

Orinda

Lamorinda Community

Orinda

Calendar	
City Council	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, June 16	
Thursday, June 18, 7pm	
joint meeting with Planning Commission	
Planning Comm.	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, June 23 canceled Tuesday, July 14	
Traffic Safety Advisory Comm.	7pm
Community Room at City Hall 22 Orinda Way Monday, June 20	
Mayor's Com. Liaison	8:30am
Community Room at City Hall 22 Orinda Way Monday, July 6	
City of Orinda: http://www.cityoforinda.org Chamber of Commerce: http://www.orindachamber.org • local businesses • upcoming events	



Residential Burglary, 6/02/09
Sometime between Monday and Tuesday a Quail Ridge Lane home that was under construction was broken into. Approximately \$770 worth of miscellaneous items were taken.

D.U.I., 5/31/09 East bound Highway 24 at Oak Hill Road, a 25-year-old male was pulled over at 1:45 in the morning, because he displayed objective signs of intoxication. The math professor at a local college failed his field sobriety test and had a blood alcohol content of .11 He was booked at Martinez "Detention" Facility. You can say that again.

D.U.I. 5/31/09 Same spot – east bound Highway 24 just a little farther down at Pleasant Hill Road, same officer, a couple of hours later. This time a 47-year-old female was pulled over and also failed the breathalyzer test. Oddly enough both individuals were driving Saturdays. What are the odds? When buzzed, stay away from Saturn, call a cab.

Attempted tire theft, 5/28/09 At 2:30 in the morning an officer on patrol noticed someone taking the tires off a truck with a small flashlight on El Nido Road, near St. Stephens. The vehicle fled the scene with lights off reaching speeds of 80 – 95 m.p.h. on Highway 24 when it crashed at the Highway 13 off-ramp. Two twenty-something young women were taken into custody, the stolen property and burglary tools were located. What a surprise, their get-away car was also stolen.



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Orinda Prepares Housing Element

By Andrea A. Firth

As Orinda's City staff and the Planning Process Review Task Force (PPRTF) work toward finalizing their report, which will address the potential for incorporating greater housing opportunities in the downtown areas of the City, running in a parallel track but about six months ahead, is the City's requirement to file an updated Housing Element with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). With the PPRTF recommendations not quite final or ready for implementation, Council members decided to submit a basic version of the housing element to the HCD with plans to update the housing plan in the Fall to include the PPRTF recommendations as appropriate.

What is a Housing Element?

State law requires that cities

plan for the projected housing needs of the community at all economic levels. As part of the city's General Plan—the comprehensive, long-term plan for the physical development of the city—the state mandates cities to include a housing element. In order for the private market to adequately address housing needs and demand, cities are required to adopt land use plans and regulatory systems which provide opportunities for, and do not unduly constrain, housing development. Orinda's current housing element planning period runs from 2007 to 2014, and the next update is due to HCD by June 30th.

How is the housing element relevant to the Orinda resident?

As is often the case in Orinda, all things relevant tie back to the deteriorating condition of the

roads. Compliance with the state's housing element law is a prerequisite to the city's receipt of Measure C/Measure J transportation funds, and this equates to about \$320,000 in annual pavement maintenance for the city. At the most recent City Council meeting, Planning Department Director Emmanuel Ursu mentioned that 40% of California's cities do not currently have housing elements that meet the state requirements, however this is not position that Ursu recommends for Orinda. Along with the possibility, albeit remote, that the city could lose road maintenance monies, according to Ursu, additional risks associated with not having a legally adequate housing element are exposure to law suits from housing advocacy groups and the potential for the Contra Costa Transportation Authority to pro-



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hibit the city from issuing any development permits until the housing element were compliant.

The housing element also requires cities to provide adequate zoning to allow for transitional housing and emergency shelters. "This does not mean we must construct or operate such facilities; however, if we received a request from a property owner to do so, and the property owner complied with the standards we established (hours of operation, location,

staffing requirements, size of the operation, etc) then we could not deny the request," explains Ursu. "My intent is to present the City Council with parameters for the operation of such facilities that both follow the requirements of state law and are consistent with the services our local churches already provide in this respect," he adds. Ursu will present a revised, draft Housing Element to the City Council at their next meeting on June 16th.

Downtown Revitalization—Getting Closer

By Andrea A. Firth

At a measured pace, Orinda is moving toward a more hassle-free process for residential development and establishing guidelines to foster the revitalization of the downtown areas. The City Council and Planning Commission have completed their joint review of the 61 recommendations proposed in the draft report of the Planning Process Review Task Force (PPRTF). Following an almost two-year journey and over 140 meetings, the PPRTF will now move to incorporate changes and feedback culled from multiple public meetings to generate a final report for the City Council.

As the Council and Planning Commission reviewed the final recommendations related to downtown revitalization, they worked to provide sufficient flexibility to allow developers to bring creative planning to the City while not uprooting the successful businesses already in place. "I am one for keeping this as open and flexible as possible," stated Planning Com-

missioner Richard Westin. "We don't know what a developer is going to bring to us... Leave it open and see what we get. Then we can begin to shape it," he added.

For not the first, or probably the last, time the Council and Commission members wrestled with the definition of a village character and what a village should or would look like. (Even the definition of semi-rural, as Orinda is often described, was briefly debated.) As proposed by the PPRTF, Orinda's village character will have a mix of retail, office, and residential space. It will be pedestrian friendly with inviting storefronts, include common open space areas, and take advantage of the surrounding natural beauty. For the visual learners in the group, the question still seemed to be—"so what does that look like?"

55-foot Building Height. Longtime resident and former Mayor and Planning Commissioner Bill Judge asked the Council to ensure that the PPRTF recommendations not go so far as to eliminate

"the village" from the village of Orinda. Although the recommendation for raising the building height to 55 feet in the downtown districts had been reviewed at a previous meeting, Judge reopened the height discussion and challenged the rationale for allowing downtown building height to rise another 20 feet even if designed with setbacks. (The current downtown building height maximum is 35 feet.) "It's appalling, it doesn't fit... 55 feet is going to far," stated Judge who used Lafayette's Mercantile Exchange Building as an example of why 55 feet is too high. "The Mercantile Exchange Building on Mount Diablo Boulevard is only 42 1/2 feet high," noted Judge. "Think about 35 feet or 42 feet but not 55 feet," he added.

Parking. Ensuring the availability of adequate parking to meet the current and future retail parking needs was clearly supported by members of both the Council and Commission.

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State Senator

DeSaulnier Talks Budget with Orinda's Council

By Andrea A. Firth

Mark DeSaulnier, California State Senator for the 7th District, paid a visit to the Orinda City Council meeting last Tuesday. Despite the current bleak outlook for the state's finances, he tried to infuse some good news, or at least hope, within his description of the

significant budget challenges facing California. "We thought we had solved the problem of the largest deficit that California has ever faced," stated DeSaulnier, who had just returned from a joint session of the Senate and Assembly in which the Governor deliv-

ered more negative news about the state's projected revenues. "We now have, as of today, an additional \$24 billion problem, which could lead to cash flow problems within as soon as a month," he stated.

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—Lynn Simon

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