



MORAGA

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Town works to get Rheem Park Area designated as a Connected Community Priority Development Area

By Vera Kochan

With the town recently adopting the Sixth Cycle Housing Element for 2023-31, staff hopes to submit an application to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) with the idea that the Rheem Park Area will receive a designation as a Connected Community Priority Development Area (PDA).

According to the Aug. 23 staff report by Moraga Planning Director Afshan Hamid, "A PDA is a policy designation with a focus on planned areas for new homes, jobs, and community amenities. The vision for a PDA is to create a transit-oriented area, addressing important community needs, such as housing supply and local-serving retail opportunities, consistent with the recently adopted sixth cycle Housing Element." It is expected that transit availability near housing will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as Vehicle Miles Traveled.

With the PDA designation the town will be able to pursue future grant funding for the Rheem Center Realm Plan area and more. However, the design-

ation does not require the town to build any housing. That decision would fall to the individual property owners, the largest of which are U.S. Realty Partners and Saint Mary's College.

During Phase I of the Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative, the town rezoned parts of the Rheem Valley Shopping Center in order to allow for multi-family and mixed-use residential housing.

Staff submitted a preliminary application to MTC for review on July 31. With a unanimous approval of the resolution authorizing submittal of a new PDA during the town council's Aug. 23 meeting, Moraga is on the road to a fully processed application.

MTC has criteria for a Connected Community PDA that the Rheem Park Area qualifies for. "First, the entire area is within half mile of a bus stop with peak service of 30 minutes or less and is beyond half mile of transit service that meets the 'high quality transit' criteria," states Hamid in her staff report. "County Connection currently provides Bus Route 6 with two bus stops at Rheem Park Area with less than 30 minutes service during peak hours."

The report continues, "Second, the Rheem Park Area has



Rheem Park Area red

Image courtesy Moraga Planning Dept

been identified as having at least 50% of the area defined as a High Resource or Highest Resource on a California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) map."

The third qualification explains that the town council has already adopted two policies to reduce VMT.

With the coveted PDA designation, town staff will be able

to apply for future state grants which can be used to make the area more attractive to possible investors. The Moraga Shopping Center has recently been awarded two PDA grants. The first, in the amount of \$87,725 will help to fund amendments to the Moraga Center Development Standards. The second grant, totaling \$600,000 will be used for a School Street rede-

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Moraga votes to reject exorbitant storm drain bids

By Vera Kochan

The 2019 Storm Drain Master Plan Addendum set the wheels

in motion for the 2021-23 Annual Storm Drain Repairs Project budgeted at \$1.7 million through the Capital Improvement Project. The town hired Basis of Design consultants to inspect all of the Corrugated Metal Pipes and storm drain-pipes/culverts belonging to Moraga. In November 2022, the town council accepted BOD's reports and recommended the replacement or repair of 22 priority storm drainpipe segments.

According to an Aug. 23 staff report by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp and Associate Civil Engineer Edrienne Aguilar, "On July 11, 2023, construction documents were advertised for bidding. Construction documents show the rehabilitation of nine segments for the base bid and two bid alternatives, prioritized based on current budget limitations and degree of risk failure."

Only two bids were received despite the advertising and were publicly opened on Aug. 3. The Engineer's Estimate for the project was \$771,000. However, both of the incoming bids exceeded that amount by substantial sums. Paulson and Cox Construction, Inc. (Concord) submitted a base bid of \$1,830,260, while the second bid from Kerex Engineering, Inc. (Pleasant Hill) came in considerably lower, but not low enough at \$888,500.

Given the vast differences between bids, staff is led to believe that the bidders might have misinterpreted the scope of the endeavor. The town's description of the project stated, "The work to be performed under this contract in-

cludes, but is not limited to: mobilization; demobilization; traffic control and construction signage; installation of water pollution controls; storm drain pipe cleaning and inspection, storm drain pipe replacement and rehabilitation using Cured-in-Place-Pipe (CIPP) lining and open-cut method, surface improvement replacement as a result of the open-cut storm drain replacement; and all other work as shown on the Plans and as described in the Caltrans Standard Specifications and these Technical Provisions to provide a complete project."

"The town went through an analysis of inspecting 30,000 linear feet of storm drain pipe and came up with a priority list of the pipes, and we're trying to get that project out before the wintertime," explained Knapp during the Aug. 23 Town Council Meeting. "It was a short window, and we put it out to bid trying to make sure that we had everything tight in our plans and specs. Unfortunately, because it was at the end of the construction cycle most companies already have their projects and could not do that in the short time frame, and we didn't have a very large - well, two bidders on the project, and so we're going to take it and look at the budget, repackage it and get it out in a spring time frame of work."

Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda asked, "Is there urgency with the corrugated pipes that we have right now, that you know about?"

Knapp replied, "I think we're in fairly good condition right now, and we'll be addressing it next year."

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Town Council Wednesday, Sept. 13, 6:30 p.m.
Planning Commission: Tuesday, Sept. 19, 6:30 p.m.
Park and Recreation Commission: Tuesday, Oct. 9, 7 p.m.