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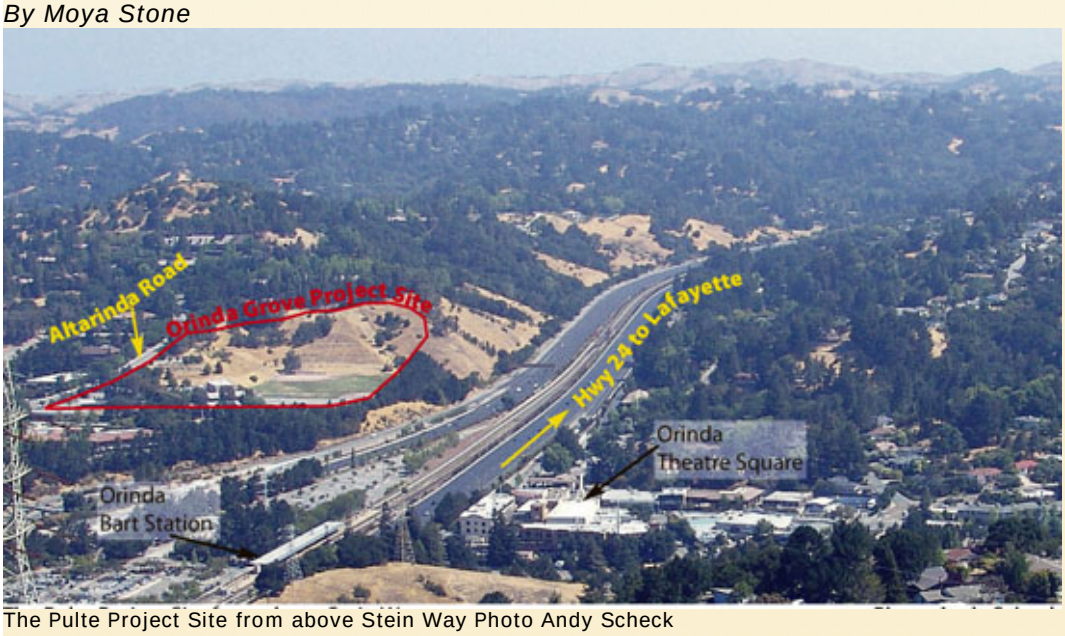
# Orinda City Council Approves Pulte Development

*By Moya Stone*




The Pulte Project Site from above Stein Way Photo Andy Scheck

On August 19th the Orinda City Council approved the Pulte Orinda Grove development project.. The bulk of the meeting was spent on reviewing the project. In the works for four years, the housing and recreation development will replace the old grammar school (and former home to JFK University) at 8 Altarinda Way. The mixed-use village style development was proposed by Michigan based Pulte Homes and will include a total of 73 housing units, eight of which will be duplexes and offered to moderate-income households. Also planned is a community park, a new office administration building for the Orinda Union School District with a 25-space parking lot and a new ball field, which will be located closer to the street where the school buildings currently stand. Walking paths will link the neighborhood to BART and downtown Orinda. In keeping with Orinda's eclectic style of housing the plans include one to three story units and offer a choice of Monterey, Colonial, Cape Cod, and Crafstman architecture. Pulte employee Kim Diamond, Senior Manager for Acquisitions and Entitlement says this is a perfect smart growth project for Orinda, "This whole concept adheres to great city planning," says Diamond. "This is an opportunity for the city of Orinda to provide housing in close proximity to BART and downtown. And the park and new ball field will provide a special place for all Orinda residents to enjoy." The council members enthusiastically approved the project with the following conditions: Pulte and the City Planning Commission are to explore the possibility of increased landscaping between the new school building and the ball field, look into the possibility of increasing the number of parking spaces for the ball field, and look into adding a first story bedroom to some of the single family houses. Pulte Homes is currently is keeping an interest list. To get on the list contact Kim Diamond at 925-249-3268. Other Notes: During the Public Forum portion of the meeting, Cynthia Casey, Senior Administrative Assistant, Public Works rose to speak. Casey, who has worked for the city for 12 years, asked that the council approve PERS, a defined

retirement plan for city employees. "Employees of Orinda are the infrastructure of the city council," said Casey. "We need to be supported." Masaye Nakamura also spoke, expressing concerns regarding the Wilder development in the Gateway Valley, approved by the council in 2005. Wilder developer Michael Olson conceded that the Nakamura family is the most impacted by this housing project, which has been in the works for over 20 years and will include 243 houses, a private swimming pool, an art gallery and several parks. A Sunrise Hill resident Robert Thompson spoke, admonishing the city council for their lack of communication with the Nakamuras. "There has been no outreach from the council to the Nakamuras," Thompson firmly stated. "I am asking for ongoing communication from the council and the developers with the Nakamura family." Keith Miller from the Orinda City Chamber of Commerce requested five thousand dollars from the city to help fund the chamber's upcoming Tour of Orinda Restaurants event (see also page 24). A fundraiser for the Education Foundation of Orinda, the council raised some concerns, but ultimately approved the request.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com



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