

## A New Home for Orinda City Offices

By Cathy Tyson



22 Irwin Way, New Orinda City Offices

Photo Tod Fierner

Good-bye trailers, hello 13,900 square feet of stunning, sustainably designed office space. “We are really excited. We haven’t been able to provide the kind of services the public deserves in the trailers,” says Kathy Polkinghorn, who has been working as Assistant City Manager since the project began back in 2005. For Lamorinda residents who needed their construction plans checked or to visit the Police department, for the last seven years, that meant a trip up Altarinda Road, duking it out for parking next to a number of police cars, then searching for the correct, dirt colored aging, cluttered trailer.

The City Manager compared construction costs to lease payments, and in the end, starting from scratch with construction of an efficient, functional building was preferred because the City would have an asset at the end of the day, rather than lease payments with nothing to show for it. The building will cost ten million dollars, financed by offering Certificates of Participation (COP) to investors who can buy COP in return for earned interest on the debt.

The building is tentatively scheduled to open to the public in mid-June. The new City Administrative Building will be an impressive, green landmark chock full of the latest innovations in construction, ventilation, and site planning. Allsteel ergonomic chairs and shiny new desks await the many city employees who have been very patiently waiting for this upgrade. The building will house the City’s Administrative, Planning, Building and Police Departments, and Emergency Operations Center. Located at 22 Irwin Way, behind the Library, the steep hillside and creek presented many challenges. “We’re pleased that our solution not only saved the creek and many trees, but also will leave a light ecological footprint,” notes Henry Siegel of Siegel & Strain Architects.

The light-filled open loft-style building is very welcoming, and visually striking. Special care was taken to fit the building to the site. “The building’s envelope design, shape, and shading strategy take advantage of natural ventilation to eliminate energy intensive compressor cooling,” continues Siegel.

From the two-tone cork flooring to the corrugated, angled metal ceiling, to the wheatboard, presto-log like desks you don’t have to look far to see how the building was designed to be environmentally friendly. Nancy Malone, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification specialist at Siegel and Strain, explains that the firm worked hard to make the building formaldehyde free. In addition, materials with no volatile organic compounds were used in the interior materials like paints, sealants and wood products. Because LEED certification cannot be awarded until the building is completely finished, and there are some minor touch-ups at the moment, certification has not yet been awarded. However they expect to have score in the gold level.

Taylor engineering was responsible for the unique mixed-mode ventilation system that allows integration of natural ventilation and forced air when needed. This system not only takes advantage of the relatively mild climate here, but also saves money and energy, two important concerns for the City in the long run. Designers are pleased to report that the building will be in the 94th percentile of energy efficient buildings across the country, and significantly reduce carbon emissions.



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