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A Community Center, a Restaurant, a Wine Cellar ...

By Sophie Braccini



Graig Crossley chooses his preference for the Hacienda. Photo Sophie Braccini

Architectural firm Gould Evans led two meetings June 2 and 8 involving approximately 70 Moraga residents to get the pulse of the community on its vision for the town-owned Hacienda de las Flores. The process led to proposals including a conference center, a wine cave, an art center and even a cannabis store. But two concepts gained the most momentum: a café or restaurant that could include catering, and a community center able to host 150 to 200 people. Participants at the June 8 meeting wanted to be sure there would be a community vote to ratify decisions made if the status of the Hacienda was changed to a public-private partnership.

Based on the feedback received, Gould Evans will propose two concepts to the Town Council on July 8. The concept chosen will be developed during the following three months with more public input.

Gould Evans Principal Bob Baum had

participants list facts, goals, and concepts for the Hacienda.

The groups came up with facts about the Hacienda easily. Some were negative, such as the lack of parking, the lack of visibility of the property, the risk of flooding, existing delayed maintenance, and the non-compliance with ADA requirements. But others were positive, such as the historic significance, the beauty of the location, the presence of trails, and the positive welcome residents gave to the Hacienda Cafe when it was opened there. There were also some neutral facts that needed to be considered, such as the size of the property and the close proximity to neighbors and related noise regulations.

Most participants noted that there is not a place to gather and relax, have a glass of wine and catch up with friends in Moraga, and that the Hacienda could serve this purpose. Many also expressed frustration that it is not open on weekends. Participants at the second meeting expressed a desire to keep the Hacienda's new services focused on local residents.

As for goals, Lauren Maccoll Maass, Gould Evans' associate vice president and project manager for the Hacienda, asked each participant to write three goals for the renovation on a note card. The cards were passed to the right and participants were asked to circle which goal resonated most with them. The most popular goals listed included balancing income and development, and creating a destination venue - a highly visible year-round multi-functional center that would encourage broad community usage for all ages, and provide a restaurant or a café, while respecting neighbors and enhancing the Hacienda's historic character.

From these goals, concepts were proposed such as a tea room, a wine cave, a jazz club at the pavilion, a spa, a teen and a senior center, an edible garden, an art garden, a boutique hotel, a restaurant and catering business for the weddings and receptions, and more. As they exited, participants were asked to put a blue dot on concepts they supported and eventually to add a red dot on the ones they greatly opposed. The concepts of a boutique hotel or small bed and breakfast got almost as many dislikes as it got likes.

Over the next four months, residents will have additional opportunities for input as the concept for the Hacienda is refined.

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