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Town of Moraga's 6th Cycle Adopted Housing Element approved

By Vera Kochan

Moraga Planning Director Afshan Hamid received a letter dated Sept. 14 from the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) informing her that the State of California had certified the Town's 6th Cycle Adopted Housing Element for 2023-31.

"HCD is pleased to find the adopted housing element, including technical modifications, in substantial compliance with State Housing Element Law (Gov. Code 65580 et seq) as of the date of this letter," wrote HCD Senior Program Manager Paul McDougall. "The adopted element, including technical modifications was found to be substantially the same as the revised draft element that HCD's July 11, 2023 review determined met statutory requirements."

After two years of planning, analysis, and extensive community input, the Town Council adopted the Housing Element on Jan. 25. "Our Housing Element reflects the Town Council's and community's vision for providing better housing opportunities in Moraga while maintaining our semi-rural feel and preserving our hillsides, open space, and existing residential neighborhoods," stated Mayor Renata Sos.

According to the Town's Sept. 19 press release, the certification allows Moraga the eligibility "to seek federal, state, and regional public infrastructure, environmental sustainability, affordable housing, and numerous other grants and funding sources that are not available to municipalities without a current Housing Element."

Additionally, Moraga will retain local control over land use while setting its sights on providing a wider range of housing opportunities for seniors, young families, local teachers, and the Town's essential service providers.

McDougall's letter reminded the town that it must continue with its implementation of all programs with special attention to areas concerning the General Plan Update, Phase One and Phase Two Zoning Text Amendments, Phase One Zoning Map Changes, Facilitate Access to Affordable Housing Subsidies, Adoption of an Affordable Housing (Inclusionary Zoning) Ordinance, ADU Production along with Compliance and Monitoring, SB 9 Projects, Amendments to Parking Regulations, Fee Deferral and Calculation Methods, Streamlined Review Process, Allowances for Special Housing Types, and Affirmatively Further Fair Housing. Town Manager Scott Mitnick commented, "This Housing Element is good for Moraga businesses, because it will revitalize our two commercial areas to better attract and retain retailers, restaurants, and other amenities that our residents have been requesting for years." Mitnick hopes that additional residential units in the heart of both shopping centers will attract more foot traffic which in turn will spark better retail, dining, and entertainment prospects.

Both the HCD letter and the town's press release spoke of the dedication and hard work by all involved with Moraga's 6th Cycle process and eventual certification, calling it a team effort. While noting the residents, businesses, landowners, and prospective developers for their collective participation, along with the Town Council, Planning Commission, Town staff, outside consultants (Barry Miller and BAE Urban Economics), and partners at HCD, the highest accolades go to Hamid and her team for their long hours and commitment to the process.

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[back](#)

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