



Published January 4th, 2023

## A moment of reflection with new Lafayette mayor Carl Anduri about city priorities

By Lou Fancher

In a conversation during the last week of 2022, newly appointed Lafayette Mayor Carl Anduri moved quickly to deflect attention from his leadership position on the city council.

"Being mayor is more ceremonial than anything else. It's making sure every member of the public is heard and the council is heard as well. I have no more authority than any of the other council members," he said.

"We set policy and direction, but the City Manager, Niroop Srivasta, really runs the city. She hires and directs the staff and carries out the policies set by council. We really lucked out with having her - and all the staff that have been here so long and bring depth and expertise."

Anduri names and celebrates other staff, fellow council members and committee volunteers who have served the city for more than a decade, skipping lightly past his own record. Anduri joined the planning commission in 1996 and served on city council from 2002 to 2012, during which time he was mayor in 2005 and 2011. He stepped off the council in 2012 to concentrate on the high demands of his work as president of Lex Mundi, a position from which he retired in 2019. Back on the council in 2020, Anduri brings to his position experience on the Planning Commission Hillside Task Force, Open Space Task Force, Environmental Task Force, Senior Housing Task Force, the Park Theater Task Force and the Roads Task Force.

When asked how the city might have changed, or not, since he first came onboard in 2002, Anduri said, "The challenges are greater now. Wildfire is definitely something we didn't think about in 2002. And the pressure from the state for affordable housing really wasn't nearly the same. It's a big challenge to deal with the housing crisis and the housing prices." The environmental impacts of climate change were on the radar in 2002, but Anduri said people are far more aware and can see real evidence of the problem in 2022, which makes it an important topic, but one with complex solutions.

On the plus side, he said Lafayette's downtown is more vibrant and far more attractive. "We have the library; dedicated in 2009, and that has had a remarkable impact. There are other new buildings and (aesthetic) upgrades that have vastly improved the city."

Another big change is that road repair no longer dominates the council meetings and public commentary.

"My big priority in 2011 was to solve the roads problem. The revenue measure we placed on the ballot had us taking \$3 million from the reserve surplus to kick-start that. The measure didn't pass but we applied the \$3 million anyway and made strides that improved the roads. Coming back on the council now, it's strange because no one says anything about the roads. Then, it was all anyone talked about. But now, we have our payments scheduled on an annual basis so we're in good shape to maintain the roads."

Priorities set in 2011 such as more affordable housing for older adults resulted in completion of the Belle Terre project on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. With completion of the 6th cycle of the Housing Element by the end of January 2023, a major priority for all cities and towns, Anduri said attention to that effort has been the council's priority.

The pandemic and resulting economic fallout is easily the greatest ongoing challenge for the city. "The big issue for Lafayette is the economic impact on small businesses." Anduri said sales taxes have returned to levels seen in 2019 and property tax revenue is actually a bit higher in 2022 than it was in the year prior to the pandemic. Even so, he recognizes the harm caused by COVID-19 and said it has altered his awareness.

"I have a new appreciation for how difficult it is for small business owners to be successful. (Vice Mayor) Gina Dawson and I want to walk along the streets and meet with owners to talk about their concerns."

In addition, the council's goals for 2023 that will be revisited and revised at the Feb. 11 meeting that is open for public comment include supporting the Park Theatre Trust and other city learning and nonprofit centers, completing the Housing Element, enacting Vision Zero -

specifically, using new technology to slow the speeds of traffic moving through the downtown core - and collaborations with Sustainable Contra Costa that establish Lafayette's position as a leader in sustainability, including the Environmental Task Force's legislative agenda to have EV charging for new multifamily buildings.

Asked what motivated him to participate in city government - and to stay involved when the going has been rough - Anduri said his father's example and an internal force were major factors. "I just had a basic desire to serve."

Anduri, mildly uncomfortable with "going personal," said, "let's not put too much attention on that." Instead, he'd prefer the focus turns to community and council goals and to the upcoming 175-year-plus celebration in 2023 of Lafayette and its history (see story Page A2).

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

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA