

# Legacy Lafayette

Legacy Lafayette  
Minutes – Stakeholder Meeting (Strong  
Economy Topic)  
June 5th, 2019  
6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
Lafayette Senior Center

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## **Attendees:**

Paul Rayl, City of Lafayette; Britt Palmberg, Rick Community Planning; Martin Landers, Plan Tools; David Sinkey, Boulder Creek Neighborhoods; Kent Brown, owner of local mobile home park; John Cohagen, owner of Atlas Valley Wine & Spirits

**Note:** The summary below do not include every comment made during the meeting. These notes are intended to capture the key takeaways and comments from participants at the stakeholder meeting.

## **Summary of Discussion Topics**

1. Introductions: Britt Palmberg of Rick explained that the series of Stakeholder Meetings are just a part of the overall process of gaining input from the community. There is a project website and a community survey currently ongoing. The community survey is available online through the entire summer. There will be a Launch Party on June 20<sup>th</sup>, in an open house format, with a variety of interactive exercises for the public and a chance to review information about where Lafayette is today. There will also be outreach at community events this summer. There will be additional meetings with groups in Lafayette as the process moves along.
2. Discussion of key economic issues facing Lafayette:
  - a. The community needs to explore the possibility of having more jobs here in town, rather than having so many people commute to other communities for employment.
  - b. There is a lot of commuting from Erie through Lafayette to employment centers in Boulder.
  - c. Erie has been experiencing a lot of development. The plan for Lafayette should explore how to help the corridors that connect through Lafayette, from a transportation perspective.
  - d. Some of the people who want the small town feel that Lafayette was known for, are leaving (due to noise, other factors). The plan needs to explore how Lafayette can have a strong economy without the negatives (noise, pollution).
  - e. The boom along Public Road is pushing some people out of that part of town. This is part of the tension between growth, and the effects of growth.

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- f. There is a feeling among many that Public Road has gotten all of the attention, all of the incentives, and other business areas in town have been left out.
  - g. It is hard for local, small businesses to compete with the Walmarts and box stores, especially when box stores receive incentives from the city. Small businesses are shrinking.
  - h. The transportation system is inadequate. It takes too long to navigate from one location to another.
3. Relationship of Lafayette to its neighbors
- a. Louisville led the communities in the eastern part of Boulder County in creating downtown vibrancy. The Downtown Business Association in Lafayette put on street fairs, enhanced the streetscape, etc. This provided a lot of inspiration for other communities including Lafayette. However, in recent years Lafayette has been more business friendly than Louisville. Lafayette has been more open to using incentives for development. From a development standpoint, Lafayette has been proactive in using incentive tools and it has been proactive in working on the Public Road corridor.
  - b. Erie is also growing a lot and is gaining a reputation.
4. Discussion of economic issues on the west side of town, other parts of town
- a. There is an opportunity to create more vibrancy on the west side of town. For example, a walkable community could help connect different neighborhoods on the west side.
  - b. The largest bulk of residential permits allowed, recently, went to the south side of town. One of the participants indicated that allocating a huge number of residential permits to one part of town was short sighted. Some property owners have had to continue to cover the costs of their land for many years, waiting for permits for residential to become available.
  - c. The bottom line is that the emphasis has been on the downtown area, not on the edges of Lafayette.
5. Discussion of taxation

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- a. Taxes that businesses pay are an issue. Taxes are high enough in the city that taxes represent a huge chunk of the expenses that tenants pay for their spaces in parts of town. It has put a lot of pressure on tenants, and some tenants have left some properties due to the taxes.
  - b. At the same time, taxes for residences are going up
  - c. There is a broader issue for local jurisdictions, in struggling to find enough funding to provide services. The Gallagher amendment in Colorado fixed the overall ratio of taxes to be 55% on commercial, and 45% on residential. This has led many towns to zone as much land as possible for retail or commercial uses, with the hopes of landing sales tax generators, even in cases where the demand for retail simply isn't there.
  - d. Some of the commercially zoned land is not viable for commercial uses, since commercial uses are paying a higher share of the overall taxes in local communities (not just Lafayette), and because a lot of retail spending is going online.
  - e. There are inequities in the tax system, in that a property that is well suited for development, but currently being used for agricultural purposes, is assessed very little in taxes, whereas car washes and other small retail parcels pay much higher taxes.
  - f. Online shopping presents a fiscal issue for local jurisdictions. The shipment of goods to local residents from out of state does not result in sales tax for the local jurisdiction. Furthermore, the prevalence of vehicles shipping goods to local residents contributes to traffic congestion.
  - g. One of the attendees noted that he is seeing more service tenants, as opposed to retail tenants, in his area and around town. This change results in the collection of less sales tax for the city.
  - h. Lafayette needs to detach the discussion of what a "strong economy" means, from the question of taxes. The overall economy can be strong, but the fiscal position of the city could be less sustainable (if less tax revenue is collected).
6. Discussion of local retail market
- a. The retail market along the Highway 36 corridor has really struggled, as more retail has moved to the I-25 corridor, to the east.

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- b. Lafayette cannot change the trend toward having more retail online, and not in brick and mortar stores. The question is, how can Lafayette look forward and proactively position it for the changes to come? How can Lafayette position itself for the shift to online retail so that it can sustain a strong economy?
  - c. Overall, having more office space and employment in Lafayette would help to provide more people in town, during the day, to support local retailers and restaurants.
  - d. The development of the CTC employment center in Louisville has had a positive impact on Lafayette. The loss of Storage Tek hurt the local area, however.
7. Discussion of challenges in developing housing
- a. The permit fees in Lafayette are very expensive and make it difficult to feasibly develop housing.
  - b. The challenges people face in finding affordable housing is a result of the overall job growth in the local area.
  - c. All of the residential housing permits (a total of 1,200 over a six year period) were allocated even before the six year period began. The current system for allocating housing permits will go to a public vote again in 2023.
  - d. Housing needs to change in form to work better in Lafayette. The designs that work well for seniors, for example (like single level living, low-maintenance living), would work well for other types of people seeking out housing. Developing smaller homes would also help provide housing for a wider range of people.
  - e. The growth in employment in the region is driving the shortage in housing. A region could try to solve the issue by restricting the number of jobs, but this of course would be controversial.
8. Discussion of potential office uses
- a. The workplace is changing, and more and more people are not going to a traditional office to work. One of the attendees thought that co-working would work well in Lafayette, due to the lifestyle in the community, and its amenities (such as trails and walkability).

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- b. Home businesses contribute to the economy (or, people officing out of their homes)
9. Challenges to developing projects in Lafayette
- a. The planning staff is good to work with, but the city's codes for development and building are outdated.
  - b. The development and building codes, by their nature, are not keeping up with changes in the local economy.
  - c. The municipal code needs more flexibility to allow for more innovative ideas and processes for development.
  - d. The uncertainty of the development approval process scares off people who are considering doing projects in Lafayette. The city staff only gets to react to projects it sees. Many projects don't ever get to the table due to the perceptions of difficulty in developing. One of the participants noted that a city ideally would want to attract lots of ideas and interest for projects, and then select the best ones.
  - e. One challenge in many Front Range communities is that professionally trained staff are repeatedly challenged by officials, and this process drives uncertainty regarding projects.
  - f. One of the participants indicated that he is an advocate of having strong staff leadership in shaping the development process.
  - g. The overall development process can be very long in Lafayette (but, the development process can be long in every community along the Front Range). With the growth restrictions in place (for residential permits), the process has to often wait for some time to begin. However, many land owners in the local area are able to be more patient with the process.