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## A New Welcome Home on the Horizon for Orindans?

By Laurie Snyder

"Show me your garden, provided it be your own, and I will tell you what you are like." - Alfred Austin

At the juncture of Camino Pablo and Brookwood Drive, tucked against Orinda Theatre Square, sits a tiny, green sanctuary. It has been there - in some shape or form - since 1973 when PG&E entered into a 20-year "Cooperative Landscaping Agreement" with Contra Costa County. Orinda inherited both park and agreement when it incorporated as a city.

Somewhere along the way, the patch was christened "the Mini-Park," and redwood trees were planted. And therein is the rub - literally. Redwoods, magnificent though they are, do not mix with power lines.

PG&E advised the Orinda City Council in 2010 of its new maintenance initiative, requiring removal of trees to protect 230KV transmission lines. But the utility also indicated a willingness to hold off until Orinda could figure out how to replace the trees with shorter greenery. The City Council approved a plan with an estimated cost of \$57,000 in 2011, following input from the Orinda Parks and Recreation Commission and Public Works Aesthetic Review Committee, Montelindo Garden Club and Theatre Square management, but did not specify a funding source.

Undaunted, Montelindo continued its tender loving care.

Cut to 2013 when the Orinda Community Foundation expressed interest in providing funds - potentially in the six-figure range - and presented ideas at a summer meeting with the city, PG&E, and Montelindo. Attendees were said to be open to new options "since OCF was committed to provide substantial financial support." PG&E, while anxious to proceed, appears to be willing to give Orinda more time since Orinda's volunteers are, in effect, taking care of a headache by beautifying and maintaining the land for them.

"A design process with identified funding for this project could yield significant improvements to the entrance to the Theatre Square/Crossroads Downtown area," wrote staff in a Nov.5 report to the City Council. Both the Parks and Recreation Commission and Public Works Aesthetic Review Committee would like to do more, but also want the project to move forward quickly. After council members considered the options - implementing the already approved plan or regrouping and re-envisioning - they directed staff to obtain more information about the funding available from the Orinda Community Foundation and work with the other bodies to consider what else might be done with the additional financial support.

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