

## 24-Hour Complaints About the Transition to New Facility

By Cathy Tyson



24-Hour Fitness: New location on Rheem Blvd Photo Cathy Tyson

With a brand new facility opening just down the street from the current 24-Hour Fitness in Moraga, one might think that members would be elated. However there's an ever expanding group of disgruntled members who are bent out of shape about not only the long delayed opening, but more importantly that their current membership will not be honored at the new facility. Since the new club has been under construction for months, and having not heard anything to the contrary, until now, there was a presumption that current members would be welcome there. As it turns out, if they're willing to kick in an additional \$9.99 in membership fees per month, then they'd be welcome.

On a letter dated May 13, that didn't arrive until well into June, Northern Division President Dan Benning informed members that their membership has been transferred to the Walnut Creek club, almost eight miles away: "We are confident that our Walnut Creek location will continue to energize your fitness program."

While the new club will definitely be an improvement from the stained carpet, and single sink, shower and toilet in the ladies' room of the old facility, it doesn't seem to fit the parameters of what 24-Hour Fitness describes as its Super Sport clubs.

The new Moraga Super Sport Club will have less than half the square footage, 21,440 versus 50,000 square feet and less than half of the amenities that this type of club "may" feature, for instance basketball, a pool, sauna, spa, steam room and more.

One member explains there's a real feeling in the gym of pent up anger, and that front desk staff has received over 100 complaints per day since the letter went out. Over the years there have been a number of issues, from the "eau de sweat" of summer air quality to a flap over magazines and paper towels. Although in the grand scheme of things these incidents were relatively minor, they certainly didn't garner any goodwill toward management. Quite a few members are joining together to try to resolve this conflict with the club.

"The plans for this club have been in the works for years and they just now decided to add 'Super' to the club designation? Ridiculous....I ask you to investigate this situation and pressure 24-Hour Fitness to honor the agreements with its members. We would be penalized and

fined if we decided to break our contract with them and I think it's only fair to expect the same from them," said a concerned gym member.

"I was sold my 3-year, prepaid membership in October 2007. The sales person's enthusiastic promise of the Moraga club moving to a new, expanded facility was what sold me. There was no mention of additional fees. Then, just one day before the club was due to open, I received a letter from 24-Hour Fitness, informing me that my membership would not be honored at the new Moraga club but would be transferred to Walnut Creek," said Di Harlow.

In addition, there are numerous complaints on yelp.com and reportedly with the Better Business Bureau (BBB). Disgruntled member Eric Yabu says he wrote in his complaint to the BBB, "I would be understanding of the upgrade requirement if the new club facilities justified a Super-Sport designation. However, they clearly do not. I think this is a case of taking advantage of their clientele as well as the greater community they serve."

Management responded as follows: "24-Hour Fitness prides itself on our commitment to provide our members with the highest level of satisfaction possible. The quality of service, safety, equipment and facilities has always been a top priority. In an effort to better symbolize our brand and ensure that our facilities provide the most conducive environment for our members to reach their fitness goals, 24 Hour Fitness will be closing the Moraga Express club and opening a brand new 21,000+ square foot facility. The new Moraga club will have premium finishes and amenities including; state-of-the art fitness equipment, an upgraded Kids Club, a pro shop, premium locker rooms, Group X room and a dedicated cycle room and towel service."

"24-Hour Fitness is offering current members an exclusive offer to join this new facility for a reduced rate and current members may visit this facility at no cost for 30 days to try it out. Members can also choose to workout at the nearby Walnut Creek location at no additional charge," said a company spokesperson.

The old facility will be closing on July 16; the new "Super Sport" club is scheduled to open July 18.