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Development, More Development, And Then Traffic

By Sophie Braccini

The Feb. 29 Tri-city meeting gave the city councils of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda the opportunity to get together, share information about what is happening in each community, brag a little, congratulate each other a little, and then discuss potential opportunities for collaboration. The focus was on development and its traffic impact.

At the beginning of the meeting Lafayette Transportation Planner Jim Hinkamp presented information from Lafayette's downtown traffic study, which illustrated the council members' concerns about road congestion. The city has led an extensive traffic and parking study using new technology such as aggregated GPS traffic data, and including public surveys, to understand where and when traffic is most congested in downtown Lafayette. It showed that Mt. Diablo Boulevard is most impacted, with its Moraga Road intersection and Highway 24 access points. The study showed that about one-third of this congestion is through traffic, originating outside of and extending beyond the downtown area, underscoring the potential impact Moraga drivers have on Lafayette's traffic congestion.

When Hinkamp used a Moraga driver as an example to explain the concept of through traffic, Moraga Mayor Mike Metcalf noted that the deteriorating condition of Lafayette traffic could hardly be blamed on Moraga, since the town has practically stayed the same over the last 25 years. "Plan Bay Area" notes that, hypothetically, housing increase projections over the next 25 years show about twice as much new housing in Lafayette than in Moraga.

Moraga has a total of 70 units currently under construction, all single-family housing, including dense single-family residences on lots in the 3,000-square-foot range along Moraga Road. The town has more projects in preliminary planning stages, other single-family projects ranging in the hundreds of units, but none will be coming to fruition in the short term.

Lafayette has nine downtown projects, a mix of shared housing, single-family homes and commercial developments. Some 150 shared-housing units are under construction or have just been completed in the downtown area, and about 70 single-family homes are in the planning process pipeline.

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