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## Town to notify HCD of informational report acceptance

By Vera Kochan

The Town Council received and accepted an informational report regarding draft technical revisions pertaining to the 2023-31 Moraga Housing Element. This report summarizes changes made to a prior Housing Element report while striving to be in compliance with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

According to the July 12 staff report by Moraga Planning Director Afshan Hamid and Consultant Barry Miller, "The Town of Moraga is continuing to implement its Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative. The Initiative includes two phases. All components of Phase One have been completed, including the 6th Cycle (2023-2031) Housing Element, conforming amendments to the Moraga General Plan, adoption of an inclusionary zoning ordinance, rezoning of key sites and amendments to the zoning ordinance to meet required housing targets, rezoning of the Bollinger Canyon Special Study Area, objective development and design standards for Rheem Center, and a program-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the above actions."

The report continues, "Phase Two is scheduled to begin in August 2023, and will include an evacuation study, additional zoning ordinance revisions, and an update of the remaining General Plan Elements." The revisions that HCD requested, according to staff, are minor technical edits that serve to clarify information already given in the adopted Housing Element. With regards to Constraints Analysis, HCD requested staff to analyze specific development standards in the R-20 zoning district which might cause developmental constraints, as well as more analysis information with regards to the scenic corridor requirements in the Moraga Center Specific Plan (MCSP) area. With the passing of AB 2339, Moraga is required to demonstrate that it was able to provide emergency shelter based on the number of homeless in Moraga at the last point-in-time count. HCD also requested an analysis of Moraga's compliance with the Permit Streamlining Act as related to CEQA as well as a timeline for updating the Planned Development ordinance, and lastly, HCD stated that the Town's Park Impact Fee was high and asked for a reevaluation. HCD did not need changes to the Town's housing goals or policies, but changes to the housing programs were requested. HCD asked for clarification regarding the General Plan Update concerning more opportunities for "missing middle" housing in the form of townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, etc. HCD requested alterations regarding future zoning changes, minor edits that would make housing for Saint Mary's College students, faculty and staff beneficial to lower- and moderate-income households, and would like the Town's Wildfire Safety and Emergency Preparedness Planning program to acknowledge the potential to develop housing for firefighters and teachers in the event that Station 41 and the Moraga Unified School District corporation yard should modernize.

Additional edits include HCD requests to add more inclusionary zoning, step-up Accessory Dwelling Unit targets, increase housing opportunities in established low-density neighborhoods, and encourage shared housing in single-family neighborhoods as well as focus First-Time Homebuyer Programs on low- or moderate-income households within the MCSP and Rheem Center areas.

More edits involve CEQA exemption policies, fee deferral policies for affordable housing, the Town's Streamlined Review Process as pertains to the Planning Commission or Town Council, and Scenic Corridor Regulations in the MCSP area with regards to buildings directly facing the scenic road. HCD requests an amendment to the municipal code to allow residential uses in the Institutional zoning district (Saint Mary's College) and finally, the staff report states that HCD requests "that the Town will aspire to allocate its capital improvement dollars equitably across the town and not favor one neighborhood over another."

Staff notified HCD on July 13 of the council's unanimous acceptance of the informational report. If any public comments were received during the seven-day public review period, HCD could require additional revisions. If none were received, HCD will be prepared to issue the formal certification letter. Once this letter is received, the Town can begin to implement the Housing Element.

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