



Moraga Town Center Homes



# 5

## COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

Moraga is a beautiful community. Its identity is shaped by hillsides, open spaces, vegetation, scenic vistas, the built environment, and its agricultural heritage. Collectively these features create a distinct character that is cherished by residents.

The Community Design Element seeks to retain these qualities while planning for changes in Moraga's commercial centers, including increased densities. It provides a framework to protect open spaces and hillsides, maintain the character of neighborhoods, conserve historic resources, and enhance the appeal of shopping areas. Additionally, it addresses the improvement of public spaces, including roads, parks, public buildings, and community gateways.

This Element seeks to strengthen Moraga's identity as a predominantly residential community in a scenic natural setting. Protecting the town's natural setting must be accompanied by an equally ambitious effort to improve the quality of its built-up areas, particularly its two commercial centers. The Town will continue to adopt guidelines and standards to encourage excellence in the quality of its public places, architecture, landscapes, and streets. These guidelines and standards should create cohesive places that "feel like Moraga" while creating a stronger identity for the town.

The Community Design Element begins by describing the key attributes of community design in Moraga. This provides the foundation for the goals, policies and programs that follow.



## 5.1 COMMUNITY DESIGN FEATURES

### NATURAL SETTING AND VISTAS

Moraga's character is shaped by valleys, canyons, creeks, hillsides, and ridgelines. To the west are the Berkeley/Oakland Hills. To the east are the ridges of Las Trampas Peak, Castle Hill, and Sugarloaf Hill, with Mount Diablo on the eastern horizon. The branching network of valleys and canyons within the town include Moraga Valley, Rheem Valley, and Bollinger Canyon.

Major topographic features in the town includes the Indian, Sanders, Mulholland, and Campolindo ridgelines. The most prominent knolls and ridgelines reach 1,200 feet above sea level, creating long distance views over the valleys. Riparian areas occur in the canyons and valley floors. The network of valleys, canyons, ridges, and streambeds create a naturally connected system of open spaces that are visible from almost every part of town.

Development patterns reflect this relationship, organically fitting into the landscape and reinforcing the natural setting. The town's overall image provides a feeling of spaciousness and

strong landscape character. Scenic views define the image of Moraga and the way the Town is perceived by residents and visitors.

### GATEWAYS AND SCENIC CORRIDORS

As a result of Moraga's topography and historical development pattern, there are several distinct gateways into town. The primary gateways are on Moraga Way (from Orinda) and Moraga Road (from Lafayette). Secondary gateways are located on Rheem Boulevard (from the Glorietta area of Orinda), Saint Mary's Road (from the Burton Valley area of Lafayette), and Canyon Road (from unincorporated Canyon). The town's gateways provide scenic views of local hillsides and ridgelines and generally convey a positive image. However, they lack distinctive entry monuments, art, or other features that convey a sense of arrival. Gateways into the town—and its two commercial districts—are understated. Improving these gateways can create a sense of arrival and a more distinct identity for the town.

Moraga has taken steps to protect the scenic quality of its roadways, including views from the road to hillside areas, by adopting a Scenic Corridor Ordinance. The Ordinance provides development guidelines and procedures

*Southbound Moraga Road at the Lafayette border*





for land along key corridors. As noted in the Implementation section of this Element, changes to the Scenic Corridor Ordinance were recommended by the Housing Element to remove potential housing constraints and recognize the potential of the built environment to improve the appearance of the corridors. Within Moraga's commercial areas, scenic corridors provide an opportunity to define transitions and gateways, and to create streetscapes that are more walkable and architecturally cohesive.

## NEIGHBORHOODS

Moraga's design identity is also shaped by its neighborhoods (see **Figure 5.1**). The town's neighborhoods vary in built character and composition, although they are largely characterized by one- and two-story homes built between 1950 and 1990 on relatively large, landscaped lots. The town also includes medium-density townhome communities such as the Moraga Country Club, Miramonte Gardens, Carroll Ranch, Rancho Moraga, and Villa Moraga (Camino Peral). There is no single prevailing architectural style, and the mix is often eclectic. However, the consistency in height and scale contributes to the identity of the town and its overall sense of place.

The Town has adopted design guidelines to help ensure that new development contributes to and enhances the overall quality of its neighborhoods. These guidelines address remodeling as well as new construction. Design priorities include protecting hillsides and ridgelines, complementing existing landscaping, enhancing scenic corridors, minimizing the impacts of development, promoting commercial centers as community gathering places, and thoughtfully designing new single family and multi-family residential neighborhoods.

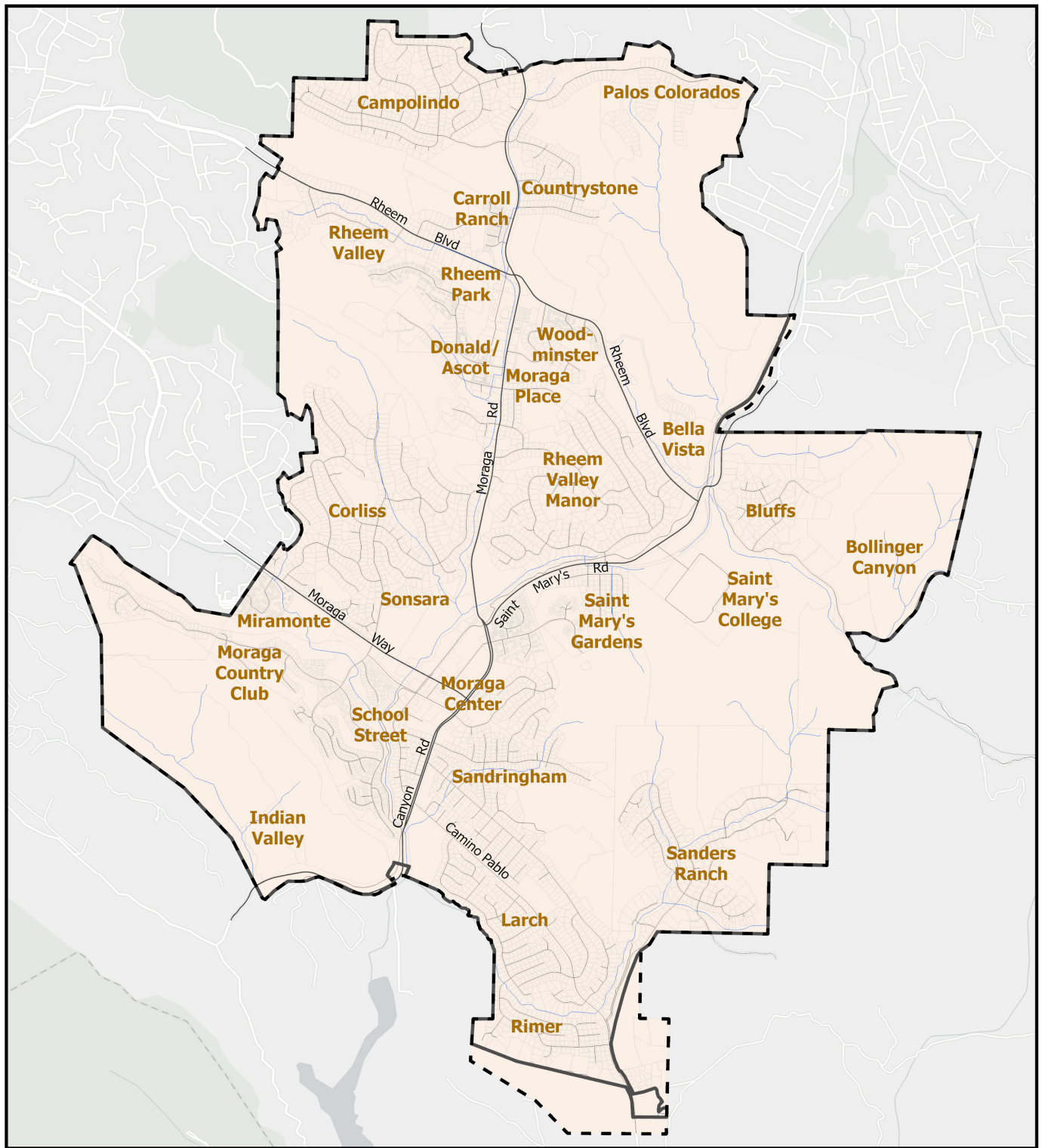
As the value of Moraga homes has increased, so have applications to modernize and expand older homes. This has created concerns about architectural style and scale, as well as issues related to privacy, noise, and parking. The Town's guidelines address these issues, as well as design elements such as graded slopes, landscaping, and retaining walls. Moraga will continue to work with property owners and neighborhoods to evaluate its design guidelines, ensure they are objective, and revise them as needed to address emerging design issues.

*Sonsara Neighborhood | Photo Credit: Tom Clearwood*





**Figure 5.1: Neighborhoods**







*Moraga Center Farmers Market*

## ACTIVITY CENTERS

Moraga does not have a traditional “downtown” but it does have two active commercial centers. Each includes a suburban shopping center as well as offices, local-serving businesses, and civic uses. Saint Mary’s College is another important activity center in the town.

Moraga Center is the largest commercial district in Moraga, and its historical center. The community design vision for this area is expressed in the 2010 Moraga Center Specific Plan (MCSP) and in the MCSP Design Guidelines. The MCSP envisions Moraga Center as a “village” with walkable streets, pedestrian connections to nearby neighborhoods, a creekside promenade, and a central area with new mixed-use development and revitalized storefronts. It further envisions a network of large and small open spaces, a future “town square” that becomes a civic gathering place for all Moragans, and new neighborhoods with medium to high density housing. The MCSP identifies the area west of Commons Park as a possible site for a new

community center, creating a focal point and civic gathering place for this area.

Achieving this vision will require a substantial amount of public and private investment. General design concepts are laid out by the MCSP and Design Guidelines, but more specific design plans will be needed as development occurs. This includes plans for the School Street extension, the Lafayette-Moraga Trail extension, and development of a new neighborhood on the former orchards west of Laguna Creek. The Town amended its Municipal Code in 2020 to add MCSP objective design standards as well as new zoning districts for this area. The Objective Design Standards are intended to expedite development approvals, particularly for new housing and mixed-use development.

The Rheem Park commercial district covers a smaller land area than Moraga Center but has a larger amount of retail space. The Rheem Valley Shopping Center includes 165,000 square feet of shopping space in an “L” shaped complex stretching nearly a half-mile from end to end. The





Town adopted objective design standards for this district in 2023, but the area does not yet have a plan for its streets and public spaces. This General Plan recommends a “public realm” plan for Rheem Center to establish a clear framework for public and private investment, and a foundation for funding future streetscape and infrastructure improvements.

Unlike the two shopping centers, Saint Mary’s College has a distinct design identity, established when the campus was first developed. The campus is surrounded by open space and accessed by a long entry drive, giving it a destination quality. The chapel bell tower is a visual landmark and is built in a Mission Renaissance architectural style that is emulated across the campus. Formal open spaces, courtyards, landscaping, and walkways between buildings provide symmetry and add to overall aesthetic quality. Elements of this design aesthetic can be adapted to Moraga’s two commercial districts to create a more unified and cohesive appearance for the town.

## PUBLIC REALM

The term “public realm” refers to spaces and areas that are accessible to everyone in the community, including parks, streets, public buildings, and plazas. These places are crucial for social interaction, civic activities, and cultural events. They also shape Moraga’s identity. Examples of public realm improvements in Moraga include the sculptures in West Commons Park, street lighting and signage along major streets, and median plantings and landscaping.

Revitalizing Moraga Center and Rheem Park will require public realm improvements as well as private investment. The Town is actively planning for these improvements, and increasing the quantity, prominence, and design quality of its public spaces. It will continue to invest in tree planting, public art, lighting, and street beautification projects, while coordinating with PG&E and private property owners on utility

undergrounding. Public realm improvements provide an opportunity to take advantage of Moraga’s desirable climate, enhance views of the surrounding landscape, and demonstrate new approaches to sustainability and resilience that can be emulated in private development.



*Public art outside Moraga Council Chambers*





## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic buildings and sites contribute to Moraga's character and are an important part of its design heritage. They enhance the town's attractiveness to residents and visitors and provide diversity and visual interest. Identifying and protecting historic resources creates economic, social, environmental, educational, and cultural benefits and provides the community with a link to its past.

The Town of Moraga adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance in 2015. The Ordinance provides a tool for nominating and designating historic landmarks, creates incentives for property owners to preserve these landmarks, and establishes a permitting process for changes once a landmark is designated. The criteria for designating landmarks are based on United States Secretary of the Interior standards. The process includes consultation with the Moraga Historical Society, a local volunteer organization dedicated to gathering and preserving knowledge about Moraga's history. The Ordinance includes provisions to avoid "demolition by neglect" and

ensure that landmarked buildings are maintained in good condition.

Landmarking of a structure is typically initiated by the owner. Incentives include Variances from local zoning, use of the State Historic Building Code, and eligibility for reduced taxes under California's Mills Act. As of 2024, no buildings have been formally landmarked. The Town will continue to work with property owners, the Historical Society, and the public at large to promote awareness of Moraga history and the benefits of preservation.

Moraga is also working with Native American representatives to identify and protect tribal cultural resources in the town. Policies in the General Plan acknowledge the potential for such resources, especially along the town's creeks and valleys. There are also opportunities to increase public awareness of the area's Native American heritage and traditions, including environmental stewardship. Consultation with Native American tribes is a critical part of the planning and development review process.



*Originally built as a hotel in 1914, the refurbished Moraga Barn is one of the town's oldest buildings | Photo Credit: Moraga Historical Society*





## 5.2 COMMUNITY DESIGN GOALS AND POLICIES

### **GOAL CD-1: NATURAL SETTING**

*PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE NATURAL SCENIC QUALITIES THAT MAKE MORAGA UNIQUE.*

#### **Policy CD-1.1: Open Space Frame**

Retain the open space “frame” of regional park and watershed lands that surrounds Moraga, defines neighborhood edges, and contributes to the town’s character and identity.

#### **Policy CD-1.2: View Protection**

Protect the important visual elements of Moraga’s natural setting. These elements include the major and minor MOSO ridgelines, significant non-MOSO ridgelines, mature tree groupings, and other significant natural features, especially as viewed from the Town’s scenic corridors.<sup>1</sup> Development projects in the Moraga Center and Rheem Park areas shall be deemed compliant with this policy if they comply with objective development and design standards related to views and visual impacts.

<sup>1</sup> See the Open Space and Parks Element for the definition of MOSO and non-MOSO ridgelines and a map (**Figure 7.3**) showing their location.

#### **Policy CD-1.3: Location of New Development**

To the extent possible, concentrate new development in areas that are already urbanized and have less environmental and visual sensitivity, including:

- The Moraga Center and Rheem Park commercial areas (e.g., “priority development areas”)
- Infill parcels in areas of existing development
- Areas of flat or gently sloping topography outside of flood plain or natural drainage areas.

#### **Policy CD-1.4: Site Planning, Building Design, and Landscaping**

In areas where development is permitted, retain natural topographic features and scenic qualities through sensitive site planning, architectural design, and landscaping. Buildings and improvements in single family areas should retain a low visual profile and provide fire-safe landscaping that complements the natural setting. New development in multi-family and mixed-use areas should respect natural terrain and enhance the visual character of Moraga’s town centers.

#### **Policy CD-1.5: Ridgeline and Hillside Areas**

Protect ridgelines from development. In hillside areas, require new developments to retain and respect the character of existing landforms, conform and blend with the natural setting, preserve significant native vegetation, and locate building sites so that visual impacts to ridgelines are minimized. Grading in areas with an average slope of 20 percent or more should create a natural appearance, minimizing soil displacement and the need for large retaining walls. Buildings and other improvements on such sites should maintain a low visual profile that blends with the natural setting and incorporates appropriate screening using native vegetation.

*(See the Conservation Element and Implementation Chapter for additional guidance on grading)*







Views of open space, trees, and hillsides contribute to the town's character and should be protected | Photo Credit: Tom Clearwood



Development on sloped sites should follow natural contours, with low-profile buildings and landscaping to enhance the natural setting  
Photo Credit: McDonald-Jones

### Policy CD-1.6: Development Regulations for Ridgelines and Hillside Areas

Maintain development regulations for ridgelines and hillside areas that protect scenic vistas and the public enjoyment of these vistas. These regulations shall require that hillside development conforms to the provisions of Policy CD-1.5 and is uninterrupted by visible manmade features to the maximum extent feasible. The MCSP area shall be exempt from these requirements.

*(See Open Space and Parks Element for further discussion of Hillside and Ridgeline regulations)*

### Policy CD-1.7: Valley and Riparian Areas

Protect the scenic and environmental qualities of environmentally sensitive riparian and valley areas. This includes the significant linear open spaces, woodlands, and grasslands along the town's creeks, as well as hillside views from valley floors.

### GOAL CD-2: PUBLIC REALM

CREATE A CONNECTED NETWORK OF ROADS, PATHS, AND PUBLIC SPACES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO MORAGA'S VISUAL QUALITY AND IDENTITY, ADD VALUE TO PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

*(See Goal CD-5 for additional policy guidance on commercial and mixed-use centers)*

### Policy CD-2.1: Public Places as Focal Points

Provide and maintain parks and public facilities that serve as community focal points, gathering places, and activity centers. These facilities should be connected to surrounding neighborhoods and commercial centers, with inviting entries, good visibility from adjacent streets, and safe and easy access for bicycles and pedestrians.

*(See also Policy T-3.4 on connectivity)*

### Policy CD-2.2: Schools as Neighborhood Gathering Places

Work with the school districts to enhance the role of school properties as neighborhood gathering places and activity centers. Address design, use, safety, management, and maintenance issues to improve access to schools, schoolyards, and playfields during after-school hours and on weekends.





### Policy CD-2.3: Undergrounding of Utilities

Whenever and wherever possible, convert overhead utility lines to underground. A priority should be placed on undergrounding projects in commercial/mixed-use areas. Require underground utilities in areas of new development.

### Policy CD-2.4: Wireless Communication Facilities

Regulate the location and design of wireless communication facilities and other telecommunications infrastructure in accordance with Town ordinances and the Federal Communications Act.

### Policy CD-2.5: Wayfinding and Gateway Signage

Improve wayfinding and gateway signage, including consistent graphic conventions, branding, and logos for Town signs, placement of additional entry signage at Town limits and gateways, and improved directional signage for significant destinations (commercial centers, public buildings, parks, Saint Mary's College, etc.).

### Policy CD-2.6: Sidewalks and Street Plantings

On streets with sidewalks, manage sidewalks and planting areas in the public right-of-way to promote pedestrian safety, enhance visual character, and reduce the impacts of vehicle traffic. Where medians are present, support their beautification and improvement.

### Policy CD-2.7: Street Lighting

Provide street lighting that improves public safety and visibility while also enhancing neighborhood character and design. Consider decorative street lighting with banners in public rights-of-way adjacent to and within commercial areas. Streetlights should avoid light and glare conflicts and be consistent with energy conservation goals.

### Policy CD-2.8: Public Art

Support the use of public art as a means of creative expression, placemaking, enhancing Moraga's visual quality, and showcasing the work of local and regional artists.



*The "Wings" sculpture in Rancho Laguna Park adds visual interest while raising awareness of Monarch butterfly habitat.*





## **GOAL CD-3: SCENIC ROADWAYS**

*MANAGE MORAGA'S SCENIC ROADWAYS IN WAYS THAT STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND APPEARANCE, PRESERVE HILLSIDE AND RIDGELINE VIEWS, AND MEET PUBLIC SAFETY, EVACUATION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE NEEDS.*

### **Policy CD-3.1: Designation of Scenic Corridors**

Designate the following routes as "scenic corridors":

- (a) Bollinger Canyon Road
- (b) Camino Pablo
- (c) Canyon Road
- (d) Donald Drive (along ridgeline of Mulholland Hill)
- (e) Moraga Road
- (f) Moraga Way
- (g) Rheem Boulevard
- (h) Saint Mary's Road

### **Policy CD-3.2: Visual Character of Corridors**

Improve the visual character of Moraga's corridors with lighting, landscaping, and signage. Within Priority Development Areas, encourage building placement and landscaping to help define and enhance the visual quality of each corridor.

*(See also Policy CD-2.8 on gateways)*

### **Policy CD-3.3: Moraga Road and Moraga Way**

Recognize Moraga Road and Moraga Way as the two primary access roads in and out of Moraga. Special efforts should be made to recognize the role of these corridors in defining Moraga's identity while protecting their function as major arterials and evacuation routes.

### **Policy CD-3.4: Landscaping and Amenities**

Use additional street tree planting, berms, fencing, and landscaping to enhance visual continuity along major corridors. Require appropriate landscaping for both public and private developments, including pedestrian lighting and street trees within existing commercial areas. Encourage use of native and drought-tolerant species and, where applicable, preservation of orchard trees.



*Scenic corridors such as Moraga Way (pictured here) should be enhanced with native and drought tolerant landscaping and conversion of overhead utility lines to underground utilities wherever possible. | Photo Credit: JD Lisa, Wikipedia Commons*



### Policy CD-3.5: Development and Design Standards

Adopt development standards for site design and setbacks, landscaping, infrastructure location, grading, and signage that enhances each corridor. Ensure that these standards are consistent with and support complementary goals for multi-family housing and mixed-use development within Moraga Center and Rheem Park.

*(See also Policy CD-2.6 regarding undergrounding of utilities)*

### GOAL CD-4: NEIGHBORHOODS

*PRESERVE THE SCALE, CHARACTER, AND QUALITY OF MORAGA'S RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS WHILE SUPPORTING HOME IMPROVEMENTS AND A SAFER, MORE WALKABLE ENVIRONMENT.*

### Policy CD-4.1: Development Standards

Maintain and enforce planning and development standards for Moraga's residential neighborhoods.

### Policy CD-4.2: Neighborhood Character

Work with individual neighborhoods to identify improvements that strengthen and enhance neighborhood character. Examples include tree planting, sidewalks, street lighting, bike paths, neighborhood entries, and landscaping.

### Policy CD-4.3: Pedestrian Amenities

Design single family and multi-family developments to create high quality pedestrian environments, including pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods and the Town's path and trail system.

### Policy CD-4.4: Infill Development in Single Family Neighborhoods

Facilitate, and where appropriate streamline, improvement of Moraga's single family housing stock, including home repair, remodels, additions, accessory dwellings, and new homes on vacant lots within established neighborhoods. Objective design standards should be used to ensure that the scale, height, setbacks, and character of such projects is compatible with existing development.

### Policy CD-4.5: New Single Family Residential Development

Ensure that the layout of new residential lots respects site topography and natural features, including lot sizes and shapes that minimize the need for large-scale grading.

*(See also Policy LU-1.9 on clustering)*

### Policy CD-4.6: New Multi-Family Development

Locate new multi-family developments in close proximity to commercial centers, transit stops, and community facilities. Use site design and landscaping to create buffers to adjacent uses, while providing connections through pedestrian and bicycle paths.

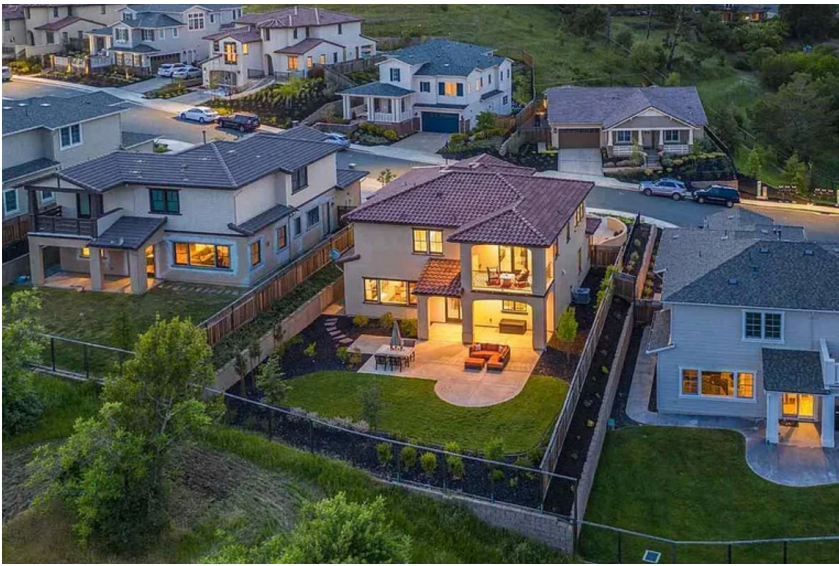
### Policy CD-4.7: Multi-Family Design

Ensure that new multi-family development is planned, designed, and constructed to enhance the local area and respect the scale and quality of its surroundings. Encourage designs that:

- Reduce perceived building mass
- Provide variation in rooflines
- Create three dimensional ("articulated") facades rather than large flat facades
- Use landscaping to soften building edges and enhance the natural setting
- Incorporate architectural design and materials that support walkable, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, including "four-sided" architecture.







*New infill housing should be consistent with the scale of existing neighborhoods, while incorporating modern amenities and features.*



*Residential developments should provide connections to adjacent neighborhoods and parks. For example, the Harvest Court development in Moraga Center included a publicly accessible pedestrian path connecting the end of Willowbrook Lane (shown here) to West Commons Park, Commons Park, and Moraga Road.*



*The design of multi-family residential developments should strive for high architectural and landscape quality. Through proper site and architectural design, high-density developments like this one in Lafayette can look and feel less dense than they actually are and create a positive, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood environment.*  
*Photo Credit: Contra Costa Association of Realtors, 2024*





### Policy CD-4.8: Private and Common Open Space

Require usable private open space in new residential development, and common open space in multi-family projects.

### *GOAL CD-5: COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE AREAS*

*PROVIDE A STRONGER SENSE OF PLACE AND IDENTITY FOR MORAGA'S TWO COMMERCIAL CENTERS, INCLUDING WALKABLE STREETS, HIGH-QUALITY ARCHITECTURE, AND ATTRACTIVE CIVIC SPACES.*

### Policy CD-5.1: Design Quality

Improve the design quality of the Town's commercial centers, creating an attractive and inviting environment for shopping, socializing, living, and working. Architectural and site design improvements should support upgrading and modernizing existing commercial space, new housing above active ground floor commercial uses, creation of pedestrian walkways and gathering spaces, outdoor dining areas, and more attractive signage.

### Policy CD-5.2: Town Center Improvements

Use street furnishings (benches, trash receptacles, etc.), paving materials, medians, signage, landscaping, lighting, and other physical design features in the town's commercial districts in ways that support the identity of these areas as civic gathering places and "town centers."

### *Policy CD-5.3: Pedestrian Orientation*

Create a strong pedestrian orientation in commercial districts that supports the role of these areas as community gathering spaces and activity centers. Incorporate amenities such as plazas, outdoor seating, street trees, and landscaping to create a safer and more inviting atmosphere for walking. Where pedestrian paths cross parking areas or vehicle lanes, give clear priority to pedestrians through pavement markings, differentiation in the pavement surface, and signage.



*Entrances to commercial areas can be enhanced through reconfiguration of parking areas, landscaping, signage, lighting and a stronger pedestrian orientation.*



*Site design, landscaping, architectural design and other amenities can combine to create a pedestrian-friendly environment that enhances the shopping centers' role as a community gathering place.*





## Objective Design Standards

For many years, cities and towns relied on discretionary review processes when considering new development projects. These processes allow a Planning Commission or Town Council to use their “discretion” when reviewing a project, sometimes based on personal judgment or subjective criteria such as whether the project reflected the “look and feel of the community.” This led to approval processes that took several years and often resulted in projects being denied, redesigned, or reduced in size.

California’s housing shortage has been attributed at least in part to vague criteria and discretionary processes that add to the cost of construction. Recent State housing laws now require “objective standards” and streamlined processes with fewer public hearings.

Senate Bill 35 defined objective standards as “standards that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant and the public official prior to submittal.” The Town of Moraga has adopted such standards for Moraga Center and Rheem Park, enabling projects that meet the standards to be approved more quickly.

## SUBJECTIVE GUIDELINES

*Lack specificity and may allow  
for personal opinion and  
arbitrary interpretation*

**vs.**

## OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

*Involve no personal judgment  
by a public official and  
provide quantifiable direction  
for when and how to apply  
development requirements.*

### Policy CD-5.4: Block and Lot Patterns

Consider realignment of existing blocks, parcels, and parking areas to support infill development in the commercial centers. Use reduced setbacks, wider sidewalks, and other development standards that encourage the placement of buildings closer to the front property line, with parking located to the side or rear.

### Policy CD-5.5: Vehicle Access and Circulation

Provide for adequate traffic access, circulation, and parking in the town’s commercial centers. Reduce potential safety hazards by minimizing driveway openings on to public streets, encouraging side street access to commercial developments, and encouraging connections between developments.

*(See Transportation Policy T-6 for additional guidance on access and parking)*

### Policy CD-5.6: Office Development

Direct office development to the Town’s commercial centers. New office buildings, or conversion/replacement of existing office buildings with different uses, should respect the visual qualities of the landscape, reflect the scale and character of adjacent neighborhoods, include pedestrian connections to nearby commercial uses, and create buffers between residential neighborhoods and arterial roadways.

### Policy CD-5.7: Moraga Center Design

Facilitate development in the Moraga Center area that supports its role as a mixed-use “town center.” This includes revitalization of the existing shopping center and development of complementary new buildings on vacant and underutilized land. It further includes maintenance and upgrading of the existing buildings, access, signage and landscaping. Use the Moraga Center Specific Plan and Design Guidelines as the framework for redevelopment in this area.



### Policy CD-5.8: Rheem Park Design

Facilitate transformation of the Rheem Park area from an auto-oriented commercial center to a mixed-use area including housing as well as shopping, service, office, civic, and open space uses.

*(See also Land Use Element implementation programs on Moraga Center and Rheem Park)*

### Policy CD-5.9: Connecting Moraga's Activity Centers

Encourage and improve access and pathways between Rheem Park, Moraga Center, Saint Mary's College, Hacienda de las Flores, Commons Park, Campolindo High School, and other schools and public facilities.

## GOAL CD-6: HISTORIC RESOURCES

*PRESERVE MORAGA'S HISTORIC RESOURCES AND RECOGNIZE THESE RESOURCES AS A VALUED PART OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND AN IMPORTANT LINK TO THE PAST.*

### Policy CD-6.1: Designation of Historic Resources

Identify and protect historic resources in the community, including buildings, sites, and other resources that connect residents with Moraga's past. These resources may include:

- (a) Hacienda de las Flores
- (b) Older buildings at Saint Mary's College
- (c) Moraga Ranch
- (d) Moraga Barn

The list of potential resources may be adjusted over time for buildings, sites, natural features (such as heritage trees), and other resources meeting the criteria for landmark designation specified by the Moraga Municipal Code, the

State Historic Preservation Office, and the US Secretary of the Interior. The Town shall maintain a process for nominating resources, incentives for designating and maintaining resources, and procedures for actions that could impact such resources in the future, including correction of unsafe conditions and violations.

### Policy CD-6.2: Treatment of Historic Resources

Manage historic resources to support their ongoing maintenance and adaptive reuse, avoid demolition, and ensure that additions and alterations do not compromise historic integrity. Where appropriate, objective design standards and guidelines should address the protection of the character-defining features of historic resources.



*A consistent Mission Renaissance architectural style on the Saint Mary's College campus creates design unity and cohesion.  
Photo Credit: Saint Mary's College, 2024*

### Policy CD-6.3: Context-Sensitive Design

Ensure that development on sites adjacent to designated historic resources is sensitive to the resource and does not adversely affect contributing historic features. Further ensure that landscaping around historic resources is maintained and updated to complement the resource and be more sustainable.







*Hacienda de las Flores is an important historic resource as well as a valued community activity center.*

#### Policy CD-6.4: Spanish Heritage Districts

Consider Saint Mary's College and Hacienda de las Flores to be "Spanish Heritage Districts" for planning and design purposes. In these areas, encourage continued use of the basic elements of "Spanish Heritage" architecture, with flexibility to allow for innovation, variety, contemporary design, and modernization of (or additions to) existing buildings. These elements include:

- (a) simple white stucco walls
- (b) red clay tile roofs
- (c) porches across the building front or side, with or without arches
- (d) arches as an architectural feature over drive-ways and entrances
- (e) buildings adapted to topography, for example through use of terraced gardens and porches
- (f) bay windows
- (g) garden walls
- (h) lattices over carports and porches
- (i) distinctive rooflines with low pitches

- (j) balconies and verandas
- (k) covered walkways and passages (arcades, colonnades)

Within Spanish Heritage Districts, structures, landscaping, and pathways should be maintained and improved in a manner that is complementary with the existing style.

#### Policy CD-6.5: Agricultural and Railroad Heritage

Recognize Moraga's history as an agricultural community and railroad town in local preservation efforts. Support events that commemorate this heritage, as well as actions that preserve important historic features.

#### Policy CD-6.6: Public Information on Historic Resources and Preservation

Promote and support educational and informational programs regarding Moraga's history to help residents better understand and appreciate the Town's past and its remaining historic resources.



### Policy CD-6.7: Recognition of Potential Historic Resources

Support the efforts of local organizations to maintain and expand collections of historic photographs, artifacts, books, media, oral histories, and other resources, and to make these materials available to the public. Support programs to recognize important sites and structures with plaques and markers, and to support local school efforts to incorporate Moraga history in their curriculum and programs.

### Policy CD-6.8: Preservation Incentives

Consider incentives that encourage stewardship of historic resources, such as the use of federal tax programs (Mills Act) and state grants that facilitate preservation and adaptive reuse of older buildings.

### Policy CD-6.9: Protection of Tribal Cultural and Archaeological Resources

Coordinate with representatives of the Native American community to protect historic Native American resources and raise awareness of Moraga's Native American heritage. This includes the use of standard conditions of approval in future development projects to ensure that Native American resources are protected during construction.

## GOAL CD-7: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

*IMPLEMENT DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES THAT REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY.*

### Policy CD-7.1: Walkability

Locate higher density residential development near shopping and workplaces in ways that facilitate walking and bicycling for shorter trips and support the use of public transportation. Leverage the designation of Moraga Center and Rheem Center as Priority Development Areas to pursue grant funding for "complete street" improvements that make these areas less dependent on private automobiles as the sole means of travel.

### Policy CD-7.2: Mixed-Use Development

Strongly support mixed-use development in the Moraga Center and Rheem Park areas to create opportunities for persons to live, work, and shop in close proximity. Building housing, office, retail, and service uses in a pedestrian-oriented "village" setting can reduce driving time and distance, and result in more sustainable land use and transportation patterns.

### Policy CD-7.3: Resource Efficiency in Site Development

Encourage site planning and development practices that reduce energy demand and improve energy efficiency. This includes siting of structures and building design to maximize solar energy heating and cooling benefits, as well as construction methods, building materials, and building improvements that reduce dependence on carbon-based energy sources.







*Bioswales in new development can absorb runoff and improve water quality*

#### **Policy CD-7.4: Green Building**

Strongly support the use of green building techniques in the design, construction, and renovation of new development. The Town itself should lead by example, incorporating best management practices for green building in the design, construction, maintenance, and operation of its own facilities.

#### **Policy CD-7.5: Sustainable Building Materials**

Encourage the use of building materials that reduce environmental impacts and the consumption of non-renewable resources. Consider measures that incentivize green building practices and sustainable design, including energy efficiency upgrades.

#### **Policy CD-7.6: Landscaping**

Use landscape design to advance Moraga's goals related to aesthetics, sustainability, walkability, climate change, water conservation, hazard mitigation, and biodiversity. Landscaping should control heat build-up from pavement, provide shade, absorb air pollution, sequester carbon, improve visual quality, and enhance wildlife habitat value. The use of native, fire-resistant, drought-tolerant species should be encouraged.

#### **Policy CD-7.7: Cool Roofs and Pavement**

Encourage the design of roofs, pavement, and other exposed surfaces in a manner that mitigates the heat island effects of development and improves energy efficiency.

*(See also Conservation Element Policy CON-2.7 on Low Impact Development)*



## 5.3 COMMUNITY DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

### Program CD-A: Residential Design Guidelines

Use the Town's Residential Design Guidelines to inform the public of the Town's design expectations and to evaluate applications for new residential construction and major alterations and additions.

#### **Action CD-A1: Design Guidelines Update.**

*Update the Town's Residential Design Guidelines to make them more objective and provide greater guidance for multi-family, townhome, small lot, and mixed-use development. The intent of this measure is to improve predictability for applicants and neighbors, clearly state the Town's design expectations, and provide additional guidance for medium and higher-density housing types.*

### Program CD-B: Objective Design/ Development Standards for Moraga Center and Rheem Park

Continue to implement objective design and development standards for Moraga Center and Rheem Park. Revisit these guidelines at least once every five years to ensure that they are achieving desired outcomes.

### Program CD-C: Scenic Corridors

Provide standards and approval procedures for development in Moraga's corridors. Standards should be objective and support the construction of housing as well as reinvestment in existing commercial and residential development along the corridors.

#### **Action CD-C1: Scenic Corridor Revisions.**

*Update Moraga Municipal Code provisions for Scenic Corridors, particularly as they apply to parcels in Moraga Center and the requirements for review of structures and features within 500 feet of a designated corridor. Ensure that*

*development standards in the Code, including setbacks and stepbacks, do not preclude achievement of the maximum development envelope that would otherwise be allowed by zoning. Standards should encourage attractive architecture that enhances the visual quality of corridors and support walkability and pedestrian connectivity in the commercial/mixed use districts.*

### Program CD-D: Design Review

Maintain design review processes and procedures that implement the design goals and policies of the General Plan and Town design guidelines.

**Action CD-D1: Procedural Review.** *Conduct an evaluation of design review processes and procedures and identify measures to streamline existing processes and reduce applicant expenses. This should include simplifying the process for window replacement and other minor replacement/ repair projects, allowing over-the-counter review or similar processes.*

### Program CD-E: Wayfinding, Signage, and Streetscape Plans

Support future development of wayfinding, signage, and streetscape plans to establish a stronger identity for Moraga, highlight and beautify Town entries, support investment in public art and landscaping, and enhance the natural beauty and aesthetic qualities of the Town.

#### **Action CD-E1: Rheem Public Realm Plan.**

*Develop a public realm plan that contains strategies for design, development, connectivity, and management of Rheem Park's public and outdoor spaces, including streetscapes, landscaping, lighting, infrastructure, and circulation.*

#### **Action CD-E2: Landscaping and Lighting Assessment District (LLAD).**

*Evaluate the feasibility of creating a LLAD to support streetscape and lighting improvements in Moraga Center and Rheem Park.*





**Action CD-E3: Art in Public Places.** Consider revisions to the Town's policies for art in public places, including potential requirements for new development and public art set-asides for future capital improvement projects.

#### Program CD-F: Utility Undergrounding

Work with Pacific Gas and Electric to convert overhead utility lines to underground lines using Public Utilities Commission Rule 20 funds and other available sources. Place a priority on undergrounding projects in Moraga Center and Rheem Park.

#### Program CD-G: Wireless Facilities Ordinance

Maintain Municipal Code provisions regulating the location and design of wireless communication facilities, including small cell facilities. These provisions are intended to preserve the visual character of the town and discourage such facilities in residential areas and visually sensitive locations, while complying with federal law and recognizing the benefits of improved wireless infrastructure.

#### Program CD-H: Water-Efficient Landscaping Ordinance (WELO)

Continue implementation of the State Model WELO, which encourages water conservation through specific standards for landscape installations, including composting and mulch. The Town has codified these requirements in its Municipal Code.

#### Program CD-I: Historic Preservation Program

Continue to advocate for the protection of historic resources and increased awareness of Moraga's history and historic sites. Maintain the Town's existing historic preservation ordinance and consider additional measures (such as Mills Act contracts) that support preservation and adaptive reuse. Moraga's ordinance was adopted in 2015

and includes criteria for designating resources, procedures for evaluating alterations, incentives for listing, and provisions to avoid demolition by neglect.

#### Program CD-J: Cultural Resource Protection at New Development Sites

Implement measures to protect potential cultural resources within new development projects in areas where such resources have been identified through a study or are likely to be present. As appropriate, the following measures may apply:

- **Historical and Archeological Resource Surveys.** Prior to issuance of a grading permit in a previously undisturbed area, require a historic and archaeological resources survey. Actions may include but are not limited to avoidance of discovered cultural resources; relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards and/or data recovery mitigation or documentation that offsets the loss of the resource;
- **Protection of Potential Historic and Archaeological Resources.** Retain a qualified cultural resource specialist to conduct site-specific analysis and implement feasible mitigation or avoidance measures for development that may impact a listed, eligible, or potentially eligible historic or archaeological resource;
- **Construction Monitoring.** Retain a qualified cultural resource specialist to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities in or around a potentially significant cultural resource.
- **Unanticipated Discoveries.** Suspend earth-disturbing work in the event a cultural resource is identified. Retain a qualified cultural resources specialist to design and implement feasible measures.





### Program CD-K: Tribal Cultural Resource Protection

In the event an unanticipated tribal cultural resource is identified during construction, retain a qualified specialist in consultation with an appropriate Native American representative to design and implement a resource treatment plan. Earth-disturbing work within 60 feet of the resource shall be suspended until consultation has occurred and feasible mitigation measures have been designed and implemented.

### Program CD-L: Paleontological Resource Protection

Applicants for new construction that would involve ground disturbance in areas known to have a high probability for paleontological resources shall retain a Qualified Professional Paleontologist to determine the project's potential to significantly impact paleontological resources. As appropriate, measures may be prescribed to reduce potential impacts.

### Program CD-M: CalGreen

Implement CalGreen building code requirements, including standards for energy efficiency, water conservation, and indoor air quality. CalGreen promotes sustainable practices in new buildings and major renovations to reduce environmental impacts and improve the health of occupants.

*(See also Land Use Element programs related to Development Review and Zoning)*

Looking south on Moraga Road  
from Painted Rock

