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Implementing the Moraga Center Specific Plan

By Sophie Braccini



Creating space along the creek Rendering provided

approach. Final regulation is not expected before the second part of the year.

Large boards were propped up in the town chamber at 335 Rheem showing schematics and pictures of what Moraga Center, the larger area around the Safeway shopping center, would look like. The town chose consultant Opticos Design to develop the zoning. The study is funded by a grant from the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.

The renderings included the definition of eight different zoning areas, each with its own set of rules, following guiding principles. A town square will be created at the intersection of the extension of School Street and another street crossing the creek. That relatively dense commercial mixed-use area will have pedestrian access, will include a large public space and will connect the different zones. Along the creek, a bike and/or walking path will be designed and the retail and housing will be smaller scale and detached. The proposed new zoning also addresses how the existing shopping center would be remodeled, adding retail space with defined setbacks along Moraga Way and Moraga Road, and locating parking behind these new buildings.

The public was able to look at the drawings for a half hour before the commissioners started their discussion. Members of the Bruzzone family, the main property owner of that area, came to see the plan, since they were not formerly consulted during the zoning study. When the Moraga Center Specific Plan was approved, with their active participation, the town was not able to reach a development agreement with the property owners.

As the discussions started, Planning Commissioner Ferenc Kovac asked if Opticos was taking public transportation into account and where commuters taking the bus would leave their cars. More than one person addressed the issue of whether there is adequate parking, noting that there is no parking problem in Moraga so far, and that no one wants to create one. Design Review Board Vice-Chair John Glover also asked if access for delivery vehicles was included in the plan, since it did not seem to be the case. And Commissioner Steve Woehleke asked if any consideration to cost and economic optimization had been given while drafting these plans. The answer was no.

Dave Bruzzone said parts of this plan made sense, but he asked where all the money would come from to remodel and create the new infrastructure envisioned. His mother, Joan Bruzzone, added that they, too, had dreams and that she did not like the fact that this was proceeding as if they did not have any rights.

The board members and commissioners indicated that they liked the direction the consultant was going, the creation of a real town center, addressing the look along the scenic corridor, matching zoning with the topography, but that more work needed to be done to get this right. All noted that the consultant should pay attention to issues of traffic and parking.

As longtime resident Dale Walwark noted, many studies have been done in Moraga and nothing ever happens. The consultant concluded that this plan was there for the long-term guidance of future developments.

A review of the MCSP implementation project will be discussed at 7 p.m. Feb. 10 at the Moraga Town Council Chambers.

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