



ABOUT TOWN NEWSLETTER



March 31, 2022

A MESSAGE FROM TOWN MANAGER CYNTHIA BATTENBERG

As I begin my fifth year as Moraga's Town Manager, I am filled with pride in everything the Town Council and Town staff have accomplished during these past four years. When my adventure as Moraga's Town Manager began in 2018, Moraga was in disaster mode. The Town faced a string of emergencies including the failure of the Canyon Road Bridge, the Rheem sinkhole and looming needs of a failing storm drain system, and a desperate shortage of cash that had led the Town to declare a state of fiscal emergency. The outlook was grim.

Now, four years later, the sinkhole has been repaired, the Town is investing wisely in its storm drain infrastructure to prevent future failures, has completed the \$12.7 million replacement of the Canyon Road Bridge, and the coffers have been replenished.



HIGHLIGHTS BETWEEN “THEN-2018” AND “NOW-2022”

		THEN (2018)	NOW (2022)
Financial Situation	State of Fiscal Emergency		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Fund Reserves at 55% • Moraga’s fiscal health ranked in top 10% by State Auditor
Storm Drain System	Zero investment in storm drain infrastructure repair and maintenance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3.2 million investment in storm drain system repair and maintenance over four years
Asset Replacement	Zero investment in asset replacement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1.6 million investment in facilities and parks over three years
Canyon Road Bridge	Temporary one lane bridge		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed \$12.7 million project funded by grants • EBMUD repairing landslide • EBRPD restoring the Lafayette Moraga Regional Trail
Streets and Roads	\$2.7 million annual funding		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3.7 million in annual funding • “Worst Streets First” Program underway
Hacienda de las Flores	\$250,000 annual operational shortfall		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual shortfall reduced to \$25,000 • Significant capital investments being made by Wedgewood Weddings and the Town
Recreation Programs			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer programs have doubled • Launched distance learning lab for children of essential workers during COVID-19 pandemic • Assumed responsibility for After School Enrichment Program

Overall, the Town has gone from **reacting** to emergencies to **proactively planning** ways to strategically address the Town’s future needs. More specifically, the following plans have been completed and are being implemented or are underway:

- **Storm Drains:** The Town has mapped its entire system (21 linear miles) of public storm drains, developed a Storm Drain O&M program through which it has begun to inspect and prioritize problem sections of the system, and make repairs and plan for infrastructure improvements. The receipt of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds has enabled us to scale up the O&M program and make significant capital investments to repair and rehabilitate the most vulnerable pipes in the system. This is an incredible accomplishment that should prevent catastrophic system failures in the future.
- **Streets:** Following nine solid years of investment in the Town’s pavement management program (thanks to the Town’s local 1% sales tax measure), the overall condition of the Town’s streets is now rated as “Good.” The Town is proud and excited to be shifting gears and implementing a “Worst Streets First” pavement rehabilitation program that will repair all the remaining poor and very poor condition streets by 2024.

- **Planning:** As mandated by the State, Moraga is implementing zoning to accommodate 1,118 new residential units. The Town has hired an excellent consultant team and is actively engaging the community to help determine where new housing should be allowed. Initial findings suggest that Rheem Center and the Moraga Center should be re-zoned to accommodate more housing. To participate in the Town's housing surveys, and for more information on the Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative, check out the [Make Moraga Home](#) project page.
- **Recreation and Open Space:** Now that Palos Colorados funds are starting to come in, and the Parks and Recreation Department has capacity to handle new projects, the Town Council created a 2022 goal to develop and initiate a process for identifying and prioritizing uses for unrestricted and unassigned Palos Colorados funds. Public input will be an essential part of this upcoming process.

Over the past four years, the Town was also able to address other long-standing issues that were in need of attention:

- The Town was exploring the idea of entering into a public/private partnership that could help the Town better activate the Hacienda de las Flores and reduce its ongoing maintenance costs. In 2021, the Town entered into an event operations agreement with Wedgewood Weddings which will generate \$240,000 per year in guaranteed income, as well as Wedgewood's ongoing capital investment in the property. An open house is scheduled for May 12, 2022, where significant upgrades to the Hacienda will be on display.
- The Town's buildings and facilities were in need of maintenance as the Town had been forced to delay repairs and investment. In the past few years, the Town has identified and funded over \$1.6 million in projects and all of Moraga's facilities are open for public use. Deferred maintenance projects at the library that have been completed include: repair of the library heater, new library roof, painting of the interior of the library (thanks to the help of local volunteers), and money has been set aside for new carpet.

As we all know, the world changed in March 2020 due to COVID-19. We are proud to have swiftly adjusted our Town processes to ensure public safety, maintenance, and other essential services to the community remained available during this challenging time. We are looking forward to getting back to normal in 2022. Your Town Council and staff care deeply about this community, work hard, approach situations creatively (within the constraints of the checks and balances of local government), and are dedicated to serving this wonderful community.

Thank you for the honor of serving you,

Cynthia Battenberg

