

VIA EMAIL

January 11, 2025

Moraga Town Council (townclerk@moraga.ca.us); cc: info@mofd.org
335 Rheem Boulevard, Moraga, CA 94556

RE: 1600 School Street Building Project

To the Members of the Moraga Town Council,

I am a Moraga resident, parent to two kids at Camino Pablo, and a local attorney with a law office on Moraga Way. I care deeply about this community and write to express concern about the 1600 School Street building project.

Moraga is already vulnerable due to inadequate infrastructure and emergency preparedness. In an evacuation, residents are limited to accessing Highway 24 via Orinda or Lafayette, creating a bottleneck that could turn catastrophic. Adding over 2,000 vehicles will only intensify these risks, particularly during emergencies. Recent wildfire tragedies, where gridlock forced residents to abandon vehicles, underscore the dangers. Our roads, already congested during routine maintenance or school hours, cannot support such a significant increase in traffic.

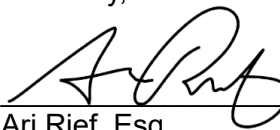
The town is also unprepared for the strain on emergency services. Only five fire stations serve Moraga and Orinda, spread too thinly to respond effectively in a large-scale emergency. With these conditions, further development without proper planning is reckless.

Although the state has mandated Moraga to build affordable housing, the current project falls short, with only 10% of units classified as affordable. Before moving forward, traffic and evacuation studies must be completed, safety impacts fully assessed, and development plans revised to prioritize affordable housing. Rushing this process endangers lives and compromises the quality of life for everyone in the community.

LA's current fires, and the predictable devastation wildfires bring each year statewide, expose a glaring truth: mismanagement and a failure to soundly prioritize public safety. The government's foremost duty is to protect its citizens and take proper precautions. How can we justify building our lives in a community only to watch it plausibly burn to the ground? Expansion and growth are inevitable, but they must be done responsibly—without endangering the people and places we hold so dear.

Thank you for considering these concerns and working to protect Moraga's residents.

Sincerely,



Ari Rief, Esq.

From: [Ashley Coates](#)
To: [Info](#); [Ashley Coates](#)
Subject: Citizens want more knowledge of evacuation process
Date: Saturday, January 11, 2025 3:14:11 PM

Hello,

Perhaps several of your personnel have been sent to battle the SoCal wildfires.

Thank you for what you are doing in MOFD and larger California to keep us as safe as possible. I have just signed up for all your communications.

I know that many people are opposing the proposed 1600 School Street apartments project in Moraga because they worry that it will strain evacuations, putting lives at risk. This opposition started before the SoCal fires!

I ask you to "step up" communication within Moraga and Orinda about how wildfire evacuations will work, and to schedule another "drill". I have heard that we might be able to have two lanes of outbound traffic, which would be an improvement over one lane. But I think that is not common knowledge. I urge having a test of two outbound lanes for any future drills.

Sincerely,

Ashley Coates

ashleyaoc@comcast.net

925-247-4034

From: [Anna F. Rief](mailto:anna.f.rief@moraga.ca.us)
To: ahevener@moraga.ca.us
Cc: [Info](#)
Subject: Deep Concern about 1600 School St Building Project
Date: Monday, January 13, 2025 11:33:01 AM

To the members of the Moraga Town Council,

As a Moraga resident, physician, and parent, I write to you with deep concern about the 1600 School Street building project. Moraga residents already face significant challenges with our existing infrastructure. In the case of an emergency evacuation, we are limited to traveling through Orinda or Lafayette to access Highway 24 that would inevitably create a catastrophic bottleneck. Adding a potential 2,236 additional vehicles to our roads would certainly exacerbate these challenges, especially during a panic-stricken evacuation.

Recent tragedies caused by wildfires, most recently in Pacific Palisades and Pasadena where residents were forced to abandon their vehicles due to gridlock, should serve as a stark warning. Our town is ill-prepared to handle a similar situation. Current road conditions demonstrate this lack of capacity:

1. Infrastructure Strain: Routine lane closures for maintenance by PG&E or EBMUD, tree abatement, or minor traffic incidents already result in significant delays on Moraga Road and Moraga Way. Commute hours are increasingly congested, with a simple 3-5 mile trip to Highway 24 often taking up to an hour during adverse weather conditions.
2. Safety Concerns: With a middle school, two elementary schools, and a high school, our roads are already overwhelmed during school hours. Adding thousands of additional residents will only worsen the situation.
3. Emergency Response Limitations: There are only five fire stations servicing Moraga and Orinda, and they are geographically spread out. In the event of a wildfire or large-scale emergency, how can fire engines and first responders reach our community effectively?

While I understand that Moraga has been ordered by the state to build 1118 affordable housing units, the proposed developments fail to address this adequately, as only 10% of the new units are designated as affordable. In order to keep Moraga livable, we need to take the time to:

1. Study the impact of such an addition on Moraga's safety
2. Push back on this reckless requirement at the state level if, as I expect, we find that even today's population can't successfully evacuate
3. Work on development plans that address the affordable housing issue in a more targeted way.

Please help us ensure that traffic / evacuation studies are completed and considered ahead of major development, and also that developers take the time to meet the CEQA design requirements and focus on affordable housing first.

Respectfully,
Anna Rief, M.D.
60 Wandel Drive, Moraga

From: [JANET DOBBS](#)
To: [Info](#)
Subject: Zone Zero
Date: Monday, January 13, 2025 1:17:46 PM

Hello,

While I do appreciate the efforts to keep our homes and community fire-safe, I want to comment on one aspect of the proposed Zone Zero ordinance, that of fences. To have to remove wood fences from their attachment to our homes would be a financial hardship for many people. I am in favor of eliminating this portion of the proposed ordinance.

Thank you,
Janet Dobbs