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## City of Orinda Makes Progress Reducing ABAG-MTC Demands

*Residents urge officials to push back even harder**Laurie Snyder*

Planning by the Association of Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Bay Area Governments (ABAG) continues to rankle residents despite successful efforts by the Orinda City Council and City staff to alter agency goals that could have forced a 260 percent increase in Orinda's housing development.

According to the staff report prepared for Council's September 4 meeting, "State law mandates that every city and county adopt and periodically update the housing element of their general plans ... to assure that cities and counties recognize and fulfill their responsibilities in contributing to the state housing goal and regional housing needs."

Additionally, "the housing is now being used as a tool to implement SB375" (California's law to reduce greenhouse gas emissions) "and the housing allocation this cycle is in large part determined by the preferred Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) adopted by ABAG and MTC in May 2012.... Through the SCS process, ABAG and MTC prepared five alternative growth scenarios for a 30-year period starting in 2010."

The Initial Vision scenario presented "allocations significantly higher than the growth envisioned in the City of Orinda General Plan." Following strongly worded letters in June 2011 by then-Mayor Victoria Smith and in February 2012 by current Mayor Steve Glazer, which called ABAG-MTC's development expectations for Orinda unrealistic and suggested the agencies are failing to provide the public with adequate opportunities for feedback, ABAG-MTC "selected a preferred scenario that is consistent with the growth envisioned in the Orinda General Plan. The preferred scenario allocates growth of 590 households to Orinda over the next 30 years, of which 177 are designated for downtown" - a reduction from initial ABAG-MTC projections of 1,344 households for the downtown area.

Residents urged the Council to continue demanding change, and also pressed leaders to better educate their fellow Orindans about ABAG-MTC procedures by spelling out in plain wording the definitions of confusing catch phrases in ABAG-MTC reports.

Council directed staff to seek clarification with the Housing Methodology Committee (HMC) regarding how many of the City's current and planned projects will meet the latest proposed Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA), and to provide clearer explanations of ABAG-MTC terminology in future reports.

The ABAG Board will consider the latest round of revisions and appeals to its draft RHNA methodology on September 20. ABAG personnel anticipate issuing Final Allocations in April 2013 for approval by its Executive Board prior to review in the summer of 2013 of the San Francisco Bay Area RHNA Plan by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

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