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## Continued Rocky Road for Specific Plan

By Cathy Tyson

Being dissed," "Dismissed again," "This is insanity;" those were just some of the public comments directed at City Council Members at a recent meeting about the Revised Downtown Specific Plan. In a chorus of negative remarks, it became clear that the new and improved version completed over the summer and released in September still had unresolved issues.

Kathy Merchant, a member of the Downtown Strategy Advisory Committee said, "There is a growing sentiment of 'what's the point?' We feel strongly that our Advisory Committee's voice was truly never heard." Merchant added that this was especially annoying after attending twenty-three meetings spread over two years.

"I don't know of any redevelopment agency that has down-zoned," said David Bruzzone. "We have to address circulation issues in town."

"23% of the General Fund comes from sales tax - the Revised Draft Plan makes development difficult at best. You should have checked in with economic experts. I urge the City to do a study," said Jay Lifson of the Chamber of Commerce.

"You can only put so much burden on a commercial property," stated Steve Cortese, developer of the Lafayette Mercantile building. "By attempting to remove uncertainty - you've created it," he said, referring to a menu of options developers can choose from, which if completed can result in more height for a project.

Maeve Pessis, President of the Lafayette Homeowners Council, is concerned about preserving views of surrounding hills and Mount Diablo and wants the community to retain its special unique qualities and wonders how much growth Lafayette can sustain especially considering the constricted roadways in town.

In a recent Friday Summary, City Manager Steven Falk opined, "Not all of the news is discouraging. Indeed, if there is a silver lining here, it's that almost all of the critical remarks have been aimed at Chapter 10 (Height and Density) of the draft plan. The other chapters -- or at least 1 through 9 -- appear to be acceptable to most people (although, because height and density pose the biggest perceived change and potential risk to the community, these issues may simply be being addressed first, with more criticism of the other issues to follow.)"

Lafayette's erstwhile revised Plan is obviously still very much a work in progress. As the Environmental Impact Report is being prepared, there is plenty of time for continued public input. It appears as though the City Council has a challenging task at hand. For residents that wish to get a head start on joining the fray, see adjacent box for upcoming meetings.

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