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Making a Local Treasure More Visible

The Hacienda Foundation's strategic plan

By Sophie Braccini



Hacienda entrance Photo Andy Scheck

The Hacienda Foundation is a private entity comprised of residents who give their time and competence pro bono to foster its mission. The foundation established several popular annual community events, including the Cinco de Mayo and Oktoberfest celebrations, and has conducted renovation projects such as the recent restoration of the Pavilion. "Even more valuable than the direct funding is the professional services provided free-of-charge by board members," said Woehleke, referring to the countless hours of conception, design, project management and execution of the projects.

The foundation's recommendations to the Town Council included continuing weekend wedding rentals, which are a significant source of revenue, and the promotion of the Pavilion as venue for cultural events.

In recent years Moraga town staff vacated two areas on the Hacienda property: the second floor, which once housed town offices, and some land along Moraga Road that was the town's corporation yard but is unused at this time.

Foundation board members believe that a marketing study of potential uses of the second floor should be conducted before any renovation work begins. "The cost of the renovation will be significant," said Woehleke; in addition to being ADA non-compliant, the second floor has out-dated restroom facilities and many fixtures, such as windows, need to be replaced.

The foundation recommended that certain projects be conducted to improve the revenue stream coming from the Hacienda. "We would like to replace the existing fountain patio at the main Hacienda building with a larger, hardscape patio area to accommodate larger groups and events outdoors," said Woehleke. "We would also like to improve and enlarge the Pavilion's bar and kitchen functionality."

One of Woehleke's main points was the necessity of creating additional parking spaces at the former corporation yard in combination with establishing greater visibility from Moraga Road. The Hacienda has an entrance on Moraga Road but it is not for public use - visitors must enter the property from Donald Drive. The seclusion of the venue is part of its charm, but it is a challenge as well.

Bob Reynolds, a retail professional and former foundation board member, said that lack of visibility is a big handicap for the Hacienda. "We have too many 'best kept secrets,'" added resident Edy Schwartz, who lamented the small size of the A-frame sign directing customers to new the Hacienda Cafe. "People want to preserve the historic feel of the Hacienda, but they are also dreaming about bigger possibilities," she said.

Mayor David Trotter asked town staff to look into possibilities for improving signage directing the public to the Hacienda.

The Town Council recommended the preparation of a complete facility assessment so that all of the work that needs to be done can be planned and budgeted over time.

"They (the foundation) are a private entity and we can't give them directions," noted Councilmember Michael Metcalf. "I suggest that you keep doing what you are doing and come up with ideas, and be open and receptive," he told foundation board members. "Don't ask us what you should do, work in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Department and Commission and come to us with proposals."

The Moraga Hacienda de las Flores Foundation is seeking volunteer candidates for the Board of Directors.

Board members have interests in one or more of:

- Planning through execution of Hacienda renovation/enhancement projects.
- Organizing community events to celebrate the Hacienda and increase awareness.
- Raising funds for Hacienda projects.

Please visit haciendafoundation.org/index.php and use the Contact Us tab to express interest in learning more.

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