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## Orchard Supply Hardware closure stuns Moraga employees and customers

By Nick Marnell



Moraga OSH set to close its doors by December.

Photo Nick Marnell

Moraga who didn't have to go far for a store like this."

Matthew Grenby of Lafayette tossed a bag of cactus mix into his utility vehicle. "It's all about the people. You can get these things anywhere. It was always a pleasure to shop here," he said.

"We never had any complaints about the store. Ever," said Kathe Nelson, executive director of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. "We're very sad. They were a very involved member, with nice people and a great store."

Not only were the employees and customers stunned by the news, but so was the OSH landlord. "I just found out early today," said Dave Bruzzone, the day after the announcement. "The store was doing better than their projections. When you have a good tenant, you hate to lose them."

Neither Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg nor store manager Venessa Ochoa would divulge any OSH financial information, but it's not a stretch to say that the store accounted for a sizeable chunk of the town's \$1 million annual sales tax revenue.

"While there will be some short-term loss of sales tax revenue to the town, past experience indicates it will be offset in part by increased sales at other locally owned retail stores, including Moraga Hardware, Across the Way and the Moraga Garden Center, as well as CVS," Mayor Dave Trotter said.

Moraga has dealt with a struggling retail sector for years, and Bruzzone said that the OSH news did nothing to halt the narrative. "We've been trying to get these vacancies filled up. We turned the corner with the Canyon Club and La Finestra, and now this," Bruzzone said, speaking of the brewery scheduled to open in the fall across from OSH, and the restaurant moving into the Moraga Shopping Center in October.

"With every door that closes, one opens," Nelson said. "We hope to bring something back into town soon." Trotter added that the newly improved OSH building "presents another attractive opportunity for a new and viable retail tenant along Moraga Way, which I believe the town can and should encourage."

On that note, Bruzzone mentioned that he has been actively looking for a grocery store. "We know that Moraga is a great place for retail and commercial," he said.

One business owner had every reason to gloat over the OSH departure, but he did not. "I respected Orchard as a chain. They were a solid, viable competitor," said Bill Snider, president of Moraga Ace Hardware. "We welcome those who looked at Orchard as the town's main hardware store."

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