

Civic News

Orinda


Public Meetings

City Council Tuesday, September 21, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission Tuesday, September 28, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Orinda: www.cityoforinda.org
Chamber of Commerce: www.orindachamber.org

• Police Report •



rock. Estimated damage for the window - \$400, estimated value of guitars \$1,500.

Possible tire slashed, 8/31/10 A 22-year-old Orinda man parked his car at the Theatre Square lot at 11:30 in the morning. He locked the car and was gone for approximately 15 minutes. When he returned, he noticed the car was listing to one side, and found a cut on one of the front tires. Police were unable to determine if there was a cut in the sidewall or if the slash was a defect in the tire.

Tools taken, 8/30/10 An unknown suspect entered the backyard of a home on La Espiral and removed unsecured un-itemized tools. Nothing was seen or heard, but \$2,000 worth of hammers and screwdrivers disappeared.

Cash call, 9/01/10 An 87-year-old woman living on Estabueno received a call from a young woman who claimed to be her granddaughter. She said she had gotten into an accident and was in jail in Canada for a D.U.I. and needed \$920 right away. The elderly woman sent the money – but alas later found out that her granddaughter was never in Canada and was never in trouble with the law.

Commercial burglary, 9/01/10 An unknown suspect broke a window at Alma Music on Brookwood Road and took five electric guitars. The thief used a very low tech method of entry – a large

Downtown Planning Workshop Set for 10/18

To provide all of Orinda's residents with the opportunity to help to determine the vision for Orinda's downtown, the City has planned two public workshops, says City Manager Janet Keeter. The first workshop will be held on Monday, October 18th, starting at 7:00 p.m. in Founders Hall at the Community Center. Professional facilitators from MIG Inc. in Emeryville will lead the "town hall style" meetings to allow residents to constructively discuss the merits of the recommendations presented in the downtown segment of the Planning Process Review Task Force Report. The second workshop is planned for early December. A. Firth




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Senior Housing Development Gets Downsized

By Andrea A. Firth



View of the storypoles for the proposed senior housing development at the corner of Irwin Way and Orinda Way from across the street. Photo Exhibit B of the Staff report from the Orinda Planning Commission meeting of 8/31/10.

During the last week of August, story poles—a wooden structure of 2 by 4's connected with strings dotted with multi-colored ribbons—were erected on the parking lot adjacent to the tennis courts at 2 Irwin Way, to provide a visual for the height and mass of the senior affordable housing facility proposed for the site (see photo). Eden Housing, which was appointed by the City to develop the housing project, has proposed a four-story building with 70 one-bedroom units that exceeds 50 feet in height in some parts. The Planning Commission then met in a workshop format on August 31st to discuss development standards for and rezoning of the 1.45 acre city-owned site prior to Eden submitting plans for design review.

Height and Mass—what's too big?

"Personally, I think it's massive," said Jeff Mills, one of four residents who attended the meeting. After viewing the story poles and

walking the property Mills found that the structure, with its hillside placement, towered over the street. "It's huge. It's blocking blue sky," he added.

Planning Commissioner Chris Kniel concurred, advocating that the current 35-foot building height restriction in the downtown district be applied. "In my opinion, [over 50] feet is not okay at all," said Kniel. "It's overbearing, way too big for the lot, and not in keeping with the character of Orinda," he said, adding, "We can't ignore the new input from the public regarding building height." Commissioner Carlos Baltodano was also concerned about a building height of 50 feet or greater and preferred the maximum building height be capped at 45 feet to be consistent with the adjacent Senior Village.

Planning Commission Chair Dean Orr, who visited the site four times before the meeting, acknowledged that upon first view of the

story poles the structure felt big. However, he noted that visual impact driving down Orinda Way going north was minimal. "You can't see it. It's incredibly well screened with substantial, mature screening," said Orr. The view that created the most concern for Orr, and several other Commissioners concurred, was looking at the story poles from the Citibank parking lot across Orinda Way. "I think this project as drawn, with the north and south wings going out to Orinda Way at four stories, is too big a change. Bringing it down a floor brings a massing that is more in line," said Orr, and he suggested that some of those units could be moved to the back of the property and be less visible from the street.

"We've heard what you are saying. We've all decided we've got to pull this back. It's just too tall," responded architect Sean Reynolds, a Project Manager with Dahlin Group Architecture Plan-

ning, which is working with Eden Housing to design the affordable senior housing facility.

After extensive deliberations, the Commission voted four to two (Kniel and Baltodano dissenting) to recommend a maximum building height standard for the site of 50 feet.

Zoning

Originally purchased by the Orinda Association, the parcel is zoned for public, semi-public use for buildings such as a library. With the old library vacant, the City began plans for an affordable senior facility on the site about 15 years ago and subsequently received \$2.5 million of in lieu fees as part of the Wilder development agreement to apply to the project. The Planning Commission voted to recommend that the parcel be rezoned residential medium density (RM), which is identical to the adjacent Senior Village, with an overlay district for senior housing.

What's next?

According to the City's Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu, the next step in the process will be the City Council's review of the Planning Commission's recommendations for the land-use amendments for the Irwin Way site; this is tentatively scheduled for the Council's October 19th meeting. In the meantime, Eden Housing is in the process of revising the story poles and their conceptual building plans based on the Planning Commission's recommendations and preparing to submit the plans for design review approval.

Heritage Tree Status for Donna Maria Oak Denied

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Several residents of Donna Maria Way spoke in support of Heritage Tree status for the stately oak that serves as a focal point for their neighborhood, however, Michael Olson, speaking on behalf of J and J Ranch, LLC which owns the adjacent property at 24 Adobe Lane, did not agree. Olson and his partners John French and Peter Branagh have proposed building 13 single-family homes on the approximately 20-acre property that also includes the historic Moraga Adobe which they plan on restor-

ing and opening to the public.

"We absolutely love the tree and its location at the entrance of our proposed project," said Olson. "We have no plans to impact the tree," he added, noting that they would likely remove some of the asphalt that is located in the protected area under the tree, and this asphalt would be replaced elsewhere but farther from the tree's base. Olson stated that he would not have any problem with the Heritage Tree designation once his project has gone through the planning process with the City but ap-

plying that status now would significantly impact their ability to develop the property. Orinda's Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu estimated that Olson's project would go before the Planning Commission in approximately two months.

Following the Council's decision, Smith stated that he and his wife were disappointed with the outcome. "I didn't quite follow the logic of the city attorney as far as ownership of the tree," said Smith, who feels the City has missed an opportunity to have an active Her-

itage Tree program. Regarding the proposed location of the entrance to Olson's new development just beyond his driveway and oak tree, Smith stated that he would prefer that all three access points to the site, one other on Donna Maria Way and one from the south end of Dolores Way, be utilized to minimize the traffic impacts on the neighborhood.

The Council also directed City Staff to refund the Smith's application fee and move to revise the Heritage Tree ordinance to be more clear.

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