, alternatively, should the opportunities site list increase densities in the downtown area beyond what was approved by the council in meetings held in January 2023? Based on guidance from

the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and additional input from consultants regarding opportunity site selection methods, Elrod said staff sought direction from Council on how to proceed after the report options were presented and discussed. In Contra Costa County, only six out of 20 jurisdictions have received HCD approval so the process is “obviously taking a long time,” Elrod said. Staff hopes to receive certification by the end of 2023, but at several times during the meeting, the difficulty of the constantly shifting process and changing laws and guidelines was acknowledged. Elrod outlined the opportunity sites inventory alterations and research conducted in general terms, with special attention to SB 4, which applies to development on faith-based and higher educational institution lands. It contains a number of requirements related to affordable housing and will mean Lafayette must have its objective standards in place by Jan. 1, 2024. Council Member Wei Tai Kwok asked about the definition and restrictions around the faith-based organizations included in the staff report. Elrod said staff looked for large sites with more than an acre. One organization in a high fire severity zone and another with no usable space were not included in the report. Elrod said no new organizations had approached staff with interest in developing affordable housing on their land. Any land rezoned as an opportunity site would retain those terms that apply to the land, not the organization. In the event a faith-based organization sold the land, a developer would retain upscale zoning guidelines. The council discussed other means, such as overlays, to establish control of the possibilities. Staff said there were limited means by which the city could control rezoned land and efforts had been made to eliminate any sites likely to fall outside of HCD’s parameters that would fail to meet requirements for affordable housing. Elrod provided her best estimate that the percentages and other information provided in the response to HCD were reasonable and realistic and therefore, more likely to receive approval. Public comment included a first speaker who was “actually shocked” to see a revised packet that had “the goal posts moved.” The four scenarios she said were confusing. Bill Bucher represented the Lafayette Homeowners Council and was encouraged by the revised ADU calculations and supported it as a positive step. The LHC was disappointed about the reduction to 88% of the opportunity sites inventory realistic development capacity and was concerned the faith-based definitions included in the housing element packet would fail to gain HCD’s approval. Other comments sought clarification of opportunity sites and called for more public outreach before decisions on the final draft are made by the council. A board member of Inclusive Lafayette said the group strongly supported option D, which included upzoning the downtown to meet RHNA requirements with the Desco properties included, and did not include faith-based organization land. One speaker asked, “Who’s actually running this process?” He said greater efforts need to be made to inform the public and reduce confusion about the continual changes. Mayor Carl Anduri said the process is “inherently difficult” and the changes made represented everyone doing their best within an admittedly frustrating situation. “Yes, there have been changes. Yes, it’s frustrating,” he said, while expressing appreciation for the staff’s hard work and efforts to maintain transparency. The council asked City Attorney Mala Subramanian to clarify the 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. lease details and how any residential development could happen within the housing element’s eight-year term. She said the parking lot was determined as the only possibility for development, not the

entire building, which reduced the total acreage available but was more realistic due to constraints of the lease agreement for the building. Subramanian also answered a question about upzoning properties and if such a choice could be reversed at a later date. The city attorney said SB 330 made that not a viable option because any property later “downzoned” would require an offset and another property of equal size to be upzoned for residential development. The council agreed unanimously on a number of items: to allow staff to share the appendices with an HCD reviewer for an informal review, to remain with the ADUs as part of the package, and to hold the realistic capacity at 88%. Specific to the opportunity site list, members supported the Desco properties as amended and centered the final discussion on Revised Workbook C, which included the FBOs. Kwok and others emphasized the community aspect of FBOs and said people in Lafayette were interested in working cooperatively to provide affordable housing that meets HCD requirements. The item was continued with unanimous support to Oct. 10, which happened after press time.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA