



**MORAGA**

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**Town Council Meetings:**  
Wed., Oct. 9, 5:30 p.m.  
Wed., Oct. 23, 5:30 p.m.  
**Planning Commission:**  
Tuesday, Oct. 15,  
6:30 p.m.  
**Parks and Recreation  
Commission:**  
Mon., Oct. 14, 6:30 p.m.

## New Moraga mural depicts town's natural beauty and landmarks

By Vera Kochan

The Art in Public Spaces Committee (APSC) is the driving force behind the new Moraga mural located on the six feet by 37 feet wall outside the Town Chambers at 335 Rheem Boulevard. The artwork combines themes pertaining to the Town's natural beauty as well as its local landmarks.

A survey was initiated by the APSC asking the community to submit key words that generally bring to mind life in

Moraga. The survey was open for six weeks between June 19 and July 31 of last year and received 221 responses, to which the APSC Mural Subcommittee analyzed and condensed the information from one of the questions asking: "In two to three words, what defines Moraga?"

The results were compiled and noted that the most often used words were: "nature, open space, hills, semi-rural, and beautiful." By combining those descriptions, the theme of the mural became: "Natural Beauty of the Surrounding Hills."

A Request for Proposals was released with the stipulation that the "mural shall be a quality work of art and appeal to a broad constituency. Mural design shall have a relationship to the Town of Moraga." A \$7,600 stipend was provided for the project by APSC which included a large fundraised portion.

The artist chosen to paint the mural is San Francisco resident Josue Rojas (www.josuerojasart.com). He describes himself as a full-time "Independent Artist/Arts Professional", specializing in fine art, large-scale murals, community-based public works, and gallery exhibitions with over 25 years experience in the field. His works can be seen across San Francisco and the greater Bay Area, such as Super Museum of Modern Art Mini-Murals, San Francisco Unified School District area schools, Uni-



Photo Vera Kochan

**Moraga mural artists (from left) Angel Velasquez, Josue Rojas, and Anthony Jimenez**

versity of California at Santa Cruz, Golden Gate Park Promenade, and more.

Rojas also has experience in teaching Latino Art History and other public art courses, in addition to graphic artist duties for the New America Media. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from California College of Arts & Crafts (San Francisco) and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Boston University.

Interest in painting first started when Rojas was 15 years old. His father had passed away and, needing an outlet for his "angst," he poured his energies into painting. His artistic styles are versatile, running the gamut from cartoon to realistic to photographic.

Working with him on Moraga's mural are Angel Velasquez and Anthony Jimenez. Rojas

is mentoring his two assistants, hoping to teach them some of his techniques so that one day they can create mural art on their own.

Rojas and his team have spent approximately four weeks on the Moraga project, as he split his time also working on a project in San Francisco. Using special mural acrylic that allows for flexibility and fluidity, Rojas will finish by applying a clear coat to repel graffiti and provide ultraviolet protection from the sun.

"So far there have been no real challenges," commented Rojas. "We're just trying to be ready for the hot weather." He appreciates that the mural doesn't require any scaffolding as many of his project do.

"I'm inspired by the townspeople and their vision for the mural," Rojas stated. "Murals lead to more murals, and I hope to inspire more murals in Moraga. Murals are a beautiful practice that we have in California and the Bay Area. It's an external expression of internal values. After having done the

homework about the community, the goals have been to represent the values through art to the people of Moraga."

APSC Member Holly Hartz said, "Moragans told us what they felt was the 'essence' of Moraga. Josue's mural is a reflection of that beauty residents described. Hopefully, Josue's mural will make a difference to our community's enjoyment of our surroundings every day."

When asked if passersby had commented on his work, Rojas replied, "People have passed by and honked or given a thumbs-up. I feel the love."

"Art in Public Spaces is proud of the new mural that is a vibrant reflection of Moraga's heart and soul," stated APSC Chair Teresa Onoda. "Based on insights from over 200 community members, this artwork beautifully captures the essence of our town. It's a powerful reminder of the pride we all share in Moraga's unique charm and the importance of community voices in shaping our public spaces."

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