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## Orinda's Aging Storm Drains May Need \$13.5 Million Fix

By Laurie Snyder



In December 2012, a pipe failure led to the formation of a sinkhole on Tarabrook Drive at Evergreen. Adopting humor in the face of adversity, some Orindans christened the area "Tarabrook Lake" during the worst moments of the emergency. Photo courtesy the city of Orinda

by the City." The consultants collected data to build a conditions model of Orinda's storm drain network, assessed the performance of existing systems for capacity and condition, identified and prioritized capital improvements to reduce the risk of nuisance and catastrophic flooding, and forecast costs for system improvements.

Schaaf & Wheeler reported that Orinda's major contributors to 100-year flooding "are flows from San Pablo Creek at the Village Square and Theatre Square along with Lauterwasser Creek near its confluence with San Pablo." While the consultants noted corrosion, debris, sedimentation and damage in Orinda's drainage network, their highest priorities among the \$13.5 million in recommended initiatives are projects that would address capacity shortcomings.

The highest priority of all was given to the North Lane Storm Drain system, a two-time problem child that overflowed twice, damaging the East Bay Municipal Utility District's water treatment plant and neighboring residential properties. Repairing the section from Ardilla Road to San Pablo Creek could cost the city \$2.9 million. The SDMP and its full list of potential projects is available on the city's website: [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).

Drain failures are ugly, they're expensive, and they can upend the lives of those they impact for years as cities struggle to move from emergency response to cleanup and complete system overhaul. Just ask Orindans who live in the city's Glorietta or Tarabrook neighborhoods. Both areas experienced drain pains requiring multi-million dollar solutions.

To try to predict and head off future emergencies along Orinda's roughly 100,000 linear feet of pipe with its 1,552 manholes and inlets, the city's Public Works Department began reviewing proposals in August 2013 from five firms hoping to perform a Master Storm Drain Study for the city. The study and resulting proposed Storm Drain Master Plan (SDMP) were completed by Schaaf & Wheeler. That plan is currently working its way through public reviews, including two recent Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission meetings.

According to the report, the objective was to examine flood risks within the city limits, and recommend the actions needed for the city to achieve an "appropriate level of service of those portions of the storm drain system that are owned

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