

Lafayette Comprehensive Plan

Planning Commission and Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Workshop

April 8, 2021

Discussion of Availability of Land in Lafayette

- Jeff Brasel (City) presented slides outlining the calculations (made by City staff and its GIS vendor) concerning the acreages of vacant lands, both within the City limits and in the areas located between the City limits and the proposed Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), as displayed on the Draft Framework Map and the project website.
- Jeff Brasel reviewed the key takeaways from the analysis with the Planning Commission and CAC.

Comments and Discussion with the Group (Availability of Land)

- The availability of Broadband is an important part of the jobs discussion in Lafayette for the future. Voters voted for broadband initiatives in Longmont. Having good broadband is an important element in promoting job growth and entrepreneurship.
- The plan should explore how to promote better broadband, on the part of the City, or with community partners. It is important to explore ways to have better broadband, both in undeveloped areas around town and in existing areas around town.
- Guy Higgins noted that, in terms of promoting broadband availability, it is important to not constrain competition. The City should pursue an approach that does not lock Lafayette in with only one provider.
- Guy Higgins asked whether there is a way to interpolate from data concerning the availability of land to the affordability of land. He noted that allocating resources means considering different trade-offs.
- Dave Heinrich asked how we can use the data concerning the availability of land for the overall Comprehensive Plan.
- Jeff Brasel asked the group whether the current version of the Draft Framework Map has the right ratios of different land uses. It may make sense, for example, to have more areas considered as “housing areas” compared to “Eclectiflex” or “Adaptable Commercial”.
- Jeff Brasel asked the group whether the current type of growth exhibited in Lafayette is the right kind of growth.
- Commissioner Michelle Stephens asked the group whether it would make sense to outline different scenarios or alternatives, based upon the data outlined concerning the availability of land. How can the Comprehensive Plan drive the future condition of Lafayette?

- The plan should articulate the different kinds of places desired around Lafayette. It is important to consider how the boundaries of the Urban Growth Boundary influence the future, as well as how cooperative planning with other jurisdictions influences planning.
- The plan needs to articulate the things that we want to see in the future and avoid what we do not want.
- Commissioner Doug Godfrey asked whether there was a regional goal with regards to housing. He noted that as a community, we still have a considerable amount to do to reach our housing goals. Do we have enough land to achieve our goals with respect to affordable housing?
- Dave Heinrich noted that by examining the County's affordable housing goals, we can arrive at the numbers that we actually need to achieve, from a housing perspective. He indicated that truly addressing how important housing is, in the Comprehensive Plan, would be very beneficial.
- Jeff Brasel noted that the project team can examine the county's goals for housing and report back to the group at the next meeting, as this would entail a pretty simple calculation. Jeff also asked whether there would be opportunities to convert existing housing to affordable housing. He noted that the project team can perform limited calculations at this point and report back to the group.
- Karen Norback indicated that the Livable Lafayette effort already completed a lot of work concerning affordable housing. She indicated that the issue is not about building more housing, but instead it is about changing what the community already has for housing. She indicated that Livable Lafayette projected that Lafayette would provide 10 percent of the affordable housing units in Boulder County.
- Karen Norback also asked about the desired population of the community, at full build-out. She indicated that it would be good to articulate "this is where the community will be, at full build-out". She indicated that the community should have a discussion on this as part of the Comprehensive Plan effort.
- Jeff Brasel indicated that the existing growth management program (which limits the number of residential building permits) provides a hard number for the capacity for the community. It would be good to show what the current projects in the development program would produce (in terms of population and the rate of population growth). Jeff indicated that it may be fruitful to have a conversation about what the final population number should be for Lafayette.
- Lynn Riedel noted that the analysis of vacant lands (and eventual build-out of various lands around Lafayette) should take floodplain areas out of the calculation (in terms of development capacity).
- Commissioner Joseph Smith commented that, ideally, the jobs offered in Lafayette would match the housing available for potential employees working in these communities. He wondered how other communities in Boulder County are meeting various housing goals.
- Adam Gianola asked whether the water and infrastructure capacity was sufficient to accommodate potential new construction, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Jeff Brasel noted that the data generated from the analysis of available lands in Lafayette and surrounding areas could drive investments made by the City in water treatment, wastewater treatment, etc.
- In terms of new development, Karen Norback indicated that the City should be able to say "no" to particular projects for various reasons (x, y, z, etc.). Jeff Brasel indicated that, ideally, the City would instead say "yes" to particular projects for reaching goals or objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Plan (x, y, z, etc.).

- Adam Gianola worries about the levels of detail that would be sufficient to include in the Comprehensive Plan. It would be good to specify the levels of guidance that we would like to see in the development code, for example.

Discussion of Urban Design Guidance

Britt Palmberg of RICK, along with Brian Mooney of RICK, presented highlights of draft concepts for urban design guidance for the different typologies to be included in the Comprehensive Plan, and paused along the way to gather comments and questions from the group, as outlined below. Britt emphasized that there isn't a "right answer" or "wrong answer" to providing urban design guidance. He also noted that the information shared tonight represents just a first pass at urban design guidance for different typologies around Lafayette. Input from the Planning Commission, the CAC, and the broader community will shape the final version of urban design guidance to be included in the Comprehensive Plan document.

- Commissioner Godfrey asked whether we really anticipated that much change happening along Public Road. The group discussed how it would be important to include the right levels of detail for the Old Town area. Another key question would concern how to guide new projects to better fit in with what the Public Road area already has. Commissioner Godfrey asked about what is really missing in the Public Road area. He thought it would be good to provide guidance, for new construction projects in terms of how they would better fit in to the Old Town district. It will be important to merge the existing fabric of Public Road with new construction.
- Jeff Brasel indicated that "adaptive re-use" is perhaps an important principle to articulate in the plan.
- Guy Higgins indicated that the downtown district in Freeport, Maine provides a great example for Lafayette. He noted that while the Comprehensive Plan is looking at a 20 year horizon, the world is constantly changing. He thought that the plan should not be so detailed that it fails, in terms of practicality, as conditions change over time.
- It will be important to emphasize how what is built new should fit with what is already present in Lafayette.
- For the Eclectiflex category, we should add "light manufacturing" as a potential land use, as light manufacturing would fit well with what is already developed in the Eclectiflex areas.
- It may make sense to not have tall buildings located next to official open spaces. It may make more sense to promote a more gradual blending of land uses. For example, a development could include transitions from a four story building to nearby open space areas.
- The Lafayette community has a long list of needs, but only a finite amount of land available.
- Commissioner Godfrey asked whether we could more intentionally marry residential uses with other kinds of uses, within the Eclectiflex areas. Live/work units could serve as great intentional uses in this part of town.
- A member of the group commented that they liked the flexibility of the Adaptable Commercial category but were nervous about including residential within the category.

Discussion of Guidance for “Housing Areas” and the Mobile Home Transect

- Guy Higgins indicated that he likes the concept of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) but worries about the parking requirements associated with ADUs. He indicated that parking should be considered when planning for ADUs within housing areas.
- Guy Higgins also indicated that he was leery of tiny homes and wondered whether they were a fad.
- Adam Gianola wondered whether tiny homes could be included within mobile home areas. For example, could someone develop a “tiny home park” as opposed to a “mobile home park”? He asked the question whether tiny homes could be included within the mobile home transect.
- Commissioner Stephens asked whether a senior housing project could be combined with community facilities, as well as tiny homes, to complement the offerings of a senior housing project.
- Commissioner Godfrey commented that the orientation of housing within the “housing areas” transect (as outlined in the urban design guidance table) looked traditional or old school. He indicated that it needed to be more intentional in the layout of different housing areas, to achieve plan goals. Jeff Brasel responded that it may make sense to frame the language concerning housing areas in a different way to make housing areas more cohesive and integrated. Commissioner Godfrey indicated that it will be important to mention the quality of architecture, in formulating policies and recommendations for housing areas in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Karen Norback asked how tiny homes could be integrated into the broader community. Jeff Brasel responded that it may make sense to orient tiny homes in groupings of four units (four packs) in order to better integrate them into the broader community.
- Kim Dugan asked how the plan could provide flexibility to allow for the integration of tiny homes into single family areas. She indicated that she understands the bigger picture idea behind providing flexibility for different types of housing, in areas where certain units are not normally seen.
- In terms of the mobile home transect, the plan needs to talk about ownership of individual lots (by residents) as a separate topic.
- Adam Gianola indicated that there is concern about mobile home parks being removed around Lafayette in the future. It is important to explore ways to prevent a property owner from kicking all of the mobile home residents out of the community. It may make sense to have a specific zone designated for mobile homes or tiny homes.
- Jeff Brasel noted that it is important to orient housing areas around passive and active open spaces, as opposed to only around streets.
- In terms of planning for streets, the plan should also discuss the underground infrastructure of streets and how they can help spur equity, inclusivity, and other important tenets of the plan.

Discussion of Next Steps

- The discussion of urban design guidance will continue at the next workshop held between the Planning Commission and CAC.

- The project team will send out the Matrix of urban design guidance, for the various transects, to the group, for review. The group can take time between now and the next workshop to review the content and formulate additional thoughts and questions.
- The project team will send out an update regarding the project schedule, as a follow up to this workshop.