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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 developer 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 includes 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.

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