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Tappan Lane Residents Pave the Way

By Andrea A. Firth



Pictured are Jim Lucas, Chuck Swanson, Tom McDowell, Rafael Topete and Al Resnick Photo Ohlen Alexander

Tappan Lane residents and neighbors on adjacent streets have taken the repair of this decaying public road into their own hands, or at least into their own wallets.

"Frankly there were areas that were dangerous. We were concerned about the safety of driving on the street through another winter," states Al Resnick, a 32-year resident of Orinda who has navigated the potholes on Tappan Lane for the past 11 years. "We had to do this ourselves, because there is no money available from the City to get the repairs done anytime soon," he adds.

Resnick along with neighbors Tom McDowell and Catherine Soso distributed a flyer to Tappan Lane residents and neighbors outlining the problem and proposing a solution-to fix the road with funds contributed by the road's users. Then the three organizers took their campaign door to door. "People were quite responsive. We have gotten pretty good participation," states Resnick, who estimates that they will raise \$24,000 for the road repairs.

"It was a low pressure sale," says Resnick. Residents were not required to participate or told how much to contribute. Resnick is also quick to acknowledge that the project was possible due to the fact that the contractor, JV Lucas Paving, Inc, a family-owned and operated business in Lafayette, provided their services at a discount. The asphalt supplier, County Asphalt, LLC, also provided a discount on material.

"This is the first group in Orinda that has come together to fund repairs on a public street," notes Chuck Swanson, Director of Public Works and Engineering for the City. He is supportive of the Tappan Lane residents' efforts and is watching the progress of the project with interest.

"The City has very limited funds for the Pavement Management Program right now," says Swanson. He explains that the Council has designated collectors (e.g., Altarinda and Miner Roads), arterials (e.g., Camino Pablo and Moraga Way), and school routes as priorities for the City's limited road repair dollars. "Residential streets won't get much attention right now. There aren't enough dollars available," adds Swanson.

There is a precedent for residents funding their own road repairs already established in nearby Lafayette, which like Orinda, can fund only a handful of road repair projects each year.

"In the past, the timeline for certain streets has been accelerated when private donations are pledged to fund a significant share of the project cost," states Tony Coe, Lafayette's Engineering Services Manager. "This most recently happened on Sweet Court, where residents paid for half of the costs, and the court was accelerated to be reconstructed about the same time as another through street in the neighborhood," he adds, noting that this is not a formalized process and requests are handled on a case-by-case basis.

"We're looking at a three to five year fix," states Resnick who was very satisfied by his first drive on the newly repaired street. "It's not just a better road, it's a safer road. It's major repair."

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