

# Community offers additional opinions on Housing Element via two recent surveys

By Vera Kochan

In a continuous effort to keep residents informed and participating in Moraga's Housing Element, the Planning Department conducted two recent surveys in order to gather more feedback concerning hopes and expectations related to housing, safety and growth within town.

Staff's booth at the April 29 Moraga Community Faire and Car Show attracted approximately 30 residents. Additionally, a May 18 Community Housing Meeting at the Hacienda de las Flores had seven residents in attendance.

According to a June 14 staff report presented to the town council by Moraga Planning Director Afshan Hamid and Consultant Barry Miller, the results of both outreach events mirrored each other quite closely. "There were continuing concerns regard-

ing issues such as wildfire mitigation and public transit," the report stated. "The majority of comments seemed to support more amenities linked to housing, such as a desire for more retail, another grocery store, medical facilities, restaurants, and supporting mixed-use development."

Also, "there were additional non-Housing related comments, such as wanting more sports fields. Although some residents have concerns regarding more density and housing, most residents wanted to see the commercial shopping centers redevelop."

The Planning Department continuously updates the town's website with information on affordable housing, as well as resources for developers. For more information visit: [www.moraga.ca.us/make-moraga-home](http://www.moraga.ca.us/make-moraga-home).

Moraga's current Housing Element status update with regards to the State of Califor-

nia Housing & Community Development (HCD) was in a holding pattern after its third submission. However, on the afternoon of the Town Council's June 14 meeting, the Planning Department finally received comments back from HCD. Hamid was able to confirm that staff will meet with HCD in the coming week to discuss any changes, and then report back to the council with revisions.

Most of the revisions have to do with Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH), which according to Hamid "comes as no surprise." She assured the town council that everything looks doable and insubstantial, so it appears that Moraga is heading for the Housing Element home stretch. The staff report noted that as of June 6, only three of the cities in Contra Costa County (Oakley, Orinda, and San Ramon) have been found in compliance.

# SMC's River of Words 2023, a youth art and poetry competition, sparked dramatic results



Photo Vera Kochan

"Made for Each Otter," Joy Y., 5th Grade, Georgia, Category II Grand Prize Winner

By Vera Kochan

Although the Saint Mary's College art exhibit, "River of Words: The Natural World as Viewed by Young People," closed a few days ago, the winning entries that were on display left an indelible mark in the artistic world with regards to the imprint left by today's youth and their perceptions of our planet.

River of Words (ROW) was founded in 1995 by Pamela Michael, a writer and activist, along with Robert Hass, a former U.S. Poet Laureate and SMC alumnus. The program belongs to the Center for Environmental Literacy and is a part of the Kalmanovitz School of Education, pioneers in the field of place-based education. The ROW art and poetry competition is conducted in affiliation with the Library of Congress Center for the Book, is free to entrants, and is open internationally for children in kindergarten through the 12th grade. There are four categories with regards to age range: K-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12. A panel of 10 judges poured through more than 2,500 entries from all over the world.

According to the SMC exhibit description, "As the world continues to evolve, it is crucial that we nurture a deep understanding and appreciation of our natural environment in the hearts and minds of the next generation." The exhibit offered "a unique glimpse into the perspectives

of young people, presenting their visions of the natural world through a diverse array of artistic mediums and poetic expression. These young artists and poets remind us of the wonders of nature and the importance of preserving our planet for future generations."

On display were the works of more than 10 artistic finalists along with a binder of the winners in the poetry category. The entrants were asked to thoughtfully consider specific ideas, images or language; "show" the reader something either through a picture or with words; use images/words that will take people on a journey; have fun with forms and textures; feature a specific aspect, formation, ecosystem or organism of nature that resonates with you; show your scientific knowledge; get your inspiration from the outdoors by using all of your senses; and display an awareness of your global community.

A few of the artistic pieces were geared toward the ocean and its inhabitants with a visual commentary regarding pollution and the destruction of the ecosystem. On the other hand, most of the younger poetry finalists wrote about the beauty found in nature and the hope of its continuance; whereas the older finalists' poems expressed elements of sadness with the things mankind has done to create environmental disasters. Even in art, the innocence of youth gives way to the realities of the older and wiser.

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**IN THE COMMONS**

- 11:00 am Dog Parade (Registration at the Bandshell)
- 11:00 am - 5:00 pm Community Booths
- 11:00 am - 5:00 pm Inflatable Jumpies
- 11:00 am - 8:00 pm Food, Wine, & Beer Booths
- 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm Family Activities (Throughout the park)

**ON STAGE AT THE BANDSHELL**

- 6:45 pm National Anthem & Mayor's Welcome
- 7:00 pm House Rockers (Concert)
- 9:30 pm FIREWORKS (Start time is estimated)

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