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## Rheem Center to Get Specific Zoning

*By Sophie Braccini*

The Moraga Economic Action Team figures the Rheem Shopping Center's commercial zoning should be different than that of the Moraga Center - more restrictive, some would say more directed, the Team's proposed new zoning aims at encouraging specific businesses to set up shop in the Rheem Center. The draft retail ordinance will be finalized at an upcoming meeting and then move to the Town Council, which will have to approve the ordinance before the new rules can be applied.

During its June 15 meeting the Team reviewed business types that will be included in the retail ordinance as 'permitted uses.' "We want to create a list of permitted uses for the businesses we want to encourage in the Center," said Economic Development Team Renee Zeimer, "this is a way to shape the vision for that center from the ground up and encourage synergies." Potential businesses of the type listed as permitted use can essentially obtain business permits over-the-counter.

Members of the Team wondered if it was lawful to have different commercial zoning in each shopping center. "It is the prerogative of a municipality to define zoning," answered Planning Director Lori Salamack, "and the uses that will not be listed as 'permitted' will not be prohibited, but will be required to comply with 'subject to findings' or 'conditional use' rules." Town Manager Jill Keimach added that it makes sense for the Moraga Center to have more permitted uses since the area belongs almost entirely to a single property owner who can manage its synergy, while the Rheem Center belongs to multiple owners who do not necessarily share a common retail strategy.

The Team's selection of permitted-use businesses appears to encourage a diversified retail experience at Rheem; one that is conducive to more entertainment opportunities and shopping. Restaurants (including wineries and microbreweries), with the exclusion of drive-thru operations, are on the list; as are grocery stores and food retailers, but not discount grocery stores; general retail stores are permitted, but not single price point retailers such as Dollar Tree (existing business would not fall under a new ordinance). Certain businesses, such as hotels or outside retail sales would be welcome in town, but the Team decided to require a permit subject to findings, a procedure that will allow the Town to control such elements as the esthetic of the project. Other uses, such as car wash, indoor and outdoor amusement facilities, auto repair, or hardware store would have to satisfy the requirements of a conditional use permit. Only a few business types were listed as prohibited, including fire arms stores and adult video or bookstores.

At its next public meeting, possibly on June 29, the team will also work in sub-groups on the different aspects of economic revival, such as increasing the synergy with Saint Mary's College, or considering a new sign ordinance.

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