

From: [r.raushenbush](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [r.raushenbush](#)
Subject: Comment on 3/18/24 Council Agenda, Item #6, Moraga Canyon Specific Plan
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Dear Members of the City Council:

I am writing regarding Agenda Item 6: Consideration of a Resolution Directing Staff to Refine the Approach to Preparation of Draft Moraga Canyon Specific Plan. I encourage you to direct Staff to focus on Alternative Site Plan Option 1 as discussed in the March 18, 2024 Council Agenda Report.

Option 1 presents a viable plan that focuses on constructing new housing on Blair Park, which has been underutilized for decades. Constructing housing there does not require moving any other facility currently existing there, much less financing re-constructing that facility elsewhere. A developer could move forward on the housing and roadway improvements while any issues about changes to recreation facilities and the corporation yard on the other side of Moraga Ave. are resolved. Because less non-housing work is required, the City will not seek as much in non-housing funding from the developer and thus can insist on more affordable housing.

By contrast, Option 2 contemplates moving recreational facilities to Blair Park. Given Piedmont's very limited field space, housing work on Coaches Field is very unlikely to begin until a new field is available on Blair Park. As you know, efforts to construct a soccer field on Blair Park failed in the past—why should we expect such efforts to move quickly

now? The financing for all of the “pre-housing” work is also uncertain. Based on past reports, the City needs to retain any “spare” funds, as well as the community’s tolerance for bond measures, for relocating or rebuilding the police and fire departments. Whether any developer would pay the costs of such new recreational facilities is quite uncertain and, at a minimum, the number of market rate units required for such a deal would increase significantly.

The City Council has risen to the challenge of preparing a Housing Element that accommodates additional housing in Piedmont as our share of a regional need. Now is the time to focus on getting actual units built. Option 1 provides the greatest likelihood of achieving that goal and certainly does so much more quickly than Option 2, which ties new housing to new recreational facilities.

Thank you for considering my views. Rick Raushenbush

Richard W. Raushenbush