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Residents Want More Quality Restaurants at Rheem Center

By Sophie Braccini



Jay Kerner, owner of the Rheem Center.

Photo A. Scheck

his team's inputs.

Over 1,000 people responded to the survey, another fact that impressed Kerner, especially since it took 20 minutes to complete. He noted that it shows how important the topic is to residents.

The survey results indicate, "By far - the most comments (write-in) and selections for businesses were for restaurants. It is clear that most all respondents want more and (better) quality restaurants. Services ranked less important among current businesses or future businesses." The general population wants sit-down, better quality restaurants, adding that there are enough fast foods in town.

Almost 80 percent of all Moragans eat out over four times per month, with 23 percent eating out more than 10 times per month.

The Saint Mary's students responded to a separate survey. They too indicated that eating out was their favorite thing to do at the Rheem Center and asked for more diversity. They listed quality before price as the most important feature for a restaurant. Although many selected fast food among their most frequented eateries, many preferred adult, sit-down, healthy and gourmet, or cafés as their preferences.

According to the survey, both the general public and students wanted more healthy local food (86 percent), a Mexican restaurant (89 percent on question of ethnic types of restaurants), a brewery, pub or sports bar-type restaurant (79 percent), and a bakery (82 percent).

Kerner said that the results validate his team's thinking, and will keep them focused on what is important to the community.

"What made us happy is that what we felt would be good ideas seem to ring true to the community and that we are on the right track," he said. He said he will give more details at the council meeting where he hopes to see a good community turn out. He feels confident that his company will attract the right businesses to the center.

In the survey, residents were also asked questions about the aesthetics and other functions of

Moragans like to eat out, and they want more options close to home.

That was one of the main findings in a communitywide survey held in the wake of the Moraga economic symposium held at the beginning of the year. The Moraga Chamber of Commerce proposed the survey, including Saint Mary's students, to support the new owner of the Rheem Shopping center's research to revitalize the centrally located mall.

The survey received many responses and the results will be discussed at the city council meeting Aug. 24, with property owner Jay Kerner of U.S. Realty Partners divulging his plans. He said he was enthusiastic to see that residents are very much interested in revitalization and have definite preferences.

"The chamber approached us with the idea (of a survey) and we thought it was fantastic," Kerner said, adding that he had been very impressed at how the chamber of commerce put together the ideas and resources to build the survey, including

the Rheem. Many respondents see it as a possible community gathering place and wanted aesthetic improvements. Kerner is working on this aspect as well. U.S. Realty Partners hired Precision Property Measurement and within two to three months measured all of the buildings, and executed a CAD drawing of the property. Kerner owns the lion's share of the center, from CVS all the way around to Amoroma, and the Starbucks and Taco Bell stand-alone buildings. U.S. Realty Partners has been working with an architect, proposing design ideas and potential upgrades, as well as landscaping and site design.

"We will want to get feedback from the community," adds Kerner, who promises additional community outreach when the plans are in final form.

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[back](#)

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