

LAFAYETTE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PLANNING COMMISSION / COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) WORKSHOP FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Summary of Discussion

Introductions

- All of the attendees at the workshop (from the PC and CAC) introduced themselves and their backgrounds in the Lafayette community.

Attendees:

City Staff: Jeff Brasel, Jana Easley

Consultants: Britt Palmberg and Brian Mooney (RICK), Francisco Miraval (Project Vision 21)

Planning Commission: Darcia Thomas (chair), Doug Godfrey, Joseph Smith, Alison Fischer, Frank Phillips

CAC members: Guy Higgins, Karen Norback, Adam Gianola, Dave Heinrich, Debbie Cook, Lynn Riedel, Amy DeBay

Workshop Ground Rules

- The consultant reviewed the ground rules for the meeting, including the use of Zoom and the Spanish channel for Zoom that is available. There will be a period for comments from the general public near the end of the meeting.

Introductory Presentation by Consultant Team, Questions, and Discussion

- **Review of Project Progress to Date**
- **Key Takeaways from Community Input**
- **Review of Draft Table of Contents for Plan Document**
- **Anticipated Schedule**
- The consultants reviewed this background information on the status of the Comprehensive Plan and also briefly reviewed the Draft Framework Map that remains

online for comment. The online mapping tool has received several thousand visits and hundreds of unique comments since going online in June. The online mapping tool will close on Friday, March 5th.

Comments from the group regarding the background information and map:

- Guy Higgins indicated that the plan will have a long horizon and the intent is for the plan to ensure over a long period of time. In many cases, the definitions or meanings of planning terms change over time. Guy suggested that a glossary of planning terms be included with the document. For example, the word “equity” could be defined. The consultant indicated that including a glossary was a great idea.
- Doug Godfrey asked whether the plan would have any performance criteria. Will the plan include a mechanism for evaluation, and will there be evaluations of performance at certain timeframes? The consultant indicated that the plan will include key metrics, across different planning topics, and that Comprehensive Plans normally include language to suggest that the community revisit performance metrics on a regular basis (yearly, every few years, etc.). The plan can state that metrics will be reviewed on an annual basis, as part of a routine discussion led by the Planning Commission.
- Regarding the Framework Map, Karen Norback indicated the map should be very clear regarding which lands are open space, and which lands are eligible for development. Many people in town assume that if a piece of ground is currently vacant, this means that it will remain as open space in the future. Karen suggested an idea that a map could be provided on the website for the Comprehensive Plan that would provide the status of every parcel on the map. Integrating the Comprehensive Plan with GIS would be helpful in this regard.
- Guy Higgins suggested that the plan needs to be flexible as conditions change, but also indicated that the plan should be clear regarding where flexibility may be possible in the future, so that community members aren’t surprised in the future.
- Lynn Riedel indicated that City-owned open space should be clearly marked on the maps so that the community understands which lands are truly ‘open space’. The details concerning the various open space parcels and their classifications should be included in the final maps, regarding ownership and designation status as open space. The plan needs to identify which open spaces will remain pristine (without trails). The maps of open spaces need to be understandable and informational.
- Joseph Smith indicated that the plan needs to delineate the difference between programmed open space and passive, non-improved open space. Karen agreed with Joseph’s comment and indicated that a map denoting ownership and partnerships (lands held jointly with other jurisdictions or agencies) for different open spaces may be important to include in the final documents. A separate map, derived from maps included in the PROS plan, may be useful.

- The group mentioned that some of the best areas in Lafayette are on the “edges” of open space, including little pockets on the edges of transit and open space.

Discussion of Table of Contents:

- An attendee asked whether Environmental Sustainability will be woven as an umbrella theme. The consultants indicated that it would be an umbrella theme, but certain sections of the document would logically focus more on environmental sustainability.
- Frank Phillips inquired about the meaning of the term “Eclectiflex”. The consultant indicated that the term reflected the traditional industrial nature of the southeast side of Lafayette that may transition into a mixture of retail and even some live/work residential land uses in some areas, over time. This area could evolve into a “suburban RINO”.
- Alison Fischer indicated that she appreciated how fleshed out the Table of Contents had become since the last meeting.
- Doug Godfrey asked whether social and environmental justice issues have come up in community outreach. He asked where these two topics would reside within the Table of Contents. He asked about what our research indicates concerning areas of social and environmental injustice in Lafayette so we can identify it and make sure it doesn’t happen in the future. The consultant indicated that the content within Chapter 3 is intended to serve as a bridge, connecting the history of Lafayette (which has relevance to social and environmental justice) to the action in the plan for the future. The consultant added that the plan will ensure that disadvantaged communities are not located near environmentally compromised areas in Lafayette. General Plans in California have a strong emphasis on social and environmental justice and the Lafayette plan can draw from content in planning from that state, if needed.
- Doug Godfrey asked whether the plan would go beyond reviewing the history of Lafayette, since pioneering days, to discuss how the area originally belonged to Native Americans and was stolen from this group. The consultant indicated that the plan would include content about Native American lands but that it may not necessarily lead to a particular policy within the document. The consultant indicated that discussion of Native American lands in the Lafayette area can tie with content about appreciating the land and natural resources in the area. The Comprehensive Plan can lead with content discussing the history of the land and the conservation of natural resources in the Lafayette area.
- Dave Heinrich asked about the idea of mixed use and how the plan could perhaps allow for a mixture of land uses within the existing framework of the community. For example, could the plan allow for the integration of neighborhood businesses areas within existing neighborhoods, similar to the pattern in a number of older neighborhoods in Denver? Are uses identified as “home occupations” in the current zoning language

expansive enough to accommodate the mixture of working and living areas that has become more common in the COVID world? Could the plan allow for uses such as food trucks or food stands within residential areas?

- City Councilor Walton asked the individuals on the PC to share how they would be using the Comprehensive Plan as commissioners. It would be great to hear the frustrations and wishes of the Planning Commissioners as we move toward finalization of the plan. She wants to make sure everything is on the table for consideration.
- Joseph Smith indicated that HOA rules may prevent the integration of commercial uses in residential neighborhoods.

Discussion – Topical Gaps in Comprehensive Plan

- The consultant reviewed a series of topical gaps in the current planning program, based upon a review of content and input to date, over the last few months.
- It is important to remember that Lafayette cannot grow its way out of a number of issues. With this in mind, what should the city’s policies be with regard to growth and development? How would the policies of the plan differ if they were viewed through a growth lens? It would help for the plan to inform the discussion with data. Jeff Brasel indicated that the consultant team and the City are currently working on a quantitative analysis that would outline the underutilized properties in the community and why they are underutilized. This information should help inform the discussions. A good inventory of non-built or underbuilt spaces will help with the discussions regarding housing, for example.
- Alison Fischer indicated that the plan needs a map of underutilized parcels and spoke to the vacancies present in already-built parcels around town. It is important to distinguish between “infill” development (which relates to the development of vacant parcels surrounded by other built parcels) and revitalization, which involves the repurposing or redeveloping or already-built space in Lafayette.
- Alison Fischer also indicated that it was important to discuss age-in-place opportunities in Lafayette as part of the plan.
- Doug Godfrey asked whether any content in the plan discusses how the community needs to better take care of what it already has (in terms of infrastructure and facilities). He asked whether the plan would discuss how uses that we already have in Lafayette could be transformed into another use. There is an important connection between infrastructure and housing, in that both call for communities to take care of what they already have.
- Dave Heinrich asked whether the plan has an ongoing list of the types of businesses that are missing in Lafayette. The plan needs to speak to how infill development should look. It is important to define infill development as regenerative in nature.
- A key question concerns how Lafayette can help bring investment to under-invested housing areas.

- There have been shifts in demand for office and retail space that may suggest conversion to other uses. Some religious organizations around the country have begun to explore using their surplus parking (next to churches for example) to provide the housing that is so very needed by local communities.

Housing Gaps

- Doug Godfrey indicated that strategies for mobile homes should encourage opportunities that work best for the people who live in mobile homes.
- Guy Higgins indicated that the housing affordability issue is a regional issue and anything Lafayette does on its own isn't going to have much of an effect on housing prices. Guy recommended that housing strategies included in the plan should take into account current ownership of homes and should treat residents fairly across the board, including residents of mobile homes. How can the plan preserve mobile home parks? How can the plan help residents as much as possible? How, for example, can ownership of mobile homes be transferred to the people who are actually living in mobile homes? We do not want the plan to cause unintended consequences. The key question is how do start to enhance and invest in mobile home communities in Lafayette?
- Darcia Thomas asked about whether the plan should allow for tiny homes. For example, should the city allow mobile home parks to evolve into tiny home communities? Should we allow tiny homes in other areas around town, such as underutilized parking lots? How can the plan encourage having more shared spaces and common areas for housing developments?
- Karen Norback indicated that the current comprehensive plan from 2003 actually already speaks to mobile home park preservation, but progress has not been made. Many of the mobile home communities are owned by out of state owners. The city could provide language in terms of helping with transactions to allow occupants of mobile homes to purchase their lot. The new comprehensive plan should look to strengthen language protecting mobile home communities and mobile home residents.
- Dave Heinrich indicated that the plan should speak to opportunities to promote co-housing around Lafayette.

Typologies on the Framework Map

- Karen Norback suggested that the plan should draw from the conclusions of the Livable Lafayette effort with regard to mobile home housing.
- Frank Phillips indicated that he had experience in mobile home housing issues. One issue is that mobile homes are regulated at the state level, and not the local level. We need to examine how this affects the mobile home issues in Lafayette.
- Alison Fischer suggested that we do not need to reinvent the wheel, and that we should look to the Livable Lafayette effort for guidance on mobile home issues.

- Adam Gianola indicated that certain aspects of state law treat some types of residential areas as commercial uses. Do we need to worry about commercial areas in Lafayette converting to residential uses over time?
- Karen Norback indicated that Old Town most certainly should be distinguished on the Framework Map. We should look to previous work on Old Town as an inspiration, and the planning for Old Town from a few years ago may require some fine tuning.
- Darcia Thomas agreed that Old Town should be called out on maps. She pointed to previous work on the Old Town overlay as a basis for the conversation, for the new plan. She indicated it was critical to hold on to the residential fabric of Old Town. Language from the previous Old Town plans should be integrated into the document.

Multi-Modal Planning

- Darcia Thomas indicated that multi-modal planning is one of the significant gripes of planning commissioners. The plan needs to provide guidance on how individual projects fit into the larger context of the City. We need to have a better sense of which corridors will serve as our main thoroughfares in the future, and how the streets in Lafayette will evolve in the future. How can we emphasize other modes of travel?
- Doug Godfrey asked whether automobile travel would remain the main mode in Lafayette or whether we would begin to emphasize different modes of transportation.
- Dave Heinrich asked about how mobility goals in the plan would tie to the City's budget. It is important for the City to actually fund multi-modal improvements, and follow through on its commitments.

Urban Design Guidance

- The group thought that certain areas on the Framework Map were a bit undefined, such as the Eclectiflex area.
- Dave Heinrich indicated that promoting the connectivity of streets and avoiding fractured street networks was important. The plan needs to emphasize the broader connectivity of streets within the community.
- Doug Godfrey indicated that we should be careful to not just focus on street connectivity. It is important to emphasize connectivity in terms of social interactions, trails, and other modes of transportation that may be better for connectivity than streets or roads. The Old Town area may benefit from the creation of a subarea plan, because the level of detail needed for Old Town may not be feasible within the overall Comprehensive Plan. The necessary detail for Old Town may be more appropriate in a subarea plan.
- Karen Norback agreed that subarea plans should be completed after the Comprehensive Plan. The City would have seen much better development in the past if subarea plans had been in place. Transitions between different areas (residential versus commercial

for example) are very important, and the current development code doesn't address transitions very well. We need to explore what transitions would mean between areas.

- As a policy, the plan should promote increased awareness in the community of the various partnerships at work in preserving open space around Lafayette.
- Darcia Thomas indicated that the subarea plans should include architectural components to help prevent development occurring in too much of an eclectic manner, that in the end leaves the community looking disjointed. The new code should ensure that developments won't break the rules for development and that the bar is raised for development. The comprehensive plan should set the stage so that the development code can be written with more detailed tools on what is and is not allowed in development.
- Adam Gianola said the plan should emphasize connectivity and should ensure that roads are not the only focus of connectivity. If the community had been developed differently in the past, then roads may not have evolved into the main focus of connectivity.

Opinions Regarding Graphic Styles for Urban Design Guidance

- Doug Godfrey indicated that he liked the graphical birds eye view shown in the examples. It is important to represent different cultures and have diversity in precedent pictures. He likes the call outs featured on some of the graphics. The plan will need to establish a balance between showing architectural vernacular and showing images that are more accessible to the public. The graphics should be readable and digestible.
- Adam Gianola indicated that the birds eye views that include aerial photos are hard to read.
- Darcia Thomas indicated that it would be helpful to show graphics at different scales. The plan needs both idealistic and neutral views of various components. She likes the street image graphic with "pop outs".
- Joseph Smith said he likes the call out features in the example graphics but would rather use photographs rather than graphics.

Other Gaps in the Plan

- Darcia Thomas indicated that there is a disconnect between the community's desires and City's financial ability to take care of these desired items. There is a gap between the needs for open space, amenities, and infrastructure and the financial resources of the City. There is a gap in conveying to the public how much money Lafayette has for these different areas.
- Doug Godfrey indicated that it is important for the plan to emphasize taking care of what we already have, as opposed to emphasizing new development. Lafayette already has significant infrastructure that requires maintenance.

- Adam Gianola likes a theme that emphasizes Lafayette supporting Lafayette (through local businesses). He wants to break down the barriers between Old Town and various HOA areas around town and would like to promote the branding of Lafayette to include all geographic areas in the community.
- Karen Norback indicated that discussion regarding how to pay for improvements, taking care of what we already have, and financing improvements can all be tied to the theme of shopping local. The plan needs an educational section that talks about the importance of shopping local and having small businesses survive in Lafayette.
- Lynn Riedel suggested that the plan should emphasize open spaces and having development buffers and wildlife corridors. This content should also be integrated into the new development code. The development code for Loveland is a good example to review in considering ideas for Lafayette.
- Doug Godfrey suggested that HOAs may serve as an impediment to making various areas around Lafayette feel like they are part of the city. There may be opportunities for subarea plans to articulate how the various HOA areas could be integrated with the rest of the community.
- Darcia Thomas agrees with the suggestion to shop local. She also noted that property taxes in Lafayette are comparatively low, and it may be worth discussing how the funding for the city has not kept up with the needs of the community.
- Guy Higgins suggested that the plan needs concrete metrics. It should identify barriers to implementation and how much improvements will cost. Importantly, the plan needs to set priorities.
- Doug Godfrey wondered whether the plan should discuss the impact COVID has had on the community. It could also discuss the topic of resiliency and the lessons learned from the COVID experience.
- Guy Higgins suggested that the plan should discuss resiliency and what it means. This is a great time to learn from COVID and the community should learn from COVID, whether or not this content ends up in the final plan.

High Level Review of Plan Document Template

- The consultant reviewed the template for the document and also highlighted the content already written for Chapter 4.
- The vision statement needs to emphasize creativity more directly.
- The photos in Chapter 4 should be photos of Lafayette.
- As a general comment, there are concerns that art has been left out of the chapter.
- The group will need some more time to digest the content in Chapter 4.

Comment from members of the public in attendance

- Claire Scott, of the Immaculate Conception School Justice Ministry, thanked the City for providing translation services for the meeting. Her group is working on the mobile home issue and strongly encourages the development of mobile home zoning. Her group wants to prevent the redevelopment of mobile home housing into higher priced housing.
- Andrew from the audience indicated that bike lanes should be considered in the plan. Providing Bus Rapid Transit is also an important equity issue in Lafayette.

Key Takeaways, Preview of Next Workshop (Tentative Date: April 8th)

- The next workshop will revisit the gaps discussed in tonight's meeting and will bring forth additional graphics and content for consideration by the group.

Close of Workshop