

Published June 14, 2017

## The good life on Kendall Circle in Via Moraga

By *Sophie Braccini*

New residents at Via Moraga. Photo Sophie Braccini

Sitting in Via Moraga's community park with a group of residents while a dog frolics on the lawn and children have fun in the nearby play structure, it's hard to believe that the space that looked so tiny on the developer's plans is both perfectly adequate and friendly. It all fits, as the new Moraga residents that have moved in the now sold-out residences testify with contentment.

Four years ago, the process started to develop 17 compact single-family homes on the two acres that used to be a bowling alley. This type of home with almost no yard is a first for Moraga. Senka Maricic-Foster, who was in charge of sales of Via Moraga for the developer, Signature Homes, confirms that the project is fully sold out. Sales started in May 2016, thus it took about a year to sell 17 units priced between \$1.2 and \$1.4 million across from the Rheem Valley Shopping Center and next to 5A-Rent-A-Space.

Signature Homes President Gary Galindo says that this was his first project in Moraga. He adds that with four years and 28 public meetings, this was the most difficult project to get approved in his entire career. He explains that the process took so long that the actors changed, such as the members of the Planning Commission and the new group came with different expectations than what had been previously approved. He remembers conflicting requests from the design review board and the commission, another aspect that made it difficult for the developer. He believes it is because Moraga does so little in matter of development that it has not been able to adopt a more expedited process. Galindo is nonetheless very proud of the outcome. He says that inside the development people forget that it is located along Moraga Road. He believes that Signature Homes has contributed to the beauty of Moraga.

May Lin bought one of the largest floor plans. Her home is bright, modern, very well conceived and functional, with quality appliances and finishes. The great room incorporates the kitchen, dining room and family room. The homeowner, who is a doctor working in San Francisco, loves that she can see her children play or do their homework while she cooks. The plan also works very well for entertaining. The ground floor includes a bath and a bedroom, or office, while the second floor has three bedrooms, a master with large bath and closets and a Jack-and-Jill bathroom for the kids.

Maricic-Foster says that these type of homes, compact single-family dwellings located near transportation and schools, is what many young families in which both parents work want today: an uncomplicated lifestyle with as little maintenance as possible.

George and Merle Silverman chose the home to be close to their children who live in Orinda. They come from Foster City. They did not want an old home that would require work. Merle Silverman had been looking online for proposed development in the three Lamorinda cities and they were one of the first to put money down to have an option on one of the homes. The couple loves the fact that the shopping center is across the street, and so does Lin, who enjoys walking to the store or to the gym.

All the neighbors interviewed note, though, that there has been a few close calls with drivers who do not stop when the crosswalk light flashes, warning that pedestrians want to reach the shopping center side of Moraga Road.

Hubert Ma and Dr. Joanna Cheung were also among the first to buy a home at Via Moraga: she is the owner of the pediatric dentistry that occupies a ground floor office next door at 533 Moraga Road. The couple thought the opportunity was too good to pass. They choose Moraga for the school district and low crime rate. Their young children have made friends in the neighborhood with other kids their age, such as those of Altan Khendup, who moved from Berkeley in a home at Via Moraga along with his wife's brother's family, who occupies the home next to his.

Some of the homeowners are newlywed, others are couples without kids, or young families or empty nesters. Silverman says that the most spoken foreign language is Mandarin, and there are people from Eastern Europe, Malaysia, as well as American-born. Some residents are in the medical field, one teaches at Saint Mary's, some are engineers.

The neighbors quickly got to know each others, and it is as a group that they walked to the study session in April for the renovation of the Rheem Valley Shopping Center. "We would have liked to see more improvements proposed," says Silverman, "but any modernization is welcomed."

The homeowners are part of a homeowners' association that maintains the common area: a front garden that creates a buffer with Moraga Road, and the community back garden.

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA