

# HILLSIDES AND RIDGELINE PROJECT

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### 1. What is the Hillsides and Ridgeline Project?

The Hillsides and Ridgeline project is an effort led by the Town of Moraga to clarify and improve the Town's development regulations that apply to hillside and ridgeline areas. The Town began the project in late 2013 based on a Town Council goal to study and potentially update the existing regulations for hillside and ridgeline development. The project will result in targeted amendments to the Town's hillside and ridgeline policies and regulations. The project addresses town-wide regulations, not any specific development project or property.

### 2. What are the major goals of the project?

The goals of the Hillsides and Ridgeline project are to:

- Reduce community conflicts over hillside and ridgeline development.
- Clarify and educate the community about existing regulations.
- Provide clear, factual, and technically-sound background data to support decision-making.
- Improve existing regulations to better achieve the Town's hillside goals and policies.

### 3. What are the Town's existing hillside and ridgeline regulations?

Moraga's hillside and ridgeline regulations are primarily found in the following documents and ordinances:

- Moraga General Plan
- Moraga Open Space Ordinance (MOSO)
- Guidelines for Interpreting and Implementing the Moraga Open Space Ordinance ("MOSO Guidelines")
- Moraga Design Guidelines
- Grading Ordinance (Municipal Code Title 14)
- Moraga Zoning Ordinance, particularly chapters 8.48 (Planned Development District), 8.52 (MOSO and Non-MOSO Open Space), 8.128 (Ridgeline Protection), 8.132 (Scenic Corridors), 8.136 (Slope Density)

### 4. What is the MOSO Initiative or Ordinance? Will the Town amend it as part of this project?

Moraga voters approved the Moraga Open Space Ordinance (MOSO) in 1986. MOSO limits residential densities in certain areas designated as "Open Space Lands." MOSO also prohibits development in high slope areas and near ridgelines within MOSO Open Space Lands. All Town policies and regulations must be consistent with the voter-approved MOSO Ordinance. The Moraga Open Space Ordinance will not be amended as part of this project.

### 5. What are the MOSO Guidelines? Will they be amended as part of this project?

As called for by MOSO, the Town Council adopted the Guidelines for Interpreting and Implementing the Moraga Open Space Initiative ("MOSO Guidelines") in 1986 and has amended them several times since.

The MOSO Guidelines provide detailed guidance on the interpretation and application of the MOSO Initiative. It is possible that the Town will amend the MOSO Guidelines as part of this project.

### **6. How can I learn more about the Town's hillside and ridgeline regulations?**

The Town has prepared a background report for the Hillsides and Ridgeline project called Understanding Moraga's Hillside Regulations. This document explains the Town's existing regulations in plain English and identifies key issues and problems with these regulations. You can view this document on the project website: [www.moraga.ca.us/hillsides](http://www.moraga.ca.us/hillsides).

### **7. What is the process to complete the Hillsides and Ridgeline project?**

The Hillside and Ridgeline project includes the following major tasks:

1. Project Initiation – Receive preliminary community input on key hillside issues (completed)
2. Background Analysis – Develop background data and maps to address key issues (completed)
3. Issues and Options – Prepare options for how to address key issues (Late 2015)
4. Draft Regulations – Prepare draft amendments to Town's policies and regulations (Early 2016)
5. Review and Adoption – Adopt amended policies and regulations (Mid 2016)

### **8. What products have already been prepared for the Hillsides and Ridgeline Project?**

The Town has already prepared the following interim products for the Hillsides and Ridgeline project:

- Background Report – Understanding Moraga's Hillside Regulations
- Draft Landslide Hazard Maps
- Preliminary List of Key Issues
- Issues and Options Memorandum

All of these products can be viewed on the project web page: [www.moraga.ca.us/hillsides](http://www.moraga.ca.us/hillsides).

### **9. What are the Draft Landslide Hazard Maps?**

The draft landslide hazard maps were prepared to help inform the update of hillside and ridgeline regulations and may be incorporated into a final product at the conclusion of the project. Two maps were prepared: a detailed landslide inventory map and a simplified landslide hazard area map. These maps represent planning-level data for particular areas of interest in Moraga and are not a substitute for site-specific mapping and analysis. Future use of these maps, and possible future additions to them, are being considered as part of project issues and options currently under consideration.

The draft landslide hazard maps can be viewed on the project web page.

### **10. Who is making decisions for the Town on the Hillsides and Ridgeline Project?**

Any changes to the Town's hillside and ridgeline regulations must be approved by the Moraga Town Council. The Town Council will consider recommendations from the Planning Commission and Hillsides and Ridgeline Steering Committee, as well as input from the community through public workshops, meetings and the project's on-line forum, Open Town Hall (see below) when making its decisions.

**11. What is the Hillsides and Ridgeline Steering Committee?**

The Hillsides and Ridgeline Steering Committee was appointed by the Town Council in 2013 to help guide work by Town staff and consultants on the project. The Steering Committee consists of five members representing the Town Council, Planning Commission, Design Review Board, and Parks and Recreation Commission. Since 2014 the Steering Committee has met five times. The Steering Committee will provide feedback and direction on project materials to Town staff and consultants, make recommendations on amended regulations to the Town Council, and help ensure that project outcomes reflect the full diversity of opinions in the community. Steering Committee meeting agenda and materials are available on the project web page.

**12. How is the Town engaging the community in the Hillsides and Ridgeline project?**

Community participation is an essential part of the Hillsides and Ridgeline project. The Town aims to provide for a fair, open, and transparent process and to solicit a diversity of opinions and points of view. The Town also seeks to promote civil and constructive engagement and to approach difficult issues in the spirit of creative problem solving.

Community workshops are the primary way for residents to provide input on the project. The Town hosted two workshops in 2014, and will host two additional workshops in 2015 and 2016 to obtain input on the Issues and Options and draft regulations. Residents may also provide input through Open Town Hall (the Town's on-line community discussion forum), and may attend meetings of the Steering Committee, Planning Commission, and Town Council.

The Town is letting the community know about opportunities to participate through email announcements, postings on nextdoor.com, postings on the Moraga Citizen's Network, presentations to community organizations, and other methods.

**13. What is Open Town Hall?**

Open Town Hall is the Town's on-line community discussion forum being used for the Hillsides and Ridgeline project. Through the course of the project, different topics will be posted on Open Town Hall for public comment. Open Town hall supplements traditional in-person workshops to broaden public participation in the project. You can access Open Town Hall through the project web page.

**14. I've heard that the Town is conducting focus groups for this project. What are these focus groups and how will the information be used?**

The Town has hired a professional public opinion research firm to obtain additional community input on key project issues. The Town will conduct four focus groups of Moraga residents with participants carefully screened to provide a representative sample of public opinion. These focus groups will allow the Town to "test" if input obtained at public workshops is representative of general sentiments in the community. The Steering Committee, Planning Commission, and Town Council will consider the results of the focus groups when selecting preferred options to address key project issues.

**15. What were the outcomes of the first two workshops?**

The Town hosted workshops on April 16 and June 5, 2014. At the April 16, 2014 workshop, participants expressed the importance of protecting and maintaining the town's open space, hillsides, and semi-rural character. These qualities must be protected and maintained. Participants expressed a desire to better

understand the Town's hillside and ridgeline regulations and noted that existing regulations, to the extent they are understood, are unclear, conflicting, and produce uncertain outcomes. Participants also identified issues that should be studied as part of the project, including the protection of ridgelines on non-MOSO lands, hazard remediation in high-risk areas, and the rules that apply to scenic corridors and viewsheds.

At the second workshop on June 5, 2014 participants further prioritized issues for further study. The results of this workshop helped to guide the selection of the final list of issues for which options were prepared.

Summaries and results of both workshops are available on the project web page.

#### **16. How did the Town select the issues and options being considered?**

At prior community workshops, residents provided input on key issues associated with hillside and ridgeline regulations. Based on that input and recommendations from the Steering Committee and Planning Commission, the Town Council identified a list of key issues for further study. Town staff and consultants then prepared options to address these issues based on direction provided by the Steering Committee at three meetings this summer.

#### **17. How will the Town select a preferred option?**

Beginning in October 2015, the Steering Committee will meet to identify preferred options to address each project issue. The Steering Committee will consider community input from the September 17<sup>th</sup> workshop, input from Open Town Hall, results from the four focus groups, and public comment at the Steering Committee meetings. The Steering Committee will make a recommendation to the Town Council on preferred options. The Planning Commission will also meet in November 2015 to make a recommendation to the Town Council on the preferred options.

The Town Council will meet in January 2016 to consider the recommendations of the Steering Committee and Planning Commission and select preferred options to address each project issue. The Town Council will also directly consider results of the community workshop, Open Town Hall, focus groups, and public comment at the Town Council meeting when selecting preferred options.

Details on meeting dates and times will be publicly announced as soon as they are scheduled.

#### **18. What happens after the Town Council selects its preferred options?**

After the Town Council selects its preferred options, Town staff and consultants will prepare draft materials consistent with Town Council direction. Some of these materials may be amendments to the wording of specific policies or regulations within Town's General Plan and Zoning Code. Other materials may be new documents, maps, or other products to supplement the Town's existing policies and regulations. The Steering Committee will review these draft materials in early 2016, and will recommend draft final materials for adoption by Town Council. The Planning Commission will also hold a meeting in early 2016 to review the draft materials and make a recommendation to the Town Council. After receiving recommendations from the Steering Committee and Planning Commission, the Town Council will hold public meetings to take final action on the draft materials.

**19. How can I get additional information about this project?**

You can access information about project meetings and materials on the project web page. If you are not already on the project email distribution list, please contact Ellen Clark, Planning Director, at [eclark@moraga.ca.us](mailto:eclark@moraga.ca.us) or at (925) 888-7041. You may also contact Ellen with any specific questions about the project.