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Keeping Art in Public Places

By Andrea A. Firth

Dotted around the outdoor spaces and walking areas by the Orinda Community Center, Library, and City Hall are several original works of art, such as the leaping frog that graces the fountain by the Library building steps and the three tall dog statues that keep guard outside Caffe Teatro. These works of art are on loan to the City of Orinda through the Art in Public Places Program. Orinda's City Council recently agreed to extend the loan period for eight of the current works of art-so hopefully the frog will keep jumping across the fountain for a little while longer-while the remaining art pieces will be returned to the artists and replaced with new works.

Ted Urban, who was integral to launching the Art in Public Places Program and currently chairs the City Committee that oversees the program, recently presented the City Council with an idea to help to fund the extended lease or purchase of these works of art. Urban suggested that the City consider establishing a community matching funds program. As he described, a percentage of the park dedication fees-part of the permit fee charged for new developments and remodels-could be set aside for retaining the art with the provision that the community donate a similar amount. For example, if the City allocated \$10,000 of the park dedication fees to the Art in Public Places Program and the community contributed the same amount, there would be \$20,000 to use annually to create long-term leases and purchase art.

While the Council seemed receptive to Urban's proposal, the idea is in the early stages of development. "We have a sense that there is a great deal of support for this sort of thing," stated Urban, however he noted that the Committee needed to determine if this was something that the community would be willing to financially support before moving forward. To get feedback on the community's interest in keeping the art and creating a matching funds program, the City has placed a brief, 4-question survey on the website (www.cityoforinda.org) for residents to complete.

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