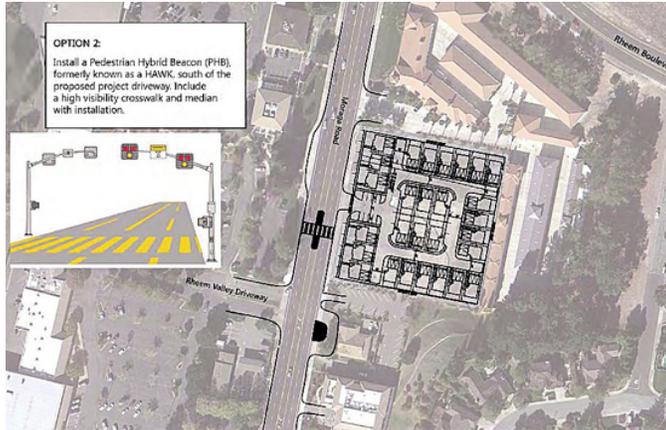


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Old Bowling Alley Site Still a Challenging Piece of Dirt

By Sophie Braccini



Proposal by Fehr and Peers for a pedestrian crossing on Moraga Road From staff report

Stacia Levenfeld. "Without sidewalks or common space, there is no place for kids to play."

"Parking is also problematic, there is not enough guest parking," added Planning Commissioner Christine Kuckuk.

There was generally agreement nonetheless that higher density housing at this location, which is near transit and shopping, was a good idea.

The visual impact of homes that are similar in appearance and closely set was also of concern because it could create a 'wall effect' and limit the view of the hills. "The limited variety would not be welcome along the scenic corridor," said Planning Commission vice chair Dick Socolich. "The scenic corridor is the heart of our community."

During public comments, resident Dale Walwark summed up the questions raised by this piece of property. "This is challenging piece of dirt," he said. "It should be commercial but there is no need for more commercial development in Moraga. If you approve any housing there, don't do it without a solution for pedestrian crossing, including at night."

The documents prepared by Town staff included a report by traffic consultant Fehr and Peers that made proposals regarding pedestrian crossing, which they consider to be the bigger challenge posed by this project, from a traffic point of view. The proposals ranged from pedestrian activated lights to beacons allowing safe passage from the development to the Rheem Center.

Among the elements that commissioners suggested the developer take into account were the quality of life for the people who will live in the development, the perspective of Moraga residents driving by, including keeping ridge lines visible, and pedestrian friendliness within the project itself.

The developer indicated that it would take the recommendations into account and was looking forward to continue to work with the Town.

On May 7 Signature Properties presented, to a joint meeting of Moraga's Design Review Committee and Planning Commission, a development project for 26 medium density homes closely packed on about two acres of the vacant, flat lot along Moraga Road across from the Rheem Shopping Center.

It is the third project proposed for this site; previous plans included one for roughly 40 apartments and then 21 detached single-family residences. This new project was developed after discussions with Town staff, encouraging the developer to increase the density of the single-family homes. The project proposes clusters of three, four and six parcels, plus a 27th lot where a bioswale (landscape drainage area) would be built.

"The price point for these homes would be from the high-\$500,000s to the mid- \$600,000s," said the developer. "This price point will make this project successful." Staff and commissioners raised several issues with the project, in spite of some strong points.

The first concern was the high density of the project that does not afford any common space for its residents.

"The setting is too dense," said Planning Commission chair

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