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Orinda Capital Improvement Plan 2012

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Orinda's roads are no longer the worst in the Bay Area, according to the most recent edition of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Pothole Report, but their overall rating of Poor remains. Factoring in the 50-year old corrugated metal pipes of the drainage system that the City inherited from the County when it incorporated, Orinda's infrastructure becomes an aging starlet crying out for more than just cosmetic surgery.

Continuing concerns were evident at last week's Orinda City Council meeting as members spent the majority of their time reviewing improvements proposed to infrastructure and parks for fiscal year 2012.

City roads and storm drains are prioritized in this year's Capital Improvement Plan, and residents will also see long-awaited projects take center stage thanks to partnerships that City leaders and staff have forged with federal, state, and regional agencies. A complete list of projects is available on the City's website, www.ci.orinda.ca.us.

Manzanita Bridge. The replacement of the bridge over San Pablo Creek on Manzanita Drive near Acadia is finally a go. Residents will experience inconvenience when the bridge is torn out, starting in summer of 2012, and replaced by a one-lane structure. (Construction will be limited to April through October 15 each year due to environmental constraints.) Seismic support and flood protection capacity will be significantly improved while still protecting the fragile habitats of the red-legged frog and Alameda Whip Snake. Nearly 80 percent of the \$1,907,900 cost projected will come from State Seismic Retrofit funds. City gas tax revenues and local traffic impact fees will make up the difference. City staff are already planning ways to keep residents informed in advance of detours and other pending disruptions.

Glorietta Storm Drain Improvements. Described by Council member Steve Glazer as "the elephant in the room," this \$1,687,427 project will drain City coffers now so that storm water may be safely eliminated moving forward.

Engineers will build a new 60-inch drainage facility parallel to Glorietta Court and Moraga Way, bore and jack a new 60-inch reinforced concrete pipe from San Pablo Creek to the manhole, and improve an existing CMP (corrugated metal pipe). Included in this plan is repair work to a collapsing storm drain required by the settlement of Robles v. Orinda. The total project cost will be spread over three years. \$342,000 has been budgeted for fiscal year 2012 with expenditures of \$715,019 and \$396,294 anticipated for fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

"It's costly, but it's something that has to be done," said Chuck Swanson, Orinda's director of Public Works and Engineering Services. Without drainage system upgrades, Swanson noted, damage to adjacent properties and structures could occur as existing systems fail, resulting in far more costly expenditures for City and its residents.

North Lane Storm Water Mitigation. Because the storm drain system near the water treatment plant is undersized, storm pipes in this area have blocked so seriously during major downpours that parts of the neighborhood have washed out several times. FEMA and the East Bay Municipal Utility District, realizing the potential for repeat harm to the neighborhood and the likelihood that the water treatment plant could also face serious damage in a future storm, joined forces to award Orinda substantial funding to fix the problem. FEMA will provide the lion's share of the project's total cost, awarding \$1,265,570 for fiscal year 2012. EBMUD will match the City's portion of \$210,928.50. It is estimated that \$275,000 of the total project cost will be expended in 2012 with the remainder spun out over subsequent fiscal years. The project should be completed by the summer of 2012 (pending FEMA approval).

Lamorinda Skatepark Parking Lot. Council members also reviewed Orinda's planned contribution of \$62,500 toward a parking lot for the Lamorinda Skatepark. Speaking in support of the City's continued involvement with this project, Julie Whitsitt, an Orinda mom and the longest serving member on the City's Parks and Recreation Commission, said, "It's not just a parking lot; it's a recreational hub for our community." Whitsitt also advised the Council that the current manner in which parents must park when dropping off their children is often unsafe, and noted that Moraga has borne the day-to-day operating and maintenance costs of the skatepark since its inception. "I think 25 percent is a fair share for Orinda," she concluded. The Council approved the project on a 3-1 vote. (Council Member Glazer voted no; Council Member Orr was absent.)

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