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Housing Element discussion continues at Lafayette Council meeting



Image courtesy City of Lafayette

Comments from the community involved concerns over adding this 1/4 mile area as a downtown buffer.

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Elrod reviewed the inventory communication history between the city and the state, which included a denial of the RHNA inventory proposed in October 2021. Revisions made in January 2023 modified allocations according to evaluation site objectives, changes in yield percentages, and alternatives that were considered to meet the RHNA requirements, such as changes to DeSilva South related to density percentages, and consideration of allowing housing on religious or institutional land.

As changes to opportunity sites and to densities will require an additional EIR, Robles noted, the next steps she said are to incorporate any revisions made by council, start the environmental review if required, and return to the council in September with the revised Housing Element draft.

Questions began with Council Member Wei-Tai Kwok asking how many church properties would be impacted, to which Robles said, "less than 10," and he asked Elrod to explain concerns about density from the community about churches that were upzoned and subsequently sold. She said that level of detail had not been examined. Robles said applying the same criteria as is used for senior living facilities could be followed for developing requirements related to religious institution properties.

Public comments and letters received by the council prior to the meeting addressed the inventory list, specifically the lower-income developments; upzoning religious properties, increased density issues, missing middle housing opportunities, objections to the 1/4 mile area added as a downtown buffer area; ADU projections, and residential segregation and environmental and transportation/traffic density impacts – or lack thereof – of low-income housing additions in the downtown, neighborhoods, and remote areas of Lafayette.

In the meeting's most pointed comments, Lauren McCabe Herpich said missing middles will not fulfill the RHNA allocations and she was "taken aback" by the proposals. "We've had three years of volunteers like yourselves who have dedicated time to create a plan that works for our town, our infrastructure, and our mission statement. Any plan that veers away from what the GPAC worked for years to present to this council ... participating in three years of town

halls and workshops; I hate to say (this) is a slap in the face for anyone who has actually participated. I really don't know who would volunteer to participate in this, if this is what's going to happen. This was all for nothing if you go against the GPAC recommendations." Herpich said that thriving communities are not just the result of housing density, but are achieved when attention is given to quality of schools, transportation, access to downtown, and parks.


Returning to council, Council Member Susan Candell inquired about SB4 and whether or not following the senate bill streamlines the process for religious organizations and nonprofit colleges to develop affordable housing. City attorney Mala Subramanian explained upzoning issues and said she would continue to look into the policies council may or may not adopt in the future and the legalities therein.

Asked by Mayor Carl Amduri about the 30 unit per acre density allotments, Robles explained they cannot be included in the RHNA count without upzoning those developments and only if including low- and very-low-income housing. In contrast, adding the DeSilva South area to the inventory list, Elrod said, could potentially increase the RHNA numbers.

In regard to adding AFFH projects north of Highway 24, which includes a very high fire severity zone, Robles said staff intends to use only parcels that offer superior evacuation potentials and constraints. Elrod added that revisions are forthcoming due to information that only recently arrived.

Opportunity sites were clarified by Wolff and new information presently coming in will result in new factors to be brought back to the council with the staff's recommendations in September. Candell proposed council hold another discussion about the Bruzzone shopping center property and possibly expanding the possibilities, an idea supported by the council. Church sites, the council decided, might be included pending additional analysis. Any remaining revisions determined to be necessary will be left to staff to include in the next draft which was to be presented to council Sept. 11, after press time.

The draft Housing Element Update can be found at www.planlafayette.org; the draft and final EIR can be found at www.lovelafayette.org/CEQA.



Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Tuesday, Sept. 26, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall

Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, Sept. 18, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall

Design Review

Tuesday, Sept. 26, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Arts & Science Discovery Room

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