



Date: March 8, 2021

To: Lafayette City Council, GPAC

From: Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

Re: Housing Element

Dear Council,

On behalf of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, we want to share with you our position on several issues that will be considered during the ongoing meetings leading to a new Lafayette General Plan.

Since 2009, the Chamber has been following and debating issues surrounding the housing element. As we participated in the DSP (Downtown Specific Plan) process, the Chamber supported most of the city's findings and recommendations. The vision of our future imagined a vibrant downtown with small town character that included shopping, activities, an informal mix of architectural styles, and the embracing of the natural beauty that surrounds our city. It also called for a multifamily residential neighborhood and provided for quality housing choices for all ages and income levels.

As affordable housing allocations for each city increases, we too must find that balance between preserving our distinct small-town culture and our ability to be part of the Bay Area's housing solutions. One outcome of this balance will help make possible housing for many of our workforce who currently do not live within the city. We find ourselves at an inflection point where affordable housing intersects with the desire to improve our community with equity, inclusion and diversity. Affordable housing will help us enjoy a community that everyone can feel comfortable, safe, and inclusive.

To help GPAC with its task to help us navigate these challenges, the Lafayette Chamber Board of Directors would like to share the following principles to help guide the discussion:

- The Chamber supports housing development in the Downtown core and along Mt. Diablo Blvd. The Chamber supports some additional housing along Deer Hill Road.
- The Chamber does not support the replacement of existing commercial properties with multi-unit housing, but if that is done, it would strongly encourage commercial tenants on the ground floor of the building, especially on the sides facing Mt. Diablo Blvd, along with adequate street parking for customers of those commercial tenants.
- The Chamber encourages any new building in the downtown core to be mixed residential use/commercial use.
- The Chamber supports upzoning the BART parking lot to count toward Lafayette's housing requirement, but only if any development on the BART parking lots includes the maximum number of parking spots to support tenants and backfill displaced parking spots.
- The Chamber supports upzoning value recapture to ensure that necessary infrastructure improvements to support this new housing are properly funded, including street improvements, water, sewer, and electricity.
- The Chamber would like to see any height limit exceptions be limited to just the downtown core.
- In order to fill the storefronts in the ground floors of new multi-unit residential buildings, the Chamber supports altering the zoning for downtown commercial properties to include health practitioners, insurance/title companies, and other similar commercial, non-retail uses.


Leading up to the pandemic shutdown, downtowns were already changing. When we resume “business as usual” it will not be usual at all. Some of the staples that make up a downtown will be replaced by different types of services. Lafayette has outpaced some of its neighbors with a balanced offering of dining, shopping, services and variety while holding on to its charm. As we prepare the next round of housing allocations, let us keep our eye on the infrastructure that we will need to support a growing population, decisions that keep us sustainability - centric and celebrate the changes that will surely increase our sales tax base and the other fees that help pay for all the amenities and services you have come to expect in an exceptional city like Lafayette.

We appreciate our ability to contribute to this discussion.

Respectfully,



John McCormick  
President, Lafayette Chamber Board



Jay Lifson  
Executive Director, Lafayette Chamber