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Development Projects Look for Fall Approval

By Sophie Braccini



Story poles along Moraga Way help the town and its residents visualize a planned development. Photo Sophie Braccini

to make a preliminary recommendation to the planning commission July 14 for the Moraga Center Homes project, which the commission will review later in the fall. The project proposes a total of 36 units comprised of different housing types - attached town homes located within the central portion of the site; six duplexes, and one triplex facing Country Club Drive. The home sizes are between 1,800 and 2,400 square feet and will have three or four bedrooms; what the developer calls luxury medium density housing. The plan includes a 10,460 square-foot pocket park located along Laguna Creek.

During an earlier review, design review board members expressed support for the project but asked for additional details to increase the visual appeal of the project as seen from Moraga Way.

The fire district wrote a letter in June expressing concerns regarding the potential conflict between fire training operations conducted at station 41 and residents. Training exercises can create temporary noise, unexpected water off-site, and visual impacts from equipment, ladders and personnel that could be disruptive. MOFD recommended that disclosures make these potential impacts clear to prospective buyers.

The second project, a Signature Properties development at 489 Moraga Road, proposes 18 single-family, high-density homes on a two-acre lot across from the Rheem Shopping Center. Signature Homes has been working with town staff and the planning commission since 2011 in a number of study sessions. The challenge for commissioners was to visualize the impact on the scenic corridor just by looking at maps and drawings; the story poles materialized it for them. According to town staff, the project will be formally reviewed by the commission on July 21 and could be approved before the end of the year.

It is hard to miss the striking story poles recently erected along Moraga Way, next to the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's station 41, which represent the 36 units of the Moraga Center Homes project proposed by developer City Ventures. On the other side of town, more story poles have stood for weeks across from the Rheem Shopping Center on Moraga Road, where Signature Properties wants to build 18 single-family homes.

According to senior planner Ellen Clark, the story poles are there to illustrate the heights of the proposed buildings. The little flags added along Moraga Way by the developer suggest the project's outline, and passers-by can also envision the massing and depth of the setback. "This is a town requirement for any new construction," explained Clark. "It is a useful exercise to start the discussion; people see it and it officializes what the project will look like."

Moraga's design review board was scheduled

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