



Orinda Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, Nov. 19, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Nov. 12, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Nov. 13, 6:30 p.m.
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,
22 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org

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Orinda's Draft Housing Element Finally Heading to End Zone?

By Laurie Snyder

The Orinda Planning Commission recently moved the ball forward on Orinda's Housing Element with its recommendation to the City Council to adopt the most recent version of the document – draft five – as well as the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, Zoning Ordinance text, and General Plan and map amendments associated with the Element.

The Oct. 29 commission meeting was the first of the latest public hearings to help Orindans achieve détente with state and local officials regarding the creation of a Housing Element for Orinda's General Plan.

With the civic equivalent of a two minute warning looming, time is of the essence. Orinda must obtain certification from the California Department of Housing and

Community Development by Jan. 31, 2014. Failure to do so puts the city at risk of losing significant transportation and planning dollars.

The second of the hearings will be held before the City Council on Nov. 19 at 7 p.m. If approved by council members, staff would then immediately send the Element to the HCD for review.

"We're the last city of 19

cities in this county that doesn't have a certified housing element," noted planning commission chair Carlos Baltodano, who described the housing element review process undertaken by the city these last several years as "arduous." He added, "We've had a lot of input from people to get to this point."

... continued on next page

New Orinda Grove Neighborhood Rolls Out the Welcome Mat

By Laurie Snyder



"The project is well on its way to being a very good asset for the community," said Orinda city manager Janet Keeter of the Orinda Grove neighborhood currently under development. Keeter advised the Orinda City Council that more than 1,500 people had toured the model homes even before Pulte's Oct. 24 ribbon cutting – an indicator of the expected competition for just 73 new homes. Photos Ohlen Alexander

In addition to hearing positive news Oct. 22 from Janet Keeter, city manager, about burgeoning public interest in the 73 homes being created for Orinda's newest neighborhood – Orinda Grove – members of the Orinda City Council received an update regarding eight of those homes

which will be classified and sold at below market rate.

"When the city council approved the project back in 2008," said planning director Emmanuel Ursu, "there was a condition of approval that required eight of the units to be affordable at moderate income levels," and that these

homes "were to be made available to households with at least four persons." Staff, in consultation with city attorneys and the developers, subsequently worked out criteria for setting the below market rate price for the first four homes and for determining prospective homeowner eligibility.

"The way we established the price is we used 110 percent of the area median income for a family of four – that is \$102,850 a year. We assumed that no more than 35 percent of the household income would go toward housing costs," explained Ursu. For city purposes, he said, "housing costs" would include the principle, interest, tax, insurance, homeowners' association fees, utilities, maintenance, and city costs to operate the below market rate program.

"We also assumed a 10 percent down payment and fixed rate mortgage over 30 years, using the average mortgage rate for the prior 12 months," ultimately settling on a sales price of \$385,000.

That price will be reassessed, when the remaining units are ready, in response to median income and mortgage rate changes. A concerted effort is being made to reach out to local businesses, schools, churches, and others who have contact with individuals working in Orinda. "We want to target folks that are locally employed, as they will have priority," stressed Ursu.

Staff will host a workshop in November or early December to explain the details of the below market rate program. A date will be announced soon. The deadline to apply will likely be in mid-January.



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