

From: [Marjorie Blackwell](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Moraga Canyon letter
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 7:57:57 PM
Attachments: [City Council letter-2272024.docx](#)

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Dear City Council,

Attached is a slightly revised version of a letter I sent you a few days ago. A number of concerned Moraga Canyon friends and neighbors asked me to resend the letter and add their names.

Also attached is a photo of the 2 tennis courts above the Community Park, taken at approximately 10 am on beautiful Saturday morning, last. As you can see only 1 court is being used.



To: City Council
Re: Housing Element EIR
From: Concerned Neighbors and Friends of Moraga Canyon
Date: Feb. 28, 2024

Dear Council Members,

We understand the dilemma you face in approving the 2023-2031 HE Implementation project “despite the potential for significant environmental effects that cannot be substantially lessened or avoided ...” but we once again urge you to consider the risks and inevitable consequences that will face Piedmont for years to come.

We refer specifically to the significant and unavoidable impacts of the proposed Moraga Canyon development, described in the EIR. Namely: geologic instability of the steep hillsides, dangers of landslides, building in a Very High Risk wildfire zone, inadequate evacuation routes, and most importantly, dangers to pedestrians crossing Moraga Ave. These “unavoidable risks” are life threatening and cannot be taken lightly simply by adopting “overriding considerations.”

Also, not to be taken lightly are the facts and reality that Moraga Canyon is over a mile from the center of Piedmont, public transportation, and schools, and that Moraga Ave. is a high-traffic, commuter artery where cars typically travel 30-plus mph. It is simply not a safe or attractive area for any kind of housing and will likely brand Piedmont as putting mandated housing in a remote, undesirable area.

In addition to building 132 housing units, expanding Coaches Field and saving open space, the city's consultant proposes "improvements" to Moraga Ave. such as adding sidewalks, a new bike lane and possibly a traffic signal. But they have yet to describe exactly how any of this will be accomplished. Do they propose to widen Moraga and straighten out the curves? How can a traffic light be installed with insufficient sight lines? And where will daily, high-volume traffic go during years of construction, since there are no alternative routes?

Another point not raised in the EIR is that Blair Park is a designated Piedmont city park. By declaring it developable surplus land, Piedmont will be the first and only city in California to build housing in a public park. An unfortunate precedent to set for a city that values its trees and parks!

Furthermore, in 2014, the City Council adopted a resolution to fund phase 1 of a landscape plan for Blair Park, but decided **"given the pedestrian safety of accessing the park, Phase 2 of the landscape project will not be funded, until community wide consensus has been reached for the future of Blair Park."** Does a Council resolution have a limited lifespan?

Also not mentioned in the EIR is the exorbitant costs to Piedmont residents of making Moraga Canyon and Moraga Ave. somehow acceptable to a developer or to a property insurance company. How high will our property taxes have to go to pay for this development?

We ask again, why is the City not considering alternatives now to Moraga Canyon? City Planning says it must abide by the State requirement of a minimum ½ acre for affordable housing sites. But if Piedmont is such a desirable "high resource area," why not convince the State to permit the City to combine two or more separate and more desirable sites? I know of one site that has

never even been considered: the two tennis courts directly above the Community Park. This site is centrally located, within easy walking distance of schools and transportation, and the infrastructure is already in place. Development costs would be far less than Moraga Canyon, and a parking structure would not even be needed.

We urge the Council to please consider the issues that many of us have been raising for the past two years and to recognize the undeniable facts and consequences of developing Moraga Canyon.

Thank you,

Friends of Moraga Canyon Board:

Marj Blackwell, President,
Chris Read, Vice President
Karen Harley, Treasurer
Julie Watters, Secretary
Peggy Esposito, Oakland Rep.

Friends and Neighbors of Moraga Canyon

Daphne Albert
Rami Albert
Ralph Catalano
Roxanne Gault
Roger Gault
Garrett Keating
Pam Hirtzer
Judee Lee
Winston Lee
Chris McGuffin
Rich Saykelly
Anita Stappen
Julie Stein
Jason Stein

Paulette Traverso
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