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New Housing Proposed for Rheem

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Planning Commission is taking a look at a proposal by Mike and Jim Knuppe to build a residential subdivision along Moraga Road, across from the Rheem Shopping Center and near their business, 5A Rent-A-Space. The two-acre property, on which some may fondly remember a bowling alley once stood, is located in an area defined in Moraga Municipal Code as a limited commercial district. The owners would need a conditional use permit in order to build a residence. The Commission held its first study session on January 18.

The project, presented by architect Galen Grant, would include 36-40 apartments and townhouses. The owners envision that the new development would provide housing for the local workforce and Saint Mary's students/staff. In its staff report, the Planning Department highlights that if the housing units were generally available to all residents, it might not meet the conditions that have been placed on development in this district. One serious consideration would be the traffic impact during peak hours. A project that was exclusively for the Saint Mary's community or a senior housing development would be more compatible with the district's purpose.

"The project would include a central area with a pool, a spa and a garden," said 5A Marketing Director Jenny Boyd, "it would be surrounded by housing on all sides." According to the owners' application, different development options were studied over the past years for that space, including a full service hotel, a recreation facility, apartment buildings, and self storage. "After thorough review of the market and the projected financial feasibility of each idea, it appears that a housing development is the best use," they wrote.

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