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Country Club Questions City Ventures

By Sophie Braccini

A proposed multi-family housing development along Moraga Way recently met with strong opposition from Moraga Country Club. The developer, City Ventures Residences, organized a series of information sessions for MCC residents to explain its project, clarify misconceptions and hear concerns.

One such meeting took place July 16. Representatives from City Ventures were quick to point out that the 54 two- and three-story condominiums planned for the vacant lot between Moraga Way and Country Club Drive, with a starting price in the mid \$700,000s, will not be low-income housing. They also explained that this development is not related to Plan Bay Area, a program that has garnered much attention lately.

The project falls under the Moraga Center Specific Plan; approved two years ago, the specific plan allows for the future development of 700 housing units in the vicinity of the Moraga Center.

Residents expressed concerns about the high density of the project and the traffic that will result. "When the Moraga Center Specific Plan was adopted, the cities of Lafayette and Orinda expressed serious concerns about traffic impacts," recalled one MCC resident. "It was explained at the time that the new houses would be for people who are downsizing and not traveling much outside town, students who go to Saint Mary's and local workforce such as police officers or teachers. But now, we are told a very different story by the developer."

In their presentation, City Ventures representatives indicated that the development would be for young families and people downsizing. "Three-story homes do not have a lot of appeal to people who are aging," said another resident. "You should consider single-story homes." All the residents agreed that the developer's forecast of 25 trips per hour at peak times was grossly underestimated. "If you have young families and both people work, you will have 100 trips at commute time," said one resident.

Not enough parking inside the development was also a recurrent theme. "Now, on the other side of Country Club Drive, you already have people parking on the street and housing is much less dense there," commented a concerned resident. "People will park all the way to the putting green!"

"We want to listen and find a way to work with the community," said City Ventures' Phil Kerr, "but this is a privately owned property that has already been approved for a certain type of development at a certain density. If we do not come, then, what will happen?"

The developer is continuing to work with the Planning Department and will provide additional data regarding traffic and parking. The project is likely to appear on planning and design review meeting agendas over the next several months - interested Moragans can check the town calendar for upcoming commission and committee meetings at www.moraga.ca.us/calendar.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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