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Lamorinda's Councils Talk Roads and Development

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Lamorinda's Mayors (from left): Carl Anduri (Lafayette), Karen Mendonca (Moraga), Victoria Smith (Orinda) Photo Andy Scheck

that the Council would be meeting with residents who live on failing roads on March 1st to discuss their support of a November-ballot tax measure of just under \$100 per parcel that is limited to ten years. The parcel tax measure, if pursued, would be a citizen-led effort according to Lafayette Council member Don Tatzin.

Moraga Council member Mike Metcalf acknowledged that his town also has a significant problem with aging road and storm drain infrastructure, although not nearly as large as his neighbors in Orinda. Metcalf said the town is working to define the magnitude of the problem and how to best communicate the issue to residents. Moraga currently spends about \$500,000 a year on the repair of arterials and collector roads.

Orinda Council member Dean Orr suggested that the public works departments consider creative ways to combine road projects across the three communities to take best advantage of available construction monies.

As far as development, Lafayette had the longest list of projects in the pipeline including luxury condos, a senior assisted-living facility, a senior affordable housing residence, apartments, and townhomes. A long and inclusive process for development of a downtown development plan should be concluded by midsummer.

In Orinda, three model homes at the Wilder luxury-home development are under construction and two of the five ball-fields on the property will be completed by June. Construction of the 73-unit Pulte development awaits financing; a senior affordable housing development will take another few years to fund. Community input to a downtown revitalization plan is ongoing.

Moraga was the only one of the three communities with a finalized plan for downtown development. The town's housing element was certified last year. A forty-unit residence has been proposed for the vacant parcel across from Rheem Center. A three-member economic development team is working to develop a plan for what will best serve the town in the half-occupied Rheem Center.

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Council members and staff from Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda convened at the Saint Mary's College Soda Center on February 10th for the annual Tri-City meeting. Following a presentation from the county and metropolitan transportation authorities regarding the ongoing process to develop a regional transportation plan aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Lamorinda's elected officials moved on to local business-roads and development.

Funding road and storm drain repairs is a problem for all three communities. Orinda Mayor Victoria Smith reported that the estimated cost of her city's road repair needs tops \$100 million. Scarce city funds, a little more than 10% of the city's operating budget annually, are reserved for fixing arterial and collector roads. Neighborhood streets are repaired only in emergency situations. "We have had some success in repairing roads with grants monies, but we still face a significant challenge," said Smith. She added that there were no plans to pursue a tax measure to fund road repairs in the current economic environment.

Mayor Carl Anduri said Lafayette's current road repair backlog totals \$15.5 million. Lafayette's Council proposes to apply \$3 million of the city's reserve fund monies to road repairs over the next three years and potentially pursue a parcel tax to fund the difference. Anduri said