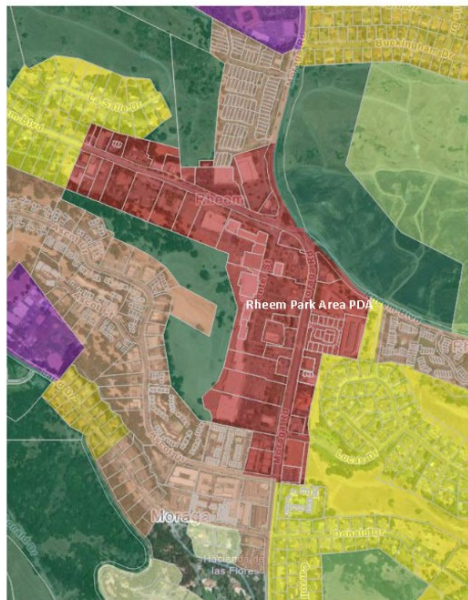


Published September 13th, 2023

Town works to get Rheem Park Area designated as a Connected Community Priority Development Area

By Vera Kochan

Rheem Park Area PDA (RED)



Rheem Park Area red Image courtesy Moraga Planning Dept

With the town recently adopting the Sixth Cycle Housing Element for 2023-31, staff hopes to submit an application to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) with the idea that the Rheem Park Area will receive a designation as a Connected Community Priority Development Area (PDA).

According to the Aug. 23 staff report by Moraga Planning Director Afshan Hamid, "A PDA is a policy designation with a focus on planned areas for new homes, jobs, and community amenities. The vision for a PDA is to create a transit-oriented area, addressing important community needs, such as housing supply and local-serving retail opportunities, consistent with the recently adopted sixth cycle Housing Element." It is expected that transit availability near housing will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as Vehicle Miles Traveled.

With the PDA designation the town will be able to pursue future grant funding for the Rheem Center Realm Plan area and more. However, the designation does not require the town to build any housing. That decision would fall to the individual property owners, the largest of which are U.S. Realty Partners and Saint Mary's College.

During Phase I of the Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative, the town rezoned parts of the Rheem Valley Shopping Center in order to allow for multi-family and mixed-use residential housing.

Staff submitted a preliminary application to MTC for review on July 31. With a unanimous approval of the resolution authorizing submittal of a new PDA during the town council's Aug. 23 meeting, Moraga is on the road to a fully processed application.

MTC has criteria for a Connected Community PDA that the Rheem Park Area qualifies for. "First, the entire area is within half mile of a bus stop with peak service of 30 minutes or less and is beyond half mile of transit service that meets the 'high quality transit' criteria," states Hamid in her staff report. "County Connection currently provides Bus Route 6 with two bus stops at Rheem Park Area with less than 30 minutes service during peak hours."

The report continues, "Second, the Rheem Park Area has been identified as having at least 50% of the area defined as a High Resource or Highest Resource on a California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) map."

The third qualification explains that the town council has already adopted two policies to reduce VMT.

With the coveted PDA designation, town staff will be able to apply for future state grants which can be used to make the area more attractive to possible investors. The Moraga Shopping Center has recently been awarded two PDA grants. The first, in the amount of \$87,725 will help to fund amendments to the Moraga Center Development Standards. The second grant, totaling \$600,000 will be used for a School Street redevelopment study.

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA