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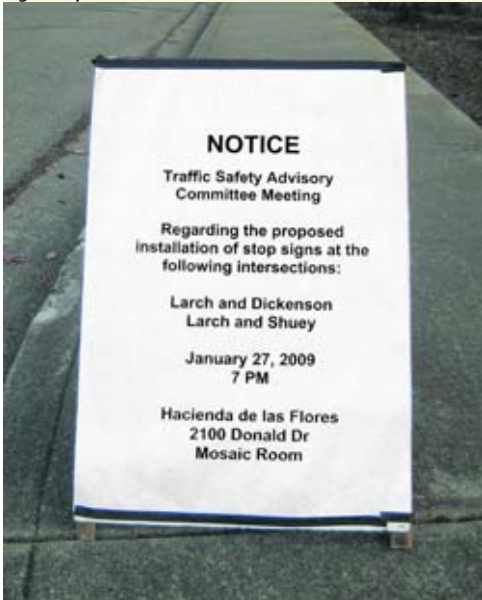
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Published January 21st, 2008

## Larch Residents Prepare to Calm Traffic

By *Sophie Braccini*



A-frame on Larch advertises the public meeting on January 27th Photo Sophie Braccini

Residents on Moraga's Larch Avenue have been active for years, lobbying to keep their residential street safe. But it has been hard to maintain the 25 mph restriction on this street that runs parallel to Camino Pablo and features long straight stretches, as well as some serious slopes. The raised crosswalks on Camino Pablo diverted additional traffic onto the favorite street for students walking from and to the nearby elementary and middle schools. As a result, residents are proposing a new traffic calming plan and are inviting the community to a public meeting on January 27th.

The group that calls itself the Larch Avenue Traffic Team surveyed 350 homes at the end of 2007 to identify problems as well as possible solutions. The results showed that speeding was the #1 concern of all the residents, the volume of motor vehicles being the second. The team identified wide support for stop signs and increased neighborhood signage.

Robin Felix, one of the members of the Larch team, presented the plan at the last Traffic Calming Advisory Committee (TSAC) meeting on January 7th. The proposal includes the installation of two new stop signs: one at the crossing of Dickenson and Larch (at this time only Dickenson has a stop sign) and one at the crossing of Shuey and Larch. Pedestrian walkways could be added.

The traffic-calming guide adopted by TSAC in September of 2008 describes the approval procedure. The plan proposed for Larch appears to be a "type 2" as defined in the guide. This level of change requires that the group secure the approval of 75% of the homeowners abutting a proposed change, and a 70% approval of homeowners within 300 feet. At this time the Larch team is organizing to get these endorsements.

"We will go door-to-door, after the public meeting, to gather signatures," stated Felix, "our only concern is reaching some owners who are not living in

Moraga, one of them residing out of the country."

TSAC members recommended that the cost for the signage be included in the document that homeowners are asked to sign, as it is they who will be responsible for the cost of the signs' implementation. The price tag was estimated at about \$500 per stop sign and \$200 per crosswalk.

The approval procedure calls for a public meeting to be held and advertised with visible signage on A-frames in the neighborhood of the changes. This meeting will take place on January 27th at the Hacienda de las Flores at 7 p.m. TSAC should make a decision to approve the plan or not during its March meeting after it receives the petition. The plan will then move to the Town Council for final okay, via consent agenda. This procedure allows for fast decision-making without discussion; a single vote may be taken for the approval of all the items placed together on the consent agenda.

The Larch Avenue plan is the first real life test of the efficiency of the new TSAC and its Traffic Calming Guide. If all goes according to plan, it will save the Council a lot of time and possibly some headaches. At its last meeting, the Council appointed Howard Harpham to be the Council's liaison to TSAC; he will keep his colleagues informed of the committee's progress.

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