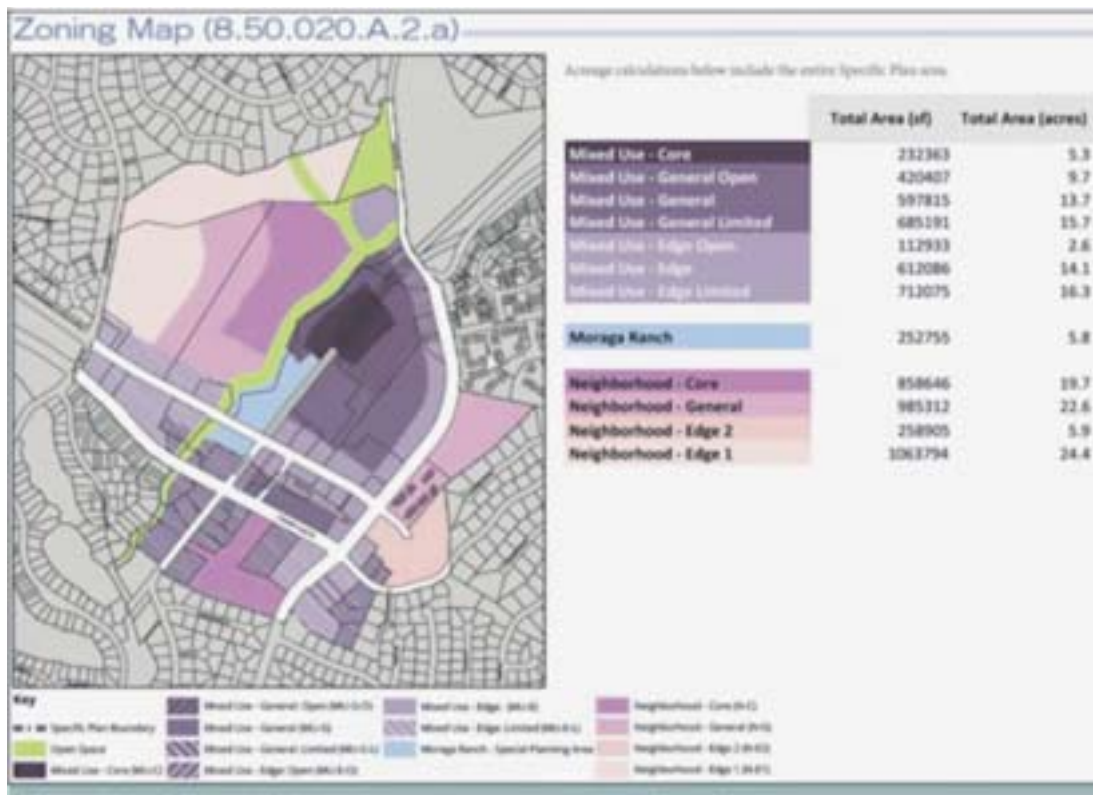


# Controversy over the Moraga Center Specific Plan seems never-ending

By Sophie Braccini



The new zoning for the Moraga Center Specific Plan

Image provided

The town council recently spent several hours discussing the zoning of the Moraga Center Specific Plan. The document approved in 2010 addresses the space located around the crossing of Moraga Road and Moraga Way. As Mayor Teresa Onoda noted, it is appropriate to spend hours debating plan implementation since once built, the plan will forever change the feel of the downtown. Traffic impacts and visual consequences were some of the most discussed aspects by the council members.

The MCSP outlined with large brushstrokes how to build some 600 housing units and add retail and offices in the center of town. But it lacks the details about how to do it. For example, the specifications given to City Ventures to develop Moraga

Town Center Homes condominiums along Moraga Way involve density, but no requirements as far as setbacks or design. What is at stake is crucial: As the town approves zoning rules, it is also approving the future look of Moraga.

The work on the zoning started in 2015. A subcommittee including Onoda and Council Member Dave Trotter has been meeting with consultants from Opticos Design to achieve what is called a form-based zoning code, which defines the aesthetics, as well as specific setbacks, circulation and heights of the entire center.

David Bruzzone and his mother Joan Bruzzone, who own most of the MCSP property, came to the Aug. 9 meeting to express their frustration over what

they see as counterproductive constraints for developers. David Bruzzone said that they would become guinea pigs to these new concepts. He believes that the additional restrictions would make it impossible to build. Joan Bruzzone stated that her family has a plan for the development of the MCSP and that the town is trying to take over their land. Resident Barbara Simpson reminded the council that property rights are a basic right of this country.

Several residents who attended the meeting commented that the 600-plus units planned for the area were too much and would alter the semirural character of the town, while others noted that denser housing in the middle of town would spur economic vitality.

Planning Director Ellen Clark

explained that the MCSP was approved seven years ago after another 10 years of studies and public outreach, and that it was now part of the town's municipal code. She added that changing it today would mean engaging in a very long and costly process.

Some council members declared they had concerns over the consequences of building what is allowed by the plan. Onoda noted that the traffic study that was used to approve the MCSP was based on the assumptions that denser housing would attract downsizing couples or people working in town. She contrasted that expectation with the reality of a development such as Via Moraga that is occupied by families with young children where both parents are working. Council Member Kymberleigh Korpus echoed the traffic concerns, but added that there was no money to order a new study. She stated that the number of units needed to be questioned in light of the traffic impacts.

The proposed zoning presented by Opticos recommends moving the highest density housing to the center of the plan, where the elevation is lower and to design multi-family structures that look like different types of large

single-family homes, up to 45 feet high. The proposal also offers to extend the area limited to three units per acre along Camino Ricardo to make sure that no high buildings are set on the highest elevation grounds now covered by a pear orchard. Vice Mayor Roger Wykle and Council Member Jeanette Fritzky said that a maximum of 45 feet was too high. All agreed that making sure that no tall building be set on higher ground was necessary.

A review of the MCSP is required to create the large green setbacks, to map connecting roads, to create green and civic spaces, and to change the density in some of the areas. The council was asked to decide whether a more substantive revision of the MCSP should be conducted, something that would cost \$250,000 and take over a year to complete.

The council members decided that only minor revisions of the MCSP were necessary and that the design review board and the planning commission would conduct the final work regarding the zoning. All these meetings are open to the public and will be posted on the town's website at moraga.ca.us.

## Hacienda Nights

### Food Trucks, 5-9pm

### 8/25 and 9/8

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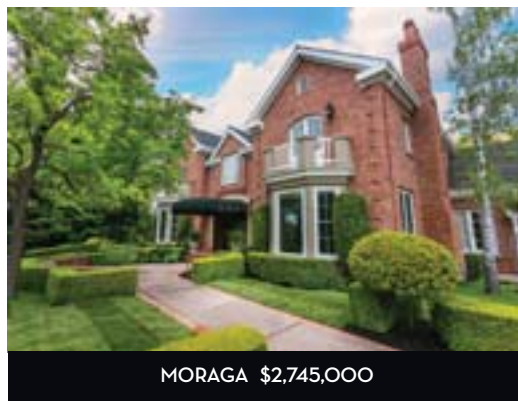
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