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LAFAYETTE

Planners propose reinventing downtown Lafayette

Posted: May 9, 2013 6:47 PM by Alex Labat
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Downtown Lafayette: A place full of good food, good music, and good times. The only thing that Downtown Lafayette isn't full of, however, places to live.

Something that CEO of Lafayette's Downtown Development Authority Nathan Norris knows firsthand.

"We have zero supply, almost zero supply of residential offerings downtown. I moved to town to work on helping the downtown, and "I" couldn't even find a place to live downtown", says Norris.

He has only been in Lafayette for a couple of months, and has already set into motion big plans for the future of Downtown Lafayette, but says to look to the future, you have to acknowledge the past.

Norris says, "I'm not coming here with a blank slate of any sort. There has been a huge amount of work that has preceded, especially as it relates to getting people to come to downtown to enjoy it. What we don't have, they we're going to be focused on in the future, is how to get more people to actually live downtown and not just visit downtown".

He has recognized the lack of space in the downtown area, and says he intends to build upon the years of work and development already laid downtown, taking it to the next stage in it's transformation.

So how would that transformation look? Or even work?
Currently, out of all of the homes currently built downtown, 90% of them are 50 years old or older. Norris's solution is taking available space in the downtown area, like this parking space for instance, and through multiple phases, making the space functional and beneficial to downtown.

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The first change would be taking away eyesores, like power lines and open parking spaces, and sprucing them up, much like what you see currently downtown. The next step is to add housing in available areas and spaces, and building parking infrastructures so that visitors, businesses, and residents have a place to park.

Finally, once the downtown area has been expanded and enough residents move in, shops similar to this one would provide residents with the amenities they would normally need in their homes.

According to Norris, downtown housing will be affordable because the everyday amenities that prospective homeowners are looking for would be provided by downtown itself.

"You can have a smaller place. You don't need a gym inside your house because you've got the Crossfit gym right here. You don't need a café next to your kitchen because you've got them down here. You don't need a huge kitchen because you've got 25 different restaurants where you can go eat. So the idea is you can get affordability through having smaller spaces that currently aren't available", says Norris.

Those looking for a place to live downtown won't have to wait long, as Norris hopes to have housing built in the area as soon as possible. "I'd like to see some of our first projects actually be in a position where you can move into them within two years", says Norris.

Now if you'd like to have your say as to what you'd like to see downtown, you'll soon have your chance to do so.

There will be two open house forums held May 14th and 15th so that the public can have their say on LCG's Comprehensive Plan which includes the development of Downtown Lafayette.

Attendees will be able to cast their vote on one of four plans for future growth. The first is multi-Center growth, which involved developing neighborhoods around town hubs like Downtown Lafayette.

The second option is balanced growth, which seeks to balance the development of Lafayette by focusing attention on developing areas north of the downtown area.

The third option is corridor growth, expanding neighborhoods and public transportation along some of Lafayette's key roads, expanding bike lanes and sidewalks.

The final choice - is to vote on no plan at all, meaning any development in Lafayette would be reactionary and only called for when needed.



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