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Published August 27th, 2014

New Orinda Union School District Administration Building Opens Its Front Door

By Laurie Snyder



Tones sound in offices throughout the Orinda Union School District's new administration building as the front door opens, gently alerting OUSD administrative personnel as visitors arrive. Photos Ohlen Alexander

"It's one of the most challenging builds I've been on in my 30-plus-year career," observed OUSD facilities director Ed Silvas. School districts usually contract out for building construction, he said, but in this case, a Pulte project manager oversaw exterior construction while OUSD managed the interior work. Many items were easily designated as "shell" or "interior," but project managers were required to collaborate when design features impacted both the interior and exterior.

The structure's first floor is home to the OUSD school board's conference room, a large storage area and information technology and maintenance services. Administrative and special services staff conduct day-to-day business and meet with parents and teachers in offices, conference rooms and other workspaces on the floor above.

A state-of-the-art facility, lighting is energy efficient with room fixtures controlled by occupancy sensors. Down the road, visitors will be able to access an internet guest account firewalled off from staff wireless services.

"We engineered a lot of the expenses out of the building," said Silvas. Rubber-backed carpeting was installed for easy maintenance and, when possible, furniture and other supplies were brought in from the old building. A new overhead sound system in the school board conference room makes it easier to hear board debates, and twin televisions - installed there at a lower cost than a traditional projection system - can be linked to flat panel systems in conference areas upstairs when expanded meeting seating is needed. Even the LED lights on handrails outside of the building will mitigate energy costs.

"We were right on budget with only 3 percent of change orders - something that is pretty much unheard of in construction nowadays," said Silvas.

Spiffy features aside, what is clear is that OUSD kids and teachers remain the center of their world. "We've allotted space for the art teachers to come and hang the work of their students," said Frenklach. And funds from Pine Grove's sale have already been put to good use. The Facilities Task

School may have been out for the summer, but Orinda Union School District administrators were busier than ever as they readied for their move into the district's new administration building.

Lamorinda Weekly photographer Ohlen Alexander captured these August scenes as administrative personnel brought the facility to life.

"This building is housing what was in three buildings before," explained Kathy Frenklach, administrative assistant to the OUSD superintendent, Dr. Joe Jaconette. District annex and maintenance personnel now work in the same facility as administrative staff.

Designed by the KTG Group of Irvine, Calif., the 7,500-foot structure was born via collaboration between the school district and PulteGroup, Inc. Pulte paid for the building's exterior and landscaping - approximately \$1.4 million in total - and OUSD kicked in the remainder. The roughly \$1.2 million cost to the district was covered by a portion of the \$19.5 million garnered when OUSD sold the old Pine Grove school property to Pulte.

Force, which oversees the handling of the Special Reserve Fund for Capital Facilities (Fund 40) established in 1989, reports that more than \$1.9 million in projects have already been completed, \$2.7 million are in progress, and another \$1 million have been authorized by the board thanks to the sale of the property.



Parents and others skipping the elevator in favor of the stairs receive this welcome as they approach the second floor.



"We engineered a lot of the expenses out of the building," said Ed Silvas. Wherever possible, furniture and other supplies were brought from the old administration building. Newer items, such as carpeting, were chosen for their ease of maintenance and ability to last well into the future.



"Lighting really makes a building," said Ed Silvas, OUSD's director of facilities. A large, wavy fixture originally planned by architects to light this hallway at the top of the stairs was eliminated by OUSD leaders in favor of a simpler, economical, but equally effective configuration.

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