

Orinda's Disposable Income—It's Leaking

By Andrea A. Firth

Orinda recently commissioned a retail leakage study to determine the City's potential to attract new businesses. Bottom line: The retail spending potential to be captured in Orinda is significant, but it will require the development of new commercial space. According to the study prepared by Wahlstrom & Associates, it's simple economics: the retail demands of the 17,700 residents far outpace the supply of retail outlets in the city.

Only \$1 of every \$3 Orinda residents spend at retail stores stays in Orinda, leaking \$175 million of sales to Moraga, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, and other shopping destinations each year. "You do have significant spending leakages, and [the City] could economically support a number of retail options, but there is a very

small inventory of existing space," said Stephen Wahlstrom when he presented the study data at the September 7th City Council meeting. In addition, the available retail space is of insufficient size or inappropriate location to attract new apparel, sporting goods, grocery, and home furnishing stores.

Orinda has a retail vacancy rate of 14%, which represents about 30,000 square feet of space, said Wahlstrom. The vacant commercial space is concentrated in the former Phair's Department Store, which has long presented a re-use challenge, and within Theater Square, which has historically proven to be a poor retail location. However, he added, Orinda's existing retail businesses, which occupy just over 100,000 square feet of space—the approximate

amount of space within a single Target discount store—do pretty well, achieving total annual sales of \$80 million.

Council members Amy Worth and Steve Glazer both pressed Wahlstrom to define the economic impact on retail sales with the addition of residential units in the downtown districts. Wahlstrom stated that additional housing would increase retail sales but not significantly. He believed that due to the limited supply of retail outlets, additional residents in downtown would also spend two of every three retail dollars outside of Orinda. "You are doing very well with the retail space that you have," said Wahlstrom. "You can't increase sales significantly without expanding the space devoted to retail."

Orinda City Council Candidate Forum

Wednesday, October 13, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Library Auditorium

Sponsored by the Orinda Association

Poetry Contest—What does Orinda mean to me?

To help commemorate the 25th anniversary of the incorporation of Orinda, the City is sponsoring a poetry contest with five age categories: K-2nd grade; 3rd grade-5th grade; 6th grade-8th grade; 9th grade-12th grade; and adult (ages 18 and over). Send

your original poem, on the theme "What does Orinda mean to me?," no longer than one page double spaced, to the City Clerk, Michele Olsen, at 22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563, or by email to molsen@cityoforinda.org by September 24th, 2010. All poems re-

ceived are public record and will be available to view on the City's website after September 24th. The winning poems will be announced at the October 5th City Council meeting and sealed in the City's time capsule on October 21st, 2010.

Crestview Residents Make Road Repairs Happen

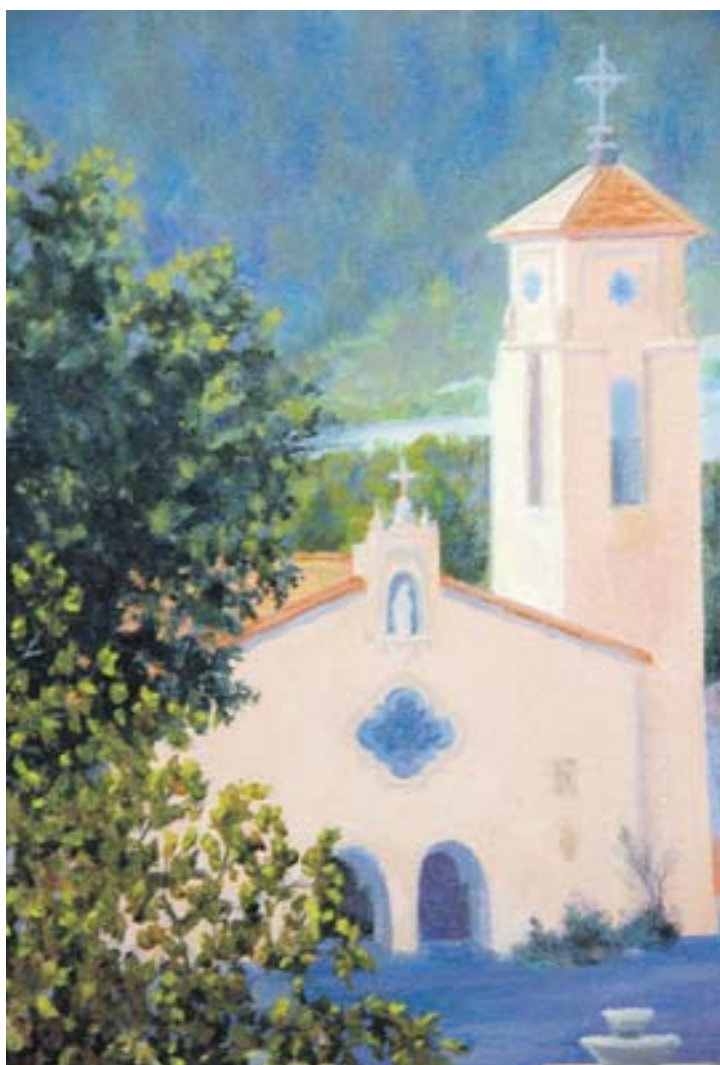


Diana Stephens was all smiles as she presented the City with a check for the \$58,000 raised by the residents of Crestview Drive to repair their crumbling road. Approximately 60 property owners contributed to the cause, and the road repairs are scheduled to start soon. Additional funding for the road-work project will be contributed by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (\$56,000) and the City (\$28,000). Pictured with Diana are Mayor Tom McCormick (L) and Chuck Swanson, the Director of Public Works and Engineering Services. *A.Firth*

Photo Ohlen Alexander

Local Artists Celebrate Orinda Silver Anniversary with Exhibit

By Andrea A. Firth



Santa Maria by Carmel DeWiess

Photo provided

Over twenty local artists currently have artwork depicting life in Orinda on display at the Orinda Library Gallery to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the City's incorporation. The month-long exhibit, which includes more than sixty works featuring landscapes, historic buildings, and community settings throughout the City, will culminate with a reception on Saturday, October 2nd from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. This free event is open to the public and will have music by the Contra Costa Chamber Orchestra, wine (at \$5 a glass), and hors d'oeuvres.

"We are pleased to be partnering with the City of Orinda to put on this special event to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the city's incorporation and to feature the work of our local artists," says Sue Severson, a trustee of the Orinda Community Foundation. "Orindans really enjoy and support the arts, and the Library Gallery is a great venue to showcase it," she adds.

Several well-known Orinda artists have work on display including Allison McCrady, Mary Spain,

and Rob Becker; neighboring artists such as George Ehrenhaft of Moraga and Margaret Lucas-Hill of Lafayette are participating too. The works, done in oil, acrylic, watercolor, and photography, capture all things Orinda including the ubiquitous hills in all seasons, color, and forms; landmark buildings such as Orinda Motors, Village Antiques, Loard's Ice Cream and Candies, and Santa Maria, St. Mary's, and Orinda Community churches; and everyday sights such as the BART station, the Orinda Theater marquis, and the more recent but oft-visited Starbucks. All the artwork is for sale, and the artists will donate a percentage of the sale proceeds to the Orinda Community Foundation.

"The Orinda Community Foundation was formed in February of this year in response to the city's declining revenues," says Severson. Historically, the City contributed about \$25,000 to community events and programs, but with the economic downturn that financial support was completely eliminated creating the need for private fundraising, she explains. The

Orinda Community Foundation will use proceeds from this event and other events held throughout the year to provide grants to support local events and programs.

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