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## Dollar Tree Applies to Open Store in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

Where can you buy the Holy Bible for \$1? If everything goes according to plan, customers may soon be able to find the King James Version of the sacred book at the Dollar Tree store tentatively slated to open in the Rheem Center this fall.

The Moraga Planning Commission will hold a special meeting on Tuesday, August 23rd at 7:30 p.m. to discuss the Dollar Tree application, which complies with Moraga's Municipal Code. The meeting is open to the public and is likely to be well-attended.

"Since we heard the news I've talked to many people, family and friends, who are very concerned with this store coming to town," said Moraga resident Joao Magalhaes, "the concern is that, with the addition of this store, Moraga will develop an identity of low cost purchasing that many among us do not want."

The long-time resident believes the town should consider what it would like to be known for, and make the appropriate political decisions to implement that vision.

The new store would occupy more than 9,000 square feet of retail space and offer a variety of merchandise including house wares, toys, hardware, arts and crafts, and prepackaged food products. According to Chelle Davis, Public Relations for Dollar Tree Inc., the company selects locations where its core customer base is located. "Our core customers are people trading-down, college students, just normal Americans," she said, "and we are very excited to be coming to the Rheem Valley Center." The opening is tentatively scheduled for late October.

"We live in a capitalistic society and the success or failure of that store will depend on its own merit," said Moraga Chamber of Commerce vice-president Larry Tessler.

"Indeed, (the Dollar Store's) diverse merchandise will benefit the community and is in synergy with the Shopping Center's anchor tenants, T.G. Maxx and Tuesday Morning," wrote Linda Duncan, Dollar Tree Real Estate Manager, in the application the store filed with the town.

Moraga resident Bob Reynolds said he was surprised that the company chose Moraga, "Rheem is becoming a bargain shopping center," he said, "it will probably serve people from outside Moraga, and may help to bring some sales tax back into town."

But some fear negative economic impacts on the town. "I think that a Dollar Store creates the wrong image and that in the long term it may affect the value of real estate for Moraga," said real estate broker Elena Hood, "We would like to see a long term vision for the town and a policy that would attract a bed and breakfast hotel, a winery, and boutiques, rather than very low-price stores." Hood and her husband specialize in high-end properties and they are concerned that the store will create a different image in the mind of buyers; they see a direct connection between the kind of services a town offers and the value of its homes. "I do think it's wrong, I do care for Moraga," she said, "and I'll try to come to the August 23 meeting."

Susan Captain, of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, also plans to attend Planning Commission meeting.

"This is very disappointing," said the local wine maker, "I have nothing against a Dollar Store - I have a problem with a Dollar Store in Moraga. It will change the face of our town and will impede our efforts to make this little town a special place for wine growing and tasting."

The Planning Commission public meeting will be held in the auditorium of the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School at 7:30 p.m. on August 23rd.

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