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Spike in Local Burglaries Prompts Businesses to be Proactive

By Sophie Braccini



Orinda Theatre Square in the evening Photo Doug Kohen

During his five years with the Orinda Police Department, detective Dan Jeffries saw only a handful of burglaries, but over the past few months he says there has been a spike.

These recent events have caused the Orinda police to somewhat modify their patrol pattern. The incidences have also reinforced the need for local businesses to come together and to find ways to prevent more crimes from happening.

"It was quite an unpleasant experience," said Entourage owner Gino Chiodo, remembering the night in March when someone broke the window of his salon in Theatre Square. "Unfortunately we've been broken into before." On that night, unidentified burglars smashed three business windows in Theatre Square: another at Shelby's, as well as one at Lava Pit above Entourage. These incidents followed rooftop intrusions in two businesses along Moraga Way, and an early-January theft at the new Flying A Gas Station near the entrance of eastbound Hwy 24.

"We have changed our patrol pattern to have more presence in the late night/morning hours," said Jeffries. The detective also thinks business owners should take more preventative measures.

"Video surveillance cameras many businesses are using is of poor quality," said the Detective, "and some of the business owners do not know how to operate the [equipment]." Jeffries said that video footage is the best way for police to identify a burglar. He suggested the owner of the building (Theatre Square) install a system to film the access and alleyways of the Square, "and have large signs indicating that they are doing so," he said. "These burglaries are planned; thieves explore the areas they plan to attack. Signs like those can be a good deterrent."

In a note to the Chamber of Commerce, Orinda Police Chief Jeff Jennings recommended the following prevention

strategies: "Alarm your business," Jennings wrote. "Arm it every day, and if you don't have one, consider installing one. Deposit your daily cash receipts at the bank. Keep a look out for suspicious behavior, and if you notice something call the Dispatch at 284-5010."

Chiodo appreciated the chief's advice. "From now on we are taking all our cash away at night and we are leaving the register opened and visibly empty," he said.

Detective Jeffries also recommends that business owners attend the regular Orinda Watch meetings conducted by the Chamber of Commerce. "We work together with the support of the Orinda Police Department and share ideas about how to make things better," said past president of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce Sue Breedlove when the group started in 2011.

Detective Jeffries often attends the meetings, and believes organizing the businesses can be a good preventative tool. "Businesses can watch out for each other and share best practices." Keith Miller, the president of the Orinda Chamber added that these meetings are open to all Lamorinda-area businesses interested in sharing concerns and ideas about crime prevention.

"It's all about safety and all are welcome," he said. Contact the Orinda Chamber of Commerce at OrindaChamber.org for more information.

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[back](#)

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