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Civic News Moraga

Moraga Revisits Sign Ordinance

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Sign designer Robin Esquivel, who has been working with the town since January, explained how new requirements had been given to her over the 9-month period only to end in a hearing at which nothing was resolved.

Former Chamber of Commerce president Edy Schwartz made a passionate plea to have the town's sign rules revised. "We need to look at the sign ordinance in a much broader way because the town, the residents, and the businesses have changed," she said. "A monument sign could really improve the Moraga Center...I hope that you realize how important this is."

Board chair Ben Helber noted that new businesses need a sign plan that describes the type, size and style of the commercial signage when they get their

approval. When it was constructed, the Moraga Center didn't need one; but board members felt reluctant to agree with a monument for one business when a comprehensive plan was not in place for the entire shopping center. "Let the property owner prepare a master plan for the signs in this shopping center," said Helber. "It won't happen unless we demand it now."

Esquivel noted that the bank had no leverage to insist that the property owner develop a master sign plan now, but board members decided that such a plan would avoid the granting of piecemeal authorizations to different businesses in the same shopping center and that once a master sign plan is approved, each business could get administrative approval for its individual signs.

Signature Homes Goes the Extra Mile for Via Moraga

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The density of Carroll Ranch is a little less than the new project, but "it was useful to see what the development becomes after a few years when the landscape has matured," noted Comprelli.

Kenwood Lane, Cedar Hollow and River Rock in Danville are all small-lot, single-family detached homes with relatively similar density, including, or not, some of the features that Via Moraga proposes. "My takeaway from the tour was what some of the variations are, and I hope we capitalize on the things the other developments did right," said Onoda, "for example sidewalks, curves in the entrances, variety of models, and since Via Moraga is the only development situated across from a shopping center it must be very pedestrian and bicycle friendly."

Some of the elements brought forward from previous iterations of the project were well received by commissioners, including sidewalks, two-car garages with driveways, and variety designed to avoid the 'wall of homes' effect.

But some elements are still unresolved. Christine

Kuckuck, one of only three commissioners who were present at previous sessions, confirmed her preference for a single entrance to the project that would, according to her, minimize the visual impact on the scenic corridor and create more of a village feeling for future residents.

All of the commissioners highlighted the importance of finalizing a traffic study to answer questions such as: Where should pedestrians cross Moraga Way to go to the shopping center or come home from the bus stop? Should residents be permitted to turn left while exiting the project? The number of guest parking spaces also needs further review.

"Questions remain and will need to be answered," said Comprelli, "but this is a perfectly appropriate type of development along Moraga Road and across from the shopping center. They have the right mix and the right density." The application process will probably take several more months; it may be a few years before the new homes are on the market.

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