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Hammering Away on Plaza Way Parking Solution

By Cathy Tyson

The work of crafting a parking solution for the historical Plaza Way area continues. Interested parties and subcommittee members met again last week to provide feedback on the Plaza Way Overlay concept.

With independent property owners that may or may not share the City's vision, discussions have focused on alternative Plaza Way Overlay concepts or "Visions" that may be embraced over time. Participation is optional, but it's clear if all the property owners were on board, the most comprehensive solution could be realized - linking all of the rear parking areas, creating a consolidated lot with improved circulation and substantially more parking spaces. "The City is investing money in a parking lot, matching the funds made available by the Poy family and the Park Theater Group. The parking must be available for the public to use," said Niroop Srivatsa, Planning and Building Services Manager, at a recent meeting of the Plaza Way Subcommittee. She added, "The City is doing everything possible to reduce the burden of property owners on Plaza Way." The ultimate goal is bring more vitality to the area, which will bring more customers to all of the businesses.

"It's a win-win for property owners and the City," said Srivatsa - the City can help spur economic development and improve the parking situation, a serious challenge to Lafayette drivers for years.

Some property owners are clearly in favor of the Parking Overlay. The Poy family, owner of Squirrels, the dry cleaner and the former Handle Bar Toys, is poised to make investments in a historical facelift and supports the Overlay, as does the Park Theater Group, which is waiting on parking changes before they go forward with their potential lease to Fenton's.

However other property owners have reservations: the owner of the Campana building has expressed concerns, so has Bill McNeil, who owns the building containing Vino Restaurant and A Man's Choice Barber plus a duplex behind the commercial buildings. A number of ladies from the Assistance League of Diablo Valley were in attendance - the organization runs the Wayside Inn Thrift Shop - they have over 400 members and a Board of Directors that would need to buy into the concept.

Choosing to participate in the Plaza Way Overlay is optional, so no action is required of reticent property owners. City staff is working hard to finalize details of a Plaza Way Overlay property owner's agreement in order to present it to the City Council in September. The Poy family and the Park Theater Group can hardly wait.

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