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To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Moraga Canyon
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City Council:

Thank you for your continued work on the Moraga Canyon Specific Plan for Piedmont's housing element. As decisions draw close, I encourage you to stay focused on the goal: **ensuring affordable housing gets built**.

It may be that Option 1 is the right choice. It's the cleanest and most straightforward. I support it.

However, I believe the **points that Piedmonter Deb Leland shared in an earlier letter** to the Council about **how Option 2 could be reworked to keep affordable housing the priority** bear thoughtful review. I am fond of Option 2 for emotional reasons: I prefer the affordable housing to be on the sunnier side of the canyon, with beautiful views.

Since I couldn't state things better myself, I'm copying key points from Deb's letter, which she shared with me. Thanks for the consideration.

From Deb Leland:

".... in its current form Option 2 does not meet either of the key criteria above, due to the \$5 million funding gap and the proposed phasing. Therefore, I would like to offer some ideas that could facilitate the phasing for Option 2 being reversed (i.e., to provide the developer control of the site designated for affordable housing immediately upon the City's selection of its development partner).

First, I would like to note that under Option 1 (or Options 3 or 4), if funds to improve Coaches Field were obtained and that project were to move forward, the existing softball and soccer fields would be out of service for the duration of that construction. Thus, there is nothing that mandates that replacement field space be completed (or even started) before housing construction could begin on the existing Coaches Field site. The Specific Plan could simply allow for each subsite of Option 2 to begin once funding for that subsite is secured. It will likely take about two years following site control for an affordable housing developer to be ready to start construction, and the City could work with the Piedmont community to raise funds for development of recreation facilities on the Blair Park site during that period.

However, I recognize that turning over control of the existing fields before funding is secured for new fields could create fear among the community that those recreational facilities would be lost entirely. Therefore, I believe the City Council needs to be able to see its path forward to financial viability of the full plan if it is to proceed with this option.

Here are some considerations to improve the financial feasibility of Option 2:

- **Allow flexibility on the size of the playfield to be developed at Blair Park.** The current Coaches Field has limited usefulness given its poor drainage, lack of lighting, and small soccer field, so creating a year-round playable turf field of comparable size at Blair Park would still be a huge benefit for the community. Furthermore, my recollection of the 2010 Blair Park proposal for a 300' x 150' playfield was that it seemed too big for the site, creating significant visual and grading impacts. (I think the same is likely true for a field of that size on the existing site, by the way.) The City could still hold on to the idea of a U14 field as a “wish list” item should additional funding become available.
- **Allow flexibility in building types, density and height to increase the residual land value and maximize the value of land features on the north side of Moraga.** Specifically, the skate park area offers spectacular views of the bay and easy pedestrian access to schools. The highest value use of this portion of the site could very well be lower density for-sale housing, and the Specific Plan should allow for this valuable area to be parceled off and sold for market rate homes at a density that maximizes the total land value. To offset that lower density housing, explore siting a taller structure where the site topography provides natural screening, such as the portion at the mouth of Red Rock Rd where Option 2 currently shows parking.
- **Expand the developable land area at the mouth of Red Rock Road** by slightly realigning Moraga Ave to the south, from where the steep hillside on the south side retreats to just below the driveway for 911 Moraga Ave. One commenter at the March 1 workshop introduced the idea of moving the entire Moraga Ave ROW to run along the southern edge of the Specific Plan area. While I don't think this is practical given the two or three homes whose driveway access is via the north side of Moraga Ave between Red Rock Rd and Maxwellton, it seems possible at the western edge of the plan area, and could create a desirable site for a taller apartment building.

If some combination of all these modifications to Option 2 result in a financially feasible plan, then the City could choose this option **and allow a developer immediate site control of the designated affordable housing site.** This is the only way that Option 2 would meet the primary objective of the Specific Plan and preserve the availability of the valuable Measure A-1 subsidy (if the City moves quickly). Otherwise, the City must either pledge City funds to cover the gap (which it seems disinclined to do), or select Option 1. Failure to do so would be a failure to adhere to the Housing Element's purpose to enable housing.

Regards,
Susy Struble