



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Town of Moraga Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative EIR

Date: February 3, 2022

To: Reviewing Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Town of Moraga's Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative

The Town of Moraga (Town) is preparing its Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative which includes an update to the Town's Housing Element, rezoning of key sites within the Town's jurisdiction, and amendments to the General Plan. The Town has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be necessary to evaluate environmental impacts of the Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative (project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In compliance with CEQA, the Town will be the Lead Agency and prepare the EIR. The Town is requesting comments and guidance on the scope and content of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies, interested public agencies, organizations, and the general public (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15082).

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) and background documents associated with the Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative, known as the "project" under CEQA, are available for review on the Town's Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative webpage at: <https://www.moraga.ca.us/493/Advanced-Planning-Initiative>. This NOP provides a summary of the project; the potential environmental issues to be analyzed in the EIR; and information on how to comment on the scope of the EIR.

Notice of Preparation Public Review Period: February 3, 2022 to March 7, 2022

The Town requests your careful review and consideration of this notice, and it invites input and comments from interested agencies, persons, and organizations regarding the preparation of the EIR. Comments and responses to this notice must be in writing and submitted to the Lead Agency Contact by **5:00 p.m. on March 7, 2022**. If applicable, please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization. If your agency is a responsible agency as defined by *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15381, your agency may use the environmental documents prepared by the Town when considering permits or approvals for action regarding the project. Please submit written comments by email or mail to the Lead Agency Contact:

Afshan Hamid, Planning Director
Town of Moraga Planning Department
329 Rheem Boulevard
Moraga, California 94556
ahamid@moraga.ca.us

For comments submitted via email, please include "Scoping Comments: Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative" in the subject line and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email.

Public Scoping Meeting: The Town will hold a virtual scoping meeting to provide an opportunity for agency staff and interested members of the public to submit verbal comments on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The virtual scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, **February 17, 2022** at 6:00 p.m.

The link to the Zoom webinar is the following:

<https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fus02web.zoom.us%2Fj%2F88320221044&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cc52b3d45c8af47f6f3f608d9e5dad44%7C0601450f05594ee5b99257193f29a7f8%7C0%7C0%7C637793550420019502%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000∓reserved=0>

To attend the Zoom webinar by telephone, dial the following number:

+1-669-900-6933 (webinar ID: 883 2022 1044)

For more information and to register to attend the scoping meeting, go to www.makemoragahome.org. The scoping presentation will be available to view after February 17, 2022 at the same URL.

Project Background: Like all cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Town of Moraga is required to update the Housing Element of its General Plan to cover the 2023-2031 planning period. The Housing Element must address new state requirements, such as “affirmatively furthering fair housing” and ensuring compliance with permitting requirements in state law. The Housing Element also must demonstrate that the Town has sufficient capacity to meet Moraga’s “fair share” of the region’s housing needs, as determined by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). Through the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process, which is required by State law, the 2023-2031 RHNA for Moraga has been set at 1,118 housing units. This is an increase of more than 400 percent relative to the allocation for 2015-2023.

The Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative will serve as a cohesive long-term framework for future growth and development in the Town. The Initiative was catalyzed by the RHNA assignment, as well as Plan Bay Area 2050 and other initiatives that support denser housing in “Priority Development Areas” around the region. The Initiative is meant to ensure the Town has a sufficient number of appropriately zoned sites to meet its housing assignment. It is also intended to provide supportive housing goals, policies, programs, and quantitative objectives to meet the Town’s future housing needs. To that end, the Town is preparing its 6th Cycle Housing Element Update, which will result in a series of land use and zoning modifications.

The Town of Moraga is consolidating long range planning efforts through this initiative, namely the Housing Element Update and corresponding rezoning of the Moraga Center Specific Plan and Rheem Park Areas, rezoning of the Bollinger Canyon Study Area, and General Plan amendments to achieve internal consistency and meet recent State requirements. For example, the Town must adopt vehicle miles travelled (VMT) thresholds as required by Senate Bill 743 to determine potential impacts from future projects. The Advanced Planning Initiative will ensure a new and comprehensive vision for growth throughout the Town that meets the community’s needs.

Project Location: The Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative encompasses the Town of Moraga, within the County of Contra Costa, California. Most of the sites analyzed under the project would be located within the Moraga Center Specific Plan area and the Rheem Park Area about a mile to the north. Figure 1 shows the regional location and Figure 2 shows the Plan Area, which includes the Town limits and sphere of influence. The three geographic areas highlighted on Figure 3 are discussed in greater detail in the Project Description below.

Proposed Project: The scope of the environmental analysis encompasses three main components: the Town of Moraga’s Housing Element Update and the rezoning of specific urbanized parts of Moraga, rezoning of the Bollinger Canyon Study Area, and amendments to the General Plan. Due to the Town-wide influence of these documents, the Town has determined that a Program EIR will be the appropriate document to comply with CEQA. The Program EIR will analyze the respective environmental impacts associated with each of the three components.

The Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative represents the community's view of its future and contains the goals and policies upon which the Town Council and Planning Commission will base their future land use and resource decisions. The Initiative will identify how the Town anticipates meeting its RHNA. It will reflect changes in the community, new issues and opportunities as identified from community input, changes in State law, and new trends. The Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- A State-certified Housing Element for 2023-2031 that responds to local and regional needs.
- An internally-consistent, easy-to-use General Plan that is legally compliant and addresses emerging issues.
- Updated long-range planning policies and programs that respond to recent State legislation related to Vehicle Miles Traveled, climate change and resilience, fire hazards, evacuation, and other pertinent topics.
- General Plan land use and zoning designations for the Bollinger Canyon Study Area.
- Opportunities for meaningful public participation, including the engagement of residents who have not historically participated in planning processes.
- New objective development standards consistent with state law.

Housing Element Update and Urban Rezoning

The Housing Element Update will present a comprehensive set of housing policies and actions for the years 2023-2031 and will encompass the entire Town of Moraga. The Housing Element Update will be based on the Town's RHNA, plus a buffer of units to ensure ongoing compliance with the No Net Loss provisions of State housing law. Potential new opportunity sites would be identified based on a number of factors, such as existing use, adjacent uses, occupancy levels, availability for sale, floor area ratio (relative to zoning allowances), and improvement to land value ratio.

As illustrated in the attached Figure 3, rezoning would be focused in two specific geographic areas:

- Rheem Park Area - The Rheem Park area is an approximately 60-acre area located at the intersection of Rheem Boulevard and Moraga Road in north-central Moraga. It includes the Rheem Shopping Center, office buildings, a convalescent facility, miscellaneous commercial uses, and vacant land. Zoning in the area includes Suburban Office, Limited Commercial, and Community Commercial. Multi-family residential uses are not listed as a permitted use in these zoning districts. Proposed zoning changes would allow multi-family residential uses on some of these properties, at densities meeting the State "default density" requirement of at least 20 units per acre.
- Moraga Center - Moraga Center is an approximately 150-acre area generally located around the intersection of Moraga Road and Moraga Way. Land use in this area is governed by a Specific Plan adopted in 2010, as well as new zoning regulations adopted in 2020. Proposed zoning changes in this area would include increasing the maximum allowable densities on sites where multi-family uses are currently permitted, as required by State law, and making multi-family residential a permitted use in areas where it is currently not permitted. The specific sites and/or zones subject to these changes will be determined through a planning process to take place in Spring 2022.

Rezoning of Bollinger Canyon Study Area

Bollinger Canyon is identified as a "Study Area" on Moraga's General Plan and Zoning Maps. A variety of land use and zoning options will be considered to rezone the area, including the application of existing zoning districts to the site and the development of new zoning districts that do not currently exist. Revisions to the Town's transfer of development rights procedures and standards may also be considered.

General Plan Amendments

Part of the Housing Element Update and the resulting rezoning will require amendments to the General Plan as rezoning would cause changes in land use, revisions to the definitions of land use categories, and changes to the residential development potential estimates included in the Town's 2002 General Plan. Changes to land use and

zoning will likely require new policies in the Land Use, Community Design, Public Safety, Open Space and Conservation, and Circulation Elements. In addition, the Town will adopt VMT thresholds for future projects in Moraga as part of the update to the Circulation Element. Updated language for the Bollinger Canyon Study Area also will be developed.

Project Alternatives: The EIR will evaluate a reasonable range of project alternatives that, consistent with CEQA, meet most of the project objectives and reduce or avoid potential environmental effects, including a required No Project Alternative.

Potential Environmental Effect Areas: The EIR will describe the reasonably foreseeable and potentially significant adverse effects of the proposed project (both direct and indirect). The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the project when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The Town anticipates that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following topic areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR:

- Aesthetics/Visual
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Less than Significant Impacts (Agriculture and Mineral Resources)
- Cumulative Effects
- Growth Inducing Effects

When the Draft EIR is completed, it will be available for review at the Town's Planning Department located at 329 Rheem Boulevard, Moraga, California 94556 and online at: www.makemoragahome.org. The Town will issue a Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR at that time to inform the public and interested agencies, groups, and individuals of how to access the Draft EIR and provide comments.

If you have questions regarding this NOP or the scoping meeting, please contact Afshan Hamid at (925) 888-7043 or via email at makemoragahome@moraga.ca.us.

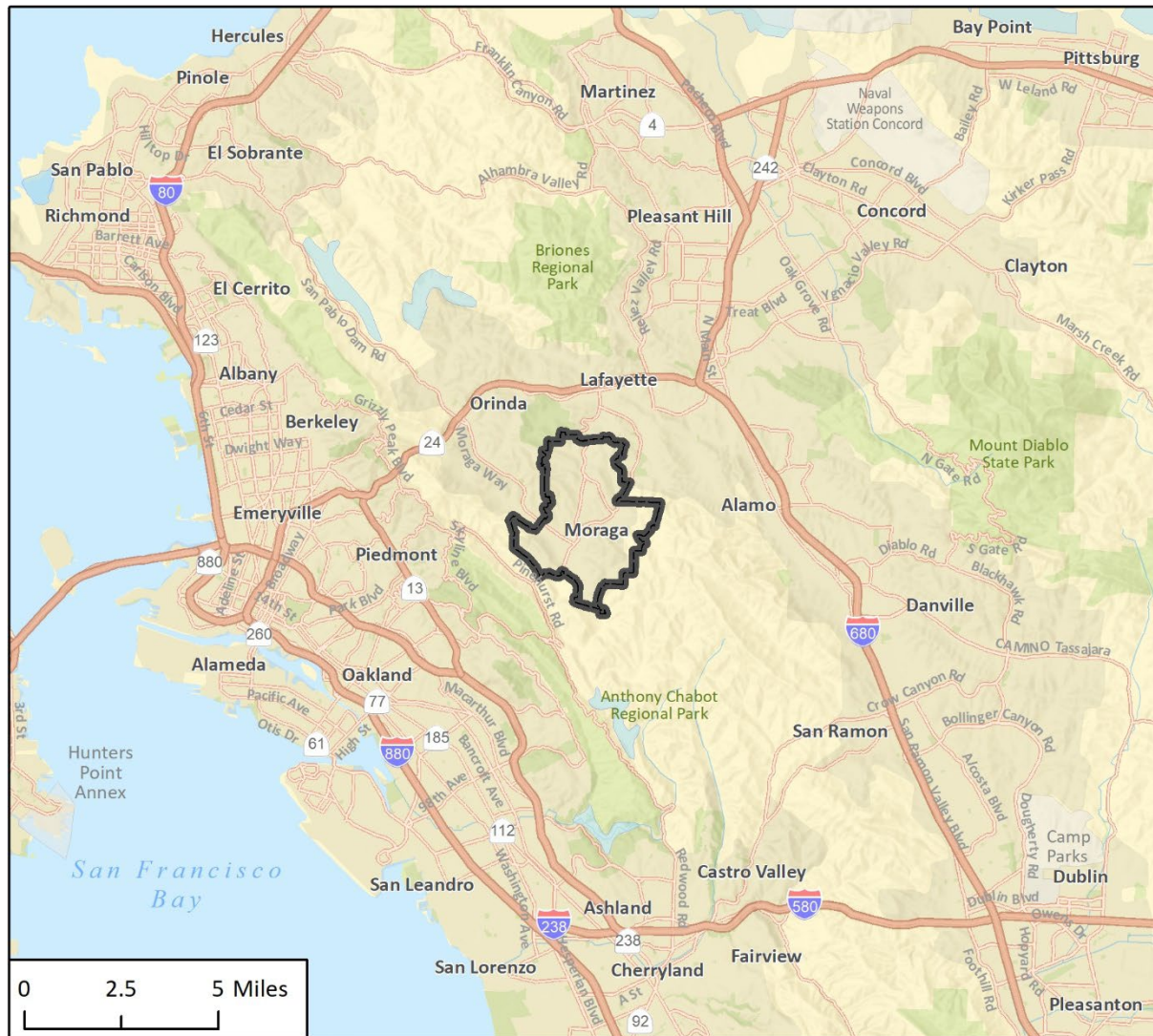


Afshan Hamid, Planning Director

February 1, 2022

Date

Figure 1 Regional Location



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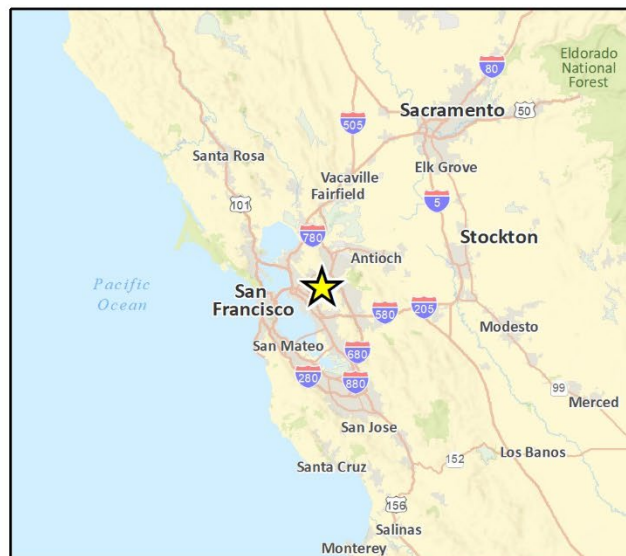


Fig. 1 Regional Location.

Figure 2 Plan Area

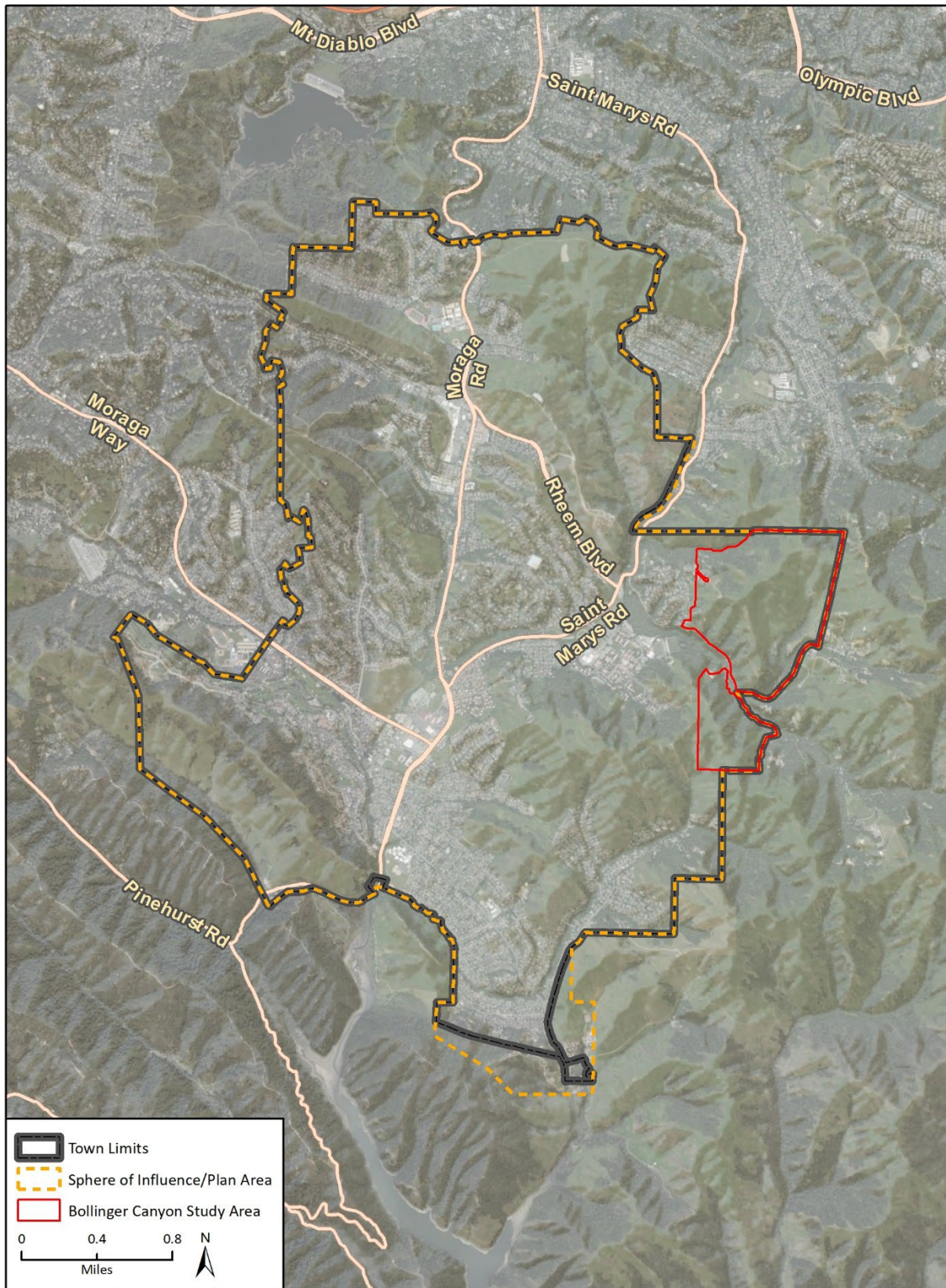


Fig 2 Plan Area

Figure 3 Study Areas

