

My name is Marj Blackwell. I live on Pala Ave., directly above Moraga Ave. I regret having to be here tonight – I know how hard the city staff has worked on the housing plan and that you face tough decisions. However, I disagree with building 132 units in Moraga Canyon. After living directly above Moraga Ave. for nearly 44 years, I can attest it is a busy, non-stop commute route between Hwy 13 and Highland Ave and Pleasant Valley. It is the only evacuation route for nearby residents and it is regularly used by Piedmont fire trucks and ambulances to accidents on Hwy 13. There is no alternative route. In addition, the idea of putting a roundabout at Maxwellton or RedRock Road may slow traffic for 2 seconds but it will not deter traffic or slow it down for pedestrians the rest of the distance.

The Housing Element Draft EIR states that if a pedestrian is hit by a vehicle at 40 mph, there's an 85% chance they will be killed, and at 20 mph, the chance of being killed is only 5%. Well, that's a relief. So, if someone is hit at the roundabout they have a 5% chance of being killed but if they --, likely a child, run across Moraga where there's no roundabout, there's an 85% chance they will be killed.

Traffic and pedestrian safety are just 2 of the problems in Moraga Canyon. Even the Housing Element EIR found significant and unavoidable impacts from development of housing in and near a Very High Fire Hazard Safety Zone, including areas with steep terrain such as Moraga Canyon. QUOTE Even with mitigation, it is not possible to prevent a significant risk of wildfires or fully protect people and structures from the risk of wildfires. The EIR states the City must hire professional engineers to do extensive geological testing to determine if the soil is stable. Consider the cost to the City of doing all the required soil testing and mitigation to shore up the steep hillsides on both sides of the Canyon. Just last week, a landslide at Maxwellton closed Moraga Ave. for several hours.

ON Feb. 10, 2023, I wrote to the State Housing Community Development Reviewer for Piedmont – with a copy to City Planning – pointing out all the problems of developing 132 housing units in Moraga Canyon. I proposed an alternative – namely to reduce the 132 units in half – providing 33 low-income and 32 moderate income units. And that the remaining units be built in Central Piedmont, adjacent to schools, services and AC Transit buses. I identified 2 City owned properties that have never been considered for housing: namely the two tennis courts above the Community Park --- and the grassy, lower slope of Dracena Park. Both of these properties are in the heart of Piedmont, within walking distance of everything. Parking structures likely would not even be needed. I suspect low income housing developers would jump at these highly desirable sites.

Ten years ago, on Jan.. 21, 2014, the City Council voted to fund Phase 1 of a Blair Park landscape plan, mainly to pay for removing dead Monterey Pines. They also decided, that given the pedestrian safety problems of Moraga Ave, not to fund any more improvements to Blair Park until there was community-wide consensus on the future of the park. So, where is the community-wide consensus? I don't think online surveys on likes or dislikes about the specific plan options constitute citywide consensus.

Thank you, and I hope you will consider my comments.