

From: [Randolph Wu](#)
To: [Jen Cavanaugh](#); [Betsy Andersen](#); [Conna McCarthy](#); [Jennifer Long](#); [Tom Ramsey](#)
Cc: [Kevin Jackson](#); [Pierce Macdonald](#); [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Comments on Second Study Session for Moraga Canyon
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Mayor Cavanaugh, Vice-Mayor Andersen and Council members McCarthy, Long and Ramsey,

Thank you for sponsoring the second study session ably presented by the City's expert team. I learned a lot (and know that the time was best spent for discussion among council members). Here are some thoughts based on my observations over the last three years of Piedmont's role in the Bay Area's housing crisis and its reluctant compliance with RHNA.

1. Piedmont can and should be part of the solution to the housing shortage rather than relying on other East Bay cities stepping forward to build more affordable housing. The City has permitted plenty of ADUs suitable for single occupants and as a complement now needs to build larger homes especially for family households limited to affordable incomes.
2. The desire for mixed income or "integrated" housing may be best met by building affordable multi-family housing (MF) not only in Moraga Canyon but also in other areas of the City. The City Council should focus on getting this first MF project done. In my opinion the only **feasible** affordable housing site in this sixth cycle is in the Moraga Canyon area. Piedmont is well behind other cities in its adoption of MF programs; for this reason developers have more attractive opportunities in other cities with proven track records supporting MF development.
3. The Moraga Canyon specific area study identifies the key variables and trade-offs. The City has a thorough comparison of the four primary options and can with confidence pick the best path forward. While your choice may not be "something for everyone", you can reach a sound decision for the community based upon urban planning, schedule, financing and environmental impacts. Based on this study, you should issue a RFP as soon as possible and solicit proposals from developers for housing development.
4. You undoubtedly would like to have a broad consensus based upon a win-win-win. If there was a realistic option for timely construction of a MF project, an expanded soccer field and a modernized Corp Yard then that would be an easy choice. Unsurprisingly there are schedule trade-offs and significant financial costs for the MF project if other desired community projects are attached. **In particular Piedmont's A-1 bond allocation may be jeopardized.** This should be avoided. The MF project must be the first priority unencumbered by unrelated improvements.
5. Piedmont is an economically segregated community. While some believe that location of a MF project in Moraga Canyon would be wrong, to me that is a "through the looking glass" perspective. The residents in affordable housing will be a small minority in Piedmont. The communal support from living in the same building will be highly preferable to a scattering of low income households among different neighborhoods. A single family living in subsidized housing among more affluent neighbors likely would feel isolated. We all know the history of school integration in the U.S. and the brave children that enrolled, bused and then were jeered as they walked through the doors of segregated schools. That will not happen in Piedmont. But 60 families living together in the first MF project is a very good outcome that will create a strong family community and break down a century of housing barriers in the City.

6. The Piedmont community wants to help its schools which have significant financial and recruitment challenges. The benefit of adding another 30 market rate units to the Moraga Canyon specific plan should be considered not only for improved economics, but also for the possibility to add **moderate income** housing for PUSD employees that make more than the low income limit. In other words 10 of the 70-100 market units could be reserved for teachers on moderate incomes **if** PUSD and its philanthropic partners can contribute the lost margin (RLV) from converting 10 market units to moderate income units. There may be no better opportunity for PUSD to reserve housing for teachers. This potential inclusion of moderate income housing need not be decided now and should be explored through a RFP from developers. But if the City decides to add 30 dwelling units to the Moraga Canyon area because it is likely to enable a break-even outcome, then PUSD should be given an opportunity to step in and subsidize moderate income housing for its teachers.

7. The Fehr & Peers transportation report definitively lays to rest **all** concerns that have been raised about increased traffic. As someone who has biked up Moraga Ave. at 5-6 MPH, I applaud the road improvements that will ensure traffic safety for pedestrians, cyclists and cars. While some may prefer an up to 40 MPH speed for a quicker commute, I support "traffic calming" measures that will ensure safety for those that live, work and play in the Moraga Canyon neighborhood.

Summary

This is a momentous decision for Piedmont. As you deliberate I expect you will try to reach a consensus that meets the desires of everyone in the community. In my opinion a consensus is not possible in Moraga Canyon as those that insist upon preservation of all open space at Blair Park will not yield any ground for housing. Some open space can easily be preserved in Blair Park **with** housing development, but that concession will not be enough for them. If there is a strong desire in the community for more recreational space, the City should look to the large, undeveloped area below the Piedmont Reservoir.

This secluded area is a much better recreational prospect when compared to Blair Park, a narrow, lightly used park adjoining an arterial road.

Last, after weighing the competing interests in new housing, enhanced recreation, modern city facilities and the status quo, if your vote upsets one or more constituencies, then you will have done the right thing. I respect the opinions of others that favor the status quo lifestyle, but I urge you to move forward with MF Option 1, with an additional 30 dwelling units, as the best overall choice for Piedmont and the broader community we all must live in together.

Randy Wu