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Friends get a little academic help



Restoration plans are being solidified at Moraga Adobe.

By Sora O'Doherty

At its August meeting, the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe received some advice from Ruben Mendoza, Professor of Archaeology and Social and Behavioral Sciences at California State University, Monterey Bay. Mendoza, a prolific author of scholarly texts, visited the Joaquin Moraga Adobe, which will this month be officially purchased by the Friends, who are preparing to run it as a local history museum. The professor is preparing a formal report for the Friends, but spoke to them at their meeting, with a slideshow of photographs to illustrate his findings. He also responded to questions from The Lamorinda Weekly.

Interestingly, Mendoza told the Friends that the Moraga Adobe is virtually identical to the Bononda adobe in Salinas, with the exception of the location of the dormer. A state historic landmark, the Jose Eusebio Boronda Adobe is the centerpiece of the Monterey County Historical Soci-

ety's Boronda Adobe History Center. According to Mendoza, both structures are excellent examples of the Monterey Colonial style, a popular architectural style from the 1840s.

Of particular concern to the professor is the addition of concrete by developer J&J Ranch in the process of restoring the Moraga Adobe. He explained that concrete is really problematic for adobe, because it can prevent the building from "breathing" and result in the accretion of moisture. Moisture, he says, is the enemy of adobe, causing it to crumble. There are two areas of concrete that caused his concern: an abutment surrounding the front of the adobe and a layer of thinset on the floor of the main room inside. The concrete abutment could be good for the adobe, providing stabilization, but only if constructed such that water drains away from the building. If water pools next to the building, it will enter the walls and cause damage.

Although he didn't like the thinset on the floor in the

main room, he was also concerned about the effects of removing it, especially if it involved the use of jackhammers. He suggested that a traditional building technique for adobes could be imitated by cutting trenches in the thinset and then adding large joists in the trenches to which wooden planks could be attached to form the floor. The Friends want to have a strong floor suitable for dancing, much like when the original adobe was used to host fandangos.

Teresa Long, at the FJMA meeting, said that the original plans submitted to the city of Orinda for the restoration of the Adobe had joists supporting the floors, not concrete. The Friends have written to the developer about their concerns about the restoration methods, and sent a copy to the city. Long added that the city is "a little worked up" because they were not consulted about changes in the plans.

Mendoza advocates keeping some elements of the Adobe that were added in the 1840s or 1860s. For example, the Friends were concerned

that the carved wood lintels were out of place in the Adobe, but Mendoza urged the Friends to retain them because they are emblematic of a style seen throughout the Americas at that period. He also suggested that any timberwork be retained, if not in situ, then elsewhere, to be studied as part of the fabric of historical legacy.

In Mendoza's opinion, the whole building is historic and it shouldn't be returned strictly to its 1841 footprint.

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Orinda loses senior planner Adam Foster to a new job

By Sora O'Doherty

After four years with the city of Orinda, senior planner Adam Foster has moved on to a new job in private industry. Foster, who came to Orinda as a consultant before being hired permanently, will be with D R Horton, a national home-building company, working out of its Pleasanton offices. Foster, who was known for biking to work from his home in Walnut Creek, will have a little longer commute now.

Foster came on board to help Orinda with the Connect Orinda Streetscape Plan, which is the project he is most proud of from his work for the city. He was very actively involved in Orinda's latest push for downtown development, and Foster says that Orinda is catching up on a lot of downtown planning. "It's going to take a while," he notes, "but Orinda has so many wonderful volunteers who are pushing for progress." He says that it was fun to help with the project during his tenure, and he particularly enjoyed working with the city council. He believes that the experience of

working with city regulatory requirements will help him in his new position as a forward planner, where he will work on such matters as managing housing projects, getting entitlements and design review.

Foster is very interested in opportunities to expand low to moderate income housing opportunities. He gave a shout out to Council Member Amy Worth, whom he praised as being philosophically engaged with the issue of housing needs. Recently, Foster built a tiny house in his own backyard, which gave him experience of being on the other side of the planning process, as well as doing the construction largely by himself.

Foster earned his degree in environmental policy analysis and planning at UC Davis. He explained that working in the planning department he had to become a generalist, learning to wear a lot of hats and learn a lot of disciplines.

The past year was a tough one for Foster, who contracted COVID-19, as did his son. His wife was on quarantine, but Foster kept working remotely through it. He assumed the role of tech assistant, previ-

ously held by Mayank Patel. Foster felt very comfortable with assisting the city to quickly convert to virtual meetings, and helped with meetings he wasn't even involved with. He volunteered to stop watching sporting events and would drop everything to jump online and help manage a virtual meeting for the city.

He felt very proud of how the city managed the transfer to online, and saw the benefits for people who perhaps in the past had been unable to attend meetings in person but could now participate without leaving home.

Worth returned the praise, saying, "In his thoughtful work with homeowners, his enthusiasm for the Connect Orinda initiative, and his help to Miramonte students in developing the ordinance banning Styrofoam use in restaurants, Adam shared his deep commitment to local planning and community development."

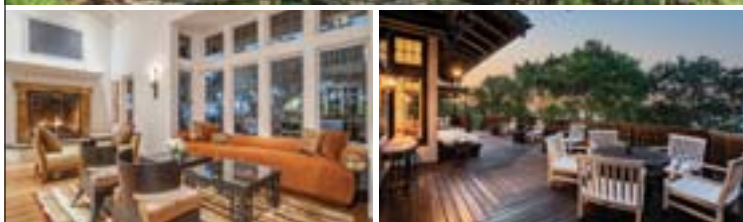
Planning Director Drummond Buckley said that Foster will be missed, but wished him the best in the new job. The city is currently recruiting for a replacement.

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