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Todd Skinner, Orinda Parks and Recreation Director-A Mainstay

By Andrea A. Firth



Todd Skinner, Director of Orinda Parks & Recreation Department Photo A. Firth

Seated in front of the Community Center alongside several red-leafed liquidambar trees, Todd Skinner, Director of Orinda's Parks and Recreation Department, recalls having organized the planting of these trees over twenty years ago. "The journey is getting to meet and work with all the great volunteers and people of Orinda," states Skinner when asked about his tenure with the City. And his journey as part of Orinda's City Staff has been a long one.

However, Skinner's connection with Orinda started long before receiving his first paycheck. He was raised in Orinda and attended both Sleepy Hollow Elementary and Miramonte High School. "I love the community that I grew up in," he says.

Skinner became the head of Orinda's Parks and Recreation Department in 1985 when the City incorporated. Prior to that, the County had employed him in a similar capacity. Skinner took over one year after Proposition 13 was enacted when 60% of the County's revenue to the Department was cut and classes jumped from a cost of \$7-\$10 to \$20. Skinner now oversees a budget of about \$1 million, and the Department's programs are essentially self-supporting bringing in 15,000 registrants a year.

From a young age, Skinner knew what he liked and wanted and was comfortable to forge his own path. He sites summers spent working at Echo Lake as the foundation for his love of the outdoors and recreation. He graduated from the University of California at Davis where he pursued an independent degree tied to these interests. While at Davis, he also applied his 6'5" frame to the track team where he qualified for the NCAA trials in the 400-meter hurdles.

Skinner later went on to obtain a Masters in Recreation Administration from San Jose State University.

When asked what's new at Parks and Rec, Skinner proudly produces scaled drawings of the five sports fields, art and garden center, series of lakes, walking paths, and trails planned for the Wilder development. "This is out future," states Skinner, who in his role as Director has been part of the many iterations of the development of this land. "From Highway 24, you will be able to hike all the way to San Leandro," states Skinner adding that the development will add 200 acres of open space-doubling the City's current acreage of open space.

While the Wilder project leaves Skinner with much to plan for and look forward to, he is also busy working to complete the Bike, Trails, and Walkway Master Plan. "Trails are important to people and Orinda," says Skinner; he anticipates that the Plan will be presented to the City Council in late Spring. From there, Skinner plans to get permission to develop a Parks Master Plan to identify the last pockets of open space and potential areas of new park land available to the City. The recent passage of Measure WW may provide funds for Orinda to secure what limited space remains.

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