

Summerhill Homes Moves Forward

By Sophie Braccini

Summerhill Homes has two development projects well under way in Moraga. The first is the Rancho Laguna II project. On Dec. 2 the Planning Commission confirmed the Conceptual and General Development Plan for the project's 27 proposed single-family residences, 10 of which would be built along Rheem Boulevard and 17 nestled among the hills of the almost 180 acres of vacant land. Then on Dec. 16, Summerhill asked the Planning Commission to look at another General Development plan, this one for a property on Camino Ricardo, which would build 26 single family residences on 14.24 acres.

The plan Summerhill presented for Camino Ricardo is a synthesis of 18 months of study, including five different study sessions with town boards and commissions and many hours of work with staff. The devel-

oper also proposed a development agreement.

All of this initial effort resulted in modifications to the project that increase the diversity of the homes' appearance, minimize the grading and create a more interesting roadway.

The Design Review Board has approved the concept as it was presented. Three architectural styles are proposed: "Early California," "Bay Area Traditional" and "Arts and Crafts," with many architectural details such as pitched rooflines and use of dormers, gables and eaves. All of the proposed homes would be two-story structures and would be designed to meet at least 70 points on the Build it Green checklist, which means that the project exceeds current Moraga code requirements for energy efficiency. Rooftop solar photovoltaic panels would be offered as an option to home buyers.

A development agreement is a contract between a local jurisdiction and person who has ownership or control of a property. The purpose of the agreement is to specify the standards and conditions that will govern development of the property; it provides mutual benefits to both parties. The developer offers elements that further the town's vision and provides benefits to the community, while for the developer the agreement is a guarantee that the rules and regulations in effect at the time of approval will not be subject to subsequent changes. In this case, the proposed development agreement includes a number of on-site and off-site public improvements including dedication and improvement of the public park/open space, construction of a pedestrian sidewalk along Camino Ricardo, construction of a public "outlook point," payment and vesting of certain fees. It also in-

cludes a lump-sum payment that the town can apply to the construction of pedestrian improvements along Moraga Road, with the precise improvements to be determined through the Livable Moraga Road project that is currently underway.

The Dec. 16 meeting took place after press deadline. The Planning Commission was expected to decide if it wanted staff to prepare the resolutions for approval of the Conceptual and General Development Plan and to continue the hearing to Jan. 6.

Upsurge of Commercial Theft in Moraga

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A few weeks ago Vigil and her employees spotted the strange behavior of a woman who filled a cart with food, then left the store, followed by another woman who came by to retrieve the cart and take it briskly away. "We do not run after people who do that," says Vigil, "we call the police with the information about the car and the direction it's heading."

Moraga police sergeant Brian South took charge of the case and immediately contacted the Orinda police, since the silver Chevrolet Astro van had been seen moving toward Orinda. The three female accomplices were caught in front of Beverages and More and subsequently arrested for stealing \$1,000 worth of goods from Safeway and for possession of rock cocaine that was found in the car.

"We also made an arrest at Home Goods of a lady who stole objects there and in other Bay Area stores," said South, "and recently we arrested another female who tried to pass a fake \$50 bill at Safeway." Vigil says that the cashier looked at the bill

through the light and noticed that the bright yellow water mark that should be visible next to the picture was not there. Police were called and arrived in time to arrest the woman.

"Trying to pass counterfeit money is a very serious crime," says South, "and we have to get the Secret Service involved."

At Moraga Hardware, Snider has become an expert in detecting counterfeit money; he even bought the same type of infrared machine that is used by a local bank. "People use old \$5 bills that they wash, then they print the \$100 marking on it," says Snider. "So if someone uses a currency-check pen that detects fake money, it will show up as being fine. But if you hold it to the light, you won't see the watermark embedded into the paper showing a portrait of Ben Franklin that is identical to the one printed on the face of the bill, instead you'll see the figure '5.'"

Lafayette police chief Eric Christensen sent out an alert to business owners Dec. 10 relating a similar story - someone in Lafayette had just

passed a fake \$100 bill that was forged from a \$5 bill.

Snider says that when people want to pass counterfeit currency, they first go to stores with a real \$100 bill to check the local procedure. "When they see that we use the infrared machine, they never come back!" beams Snider.

Lafayette police chief Eric Christensen offers this list of the security features of U.S. currency.

The watermark: On the right side of the bill, the same president that is depicted upon the face of the bill should be on the watermark.

Mylar thread: Within the left side of the bill, there is a Mylar thread which should show the same denomination as that shown on the bill.

Color-shifting ink: On the number on the lower left hand corner, the value of the currency should change color as you move the bill from a green/brown to black.

Micro-printing: On larger denomination bills, there is micro-printing inside the numeric value in the lower left corner. The typing within the number should read USA and the value of the bill repeated over and over again; for example, USA20 USA20 USA20.

The feel and sound of the bill: Probably the best security feature is the texture of the bill; the currency should make a low, thudding sound when pulled upon.

Civic News Moraga



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