

LAMORINDA Community • Wilder Project Jumps Next Hurdle

By Andrea A. Firth

Orinda & Moraga

Photos Andy Scheck



Orinda's City Council recently approved the final map for the first phase of the Wilder subdivision project. The Phase I map, the first of four anticipated final maps, will create 72 single family residential lots, the lots for a swim center,

community art and garden center and some of the planned playing fields, along with the open space and trails surrounding the lots. According to Mike Olsen, the representative for the Wilder project, the first homes built will be part of this

Phase I map, and maps for the subsequent phases of the project will be presented to the City Council in the next three to four months.

Moraga Restaurants Caught Selling Alcohol to Minors

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Ruppenthal believes this highlights an area that needs to be addressed.

Officer Ron Ward agrees: "I was very surprised, too," said Ward, "we have a no tolerance policy in this town that's supported by the hierarchy and the Council."

Ward speaks from experience; he has been the top enforcer of Driving Under the Influence (DUI) laws in Contra Costa five years in a row and received a national award in 2007. He believes that the situation resulted from insufficient training and communication. "This may be a lack of communication between restaurant owners and employees," he said, "people can feel awkward asking, but there is training available to help identify and react to underage and over-drinking."

Ward does not believe that Moraga has a specific problem with alcohol, even though he recently arrested a 16 year old who was driving after 11:30 p.m. and was 'Under the Influence.' There were 107 recorded DUIs in Moraga in 2007.

The restaurants involved say that training programs are already in place. According to the General Manager of one establishment the incident was an unfortunate and isolated slip-up. "A human error was made," he acknowledged, continuing, "We took this event very seriously and immediately

took steps to further staff training and are working with ABC and their online program." He is confident that this will not happen again at his restaurant.

Another restaurateur reacted quickly as well and posted prompts in his restaurant both for customers and staff. All are reminded of the rules and responsibilities of the license requirements and that even on busy nights one has to make sure that all customers are the age they appear to be. "We had to let go the waitress who made the error," he said, adding that the incident was not her only mistake.

The penalty for non-compliance is a suspension of the license or a fine. A similar operation in Lafayette last December netted three violators.

First time violators in a three year period of time face a fifteen day suspension of their ABC license or may choose to pay a fine in lieu of the suspension, in the range of \$750 to \$3000, depending on the average amount of alcohol they sell. According to Jennifer Deuel from ABC, all the Moraga restaurants were first time contraveners. A second violation in 3 years would be subjected to a twenty five day suspension and a third time could mean the final suspension of the license.

For more information go to <http://www.abc.ca.gov/>.

Moraga Comments On Specific Plan

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Moraga Center Specific Plan Page 7 View Locator

The plan includes a significant addition of multi-unit housing, either senior housing, students or multi-families, which triggered many reactions from the public. In an email to Salamack, Ferenc Kovac, a 20 year resident of Moraga, summarizes the concern: "Bringing

more homes, especially high density housing, will average the home price down, bring crime up, and have a huge negative impact on the quality of life in Moraga."

The Bruzzone family, which owns 90% of the land targeted by the Specific Plan, expressed concern through their urban planner, Richard Loewke. During a Parks and Recreation meeting he explained that one of the locations proposed for the gymnasium would be very detrimental to retail success and on a larger scale he expressed the opinion that "the Bruzzone family... were disappointed not to have been able to help shape the project description" and they are concerned that "the limitations contained in this version of the specific plan would block the production of both needed housing and retail development." The consultant proposed a very long list of elements to allow a successful development of the area. Among them, incentives to encourage the expansion of retail,

the constitution of the right mix of housing according to market conditions, streamlining of the approval process, and consideration of the use of future revenue to underwrite the cost of a public shuttle service connecting Saint Mary's College, the downtown and BART stations, delivering traffic mitigation and additional retail traffic.


Traffic mitigation was one of Deschambault's concern as well since the new California Environmental Quality Act procedure requires developments to mitigate their CO2 impact.

The traffic issue was echoed by some residents; one wrote: "Traffic is the main concern, specifically Moraga Road which is the main artery out of Moraga. This road is at full capacity now... How could it handle 2,000 or 3,000 additional car trips a day?"

Moragan James Johnson proposed a public referendum since he believes that the Specific Plan does not comply with the spirit of Moraga General Plan.

The Cities of Lafayette and Orinda both sent a letter requesting an extension of the public comment period, stating that 45 days is not enough time to review the voluminous and complex plan, particularly its impact on the roads and intersections. Both highlighted the timing, during summer vacation, that's not conducive to large public involvement.


At press time the Council hadn't made a decision on extending the comment period, however the staff's recommendation was not to extend to period because of the housing element contained in the plan that needs to be approved by the Town before a certain date. Whatever the vote of the Council, there is still time for residents to get informed and participate in the debate. The plan is available at the Moraga Library and online on the Town's web site (ci.moraga.ca.us); Salamack awaits your contributions. Public comments are also posted on the website.



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