



Letters to the Editor



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email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

It's so unfortunate how all parties involved in the "Vivian" OUSD residency case handled this issue. Clearly there are many potential factors at play here, and few of us have the whole picture. I strongly urge OUSD to take quick public action to clarify their policies. I would recommend the following:

- OUSD and AUSD should establish a joint task force to work on this issue. (Since most students in OUSD go on to an AUSD high school, it's important that the residency policy be consistent between the two districts.)
- The task force should consist of Orinda citizens and representatives of both school boards. It might be best to do this once the new board members have been sworn in.
- Both districts should immediately post their current policies on their websites, and publish them in local newspapers. We all need to know not only what the current policies are, but exactly how and when concerns about a student's residency in the district are investigated. For example, what steps are taken before a private investigator is called in?
- The task force should then hold a series of public meetings to invite everyone to express their concerns and ideas.
- The task force should then develop an initial proposal regarding requirements for residency, and exactly how concerns regarding residency will be handled. This should be published on the districts' websites in and local papers.
- Public meetings should be held to get input regarding the new guidelines.
- New guidelines are then finalized by the task force.
- Guidelines are clearly posted on the district websites.

Given the strong feelings this situation has engendered in the Orinda community, I urge the districts to be totally transparent and responsive to public comment. I also urge all that participate in the discussions to be civil; we all want to do what is best for students in the district.

Deborah Sedberry
Orinda

Editor:

A Practical Housing Strategy for Orinda.

The Housing Element process has been one Orinda has been obliged to complete in 2014, but the conversation about affordable housing needs to expand to the renewal of downtown and the role of housing in its future development.

The City, acting in its own best interests - not because it may be

required by the State, should pursue the development of housing, some of which should be affordable. The most feasible location for new housing development is in the City's commercial districts, particularly in Orinda Village where there are several underdeveloped properties.

Over 70% of the land area in Orinda Village is devoted to surface parking - not an appropriate way to utilize valuable downtown land. The City correctly proposes higher density and underground parking for mixed use - housing in this area. However, current land values and costs associated with underground parking would preclude affordable housing except for some small percentage.

The various underdeveloped properties in Orinda Village provide opportunities for more intensive development of mixed-use retail and office as well as housing, all of which would benefit the City financially through enhanced property and sales taxes. Equally important, development that is well planned, well designed and which creates a charming "village" character would enliven the area making it more attractive to businesses and shoppers as well as future residents.

Chapter 17.1 of the City's Municipal Code cites the specific purposes of the "downtown district regulations", which could further the intent of revitalizing downtown areas. These include the following: "...regulate development to achieve a vibrant community center over time"; "provide for multifamily housing, including affordable housing in downtown areas"; "establish incentives, such as additional building height, higher floor area or broader range of permitted uses to help achieve a vibrant community center" These are laudable objectives, which the City should accept as an obligation.

In order to "achieve a vibrant community center" the City needs to develop an implementation strategy to accomplish it.

Orinda does not need a grandiose downtown plan. All that is required are some basic zoning modifications together with some modest development studies of specific downtown sites and overall downtown economic and marketing studies to determine the feasibility of potential retail commercial, office and housing development.

Orinda's effort on the Housing Element will soon be completed and submitted to the State. Once accepted, the City Council should devote its attention and energy to pursuing efforts to revitalize its downtown, including affordable housing in the process. It has the opportunity and indeed the obligation to do so without delay.

Michael Kaplan
Orinda

Editor:

City Ventures (CV) proposed development is too large for the land on Moraga Way. City Ventures often uses smoke and mirrors to violate the General Plan and disregard the residents.

CV claims it resembles the Moraga Country Club (MCC) houses. Seriously, all you have to do is look at the plan to see this is rubbish: You see the MCC houses look like dots, then you see what looks like a shopping mall. MCC houses are much smaller, 2 stories, have a setback of 35 - 60 feet, extensive vegetation (and approximately 10 MCC houses could fit on that lot, not 36)! CV duplexes/triplexes on Country Club Drive are setback 4.9 feet!

CV's traffic report is a joke. We should demand an independent traffic report. The town has not run it's own traffic report. It is normal process for a town to do so, to not appear biased. In Moraga if a development adds 20 or more cars to rush hour, then it must report the findings to Orinda and Lafayette. Well, surprise, surprise, CV claims (absurdly) that it will increase only 19 cars to the morning commute and 9 in the evening - with 90 parking spaces and potentially more cars. This is a commuting neighborhood, and kids are driven to school, the traffic impact on Moraga Way and Road will far exceed 19! A gentleman attending a meeting last year, plugged numbers into a traffic program, and got a much larger number.

More deception: CV calls 3 stories : "2 stories with a loft"; it calls the tiny piece of land a "park" because open space is required for all development; duplexes and triplexes along CCD are "cottages".

The bias of the town towards CV is often obvious. A planning commissioner said that she did not like the shock value of story poles, so perhaps they can find a way to not use them. The reason they shock us is it reveals reality: suddenly the smoke and mirrors are stripped...something the residents are entitled to learn.

There should be an environmental review specifically for this project like the General Plan requires.

If the project was 24 - 2 story houses, the residents would accept it. However, as Charity from CV claims, "CV would not make as much money." That is a truthfulness that reveals all.

At every meeting the town and CV spend the entire time trying to find ways to hide it's size. This was noticed by a planning commissioner, who recommended it be less dense to fit the site. Why not take all that energy to come up with something that fits and everyone likes, while honoring Moraga?

Margaret Gee
Moraga

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