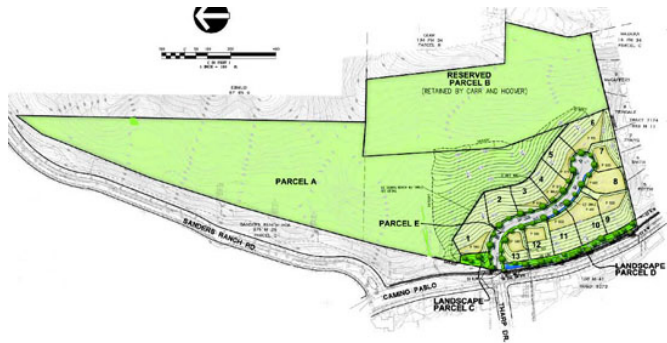


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A Piece of Carr Ranch To Be Annexed

By Sophie Braccini



The proposed development along Camino Pablo Photo provided

the 1990s. "I actually was on the (Moraga) Planning Commission when the Skyview subdivision went through the county and was approved," recalled Councilmember Dave Trotter. "When the folks on the staff and council asked what can we do to have any input in this at all, the county people responded, 'This is not your sphere of influence, so you can get stuffed.' That's basically what they said." Resident Robin Court added, "(The Board of Supervisors) disregarded Moraga's wishes, and even disregarded the recommendation of their own staff coming out of the environmental review process, recommending a much lower density."

After the Skyview development, the town's planning director at the time, Jay Tashiro, expanded the town's sphere of influence that now includes the Carr Ranch property (see the Lamorinda Weekly article: <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0511/Moragas-Sphere-of-Influence.html>).

At the meeting, Contra Costa County planner Sean Tully assured that the town would be consulted if the property was developed under county rules, but he did not impress the audience.

The original owner of the property, John Hoover, also favors annexation. "Skyview's seven acres were sold by our aunt ... and when the 17 Skyview homes were built I was not happy with that project," he said at the meeting. "There was no open space given back to the town; there was no single story house. For that piece of property (the new 24-acre parcel), we want Moraga to be part of what is going to happen. ... We (propose) to put the homes where it wouldn't be as visual; to the left of Tharp Drive it remains all open space." He added that the project would match the size and density of the homes on Tharp Drive (three homes per acre), with sizes between 2,800 and 3,800 square feet. Matt Dobbins and Mark Armstrong, of developer Dobbins Property LLC, confirmed their desire to work with the town. "One of the main differences between the county and the town is design," said Armstrong, who is familiar with the Moraga process. "The county does not have the expertise and design review standards (Moraga has), and that's what is going to make a difference in this project." Dobbins added after the meeting that his company had already been working with staff for a year to design a project everyone could get behind. Project architect Alan Sayles highlighted the vision of what he called a "model development" in Moraga with 13 "green" homes and native landscape.

There are some technicalities, however, that may make the process a little bumpier than one

There seems to be a consensus among developers, town staff and residents that a piece of Carr Ranch the owner wants to develop should be incorporated in the town of Moraga. The 24 acres located between Sanders Ranch and Rancho Laguna Park, with a portion along Camino Pablo, are currently unincorporated and if left as is would be developed under county rules. On Feb. 25 the Moraga Town Council gave direction to proceed with an application to incorporate the lot, a decision resting with the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). When that part is out of the way, many other aspects will have to be discussed, including the zoning of the property.

The town's motivation to annex the property has historic roots. One person on the council remembers the development process of the Skyview property, the first piece of the Carr Ranch next to Rancho Laguna Park that was developed in

might anticipate after hearing the consensus. Skyview could become a hurdle. Skyview will be surrounded on three sides by Moraga land if the Carr Ranch portion is incorporated, creating what LAFCO calls an unincorporated island, and LAFCO does not like islands. If LAFCO objects, Skyview property owners may need to decide if they want to be incorporated into the town.

Quite a number of owners came to the meeting, and their immediate concern did not have to do with incorporation. Those who talked expressed concerns over impacts the proposed development would have on their properties and the town. One of them said that the project was flawed and that they would fight it under whatever jurisdiction it chooses to apply. Other neighbors asked that the developer engage with the Skyview community. Dobbins indicated his desire to reach out to the Skyview community and to discuss reasonable ways to accommodate their requests.

The council had no difficulty deciding that seeking incorporation would be the way to go. But other issues began to surface, such as zoning. Dobbins Property will now initiate a normal development application with the Moraga Planning Department while the town takes steps to formally apply for annexation with LAFCO.

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