

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 10 Issue 2 Wednesday, March 23, 2016



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## A Neighborhood Grows in the Grove

By Cathy Tyson



*Pulte Homes' Orinda Grove off Altarinda Road*

*Photo Andy Scheck*

With few opportunities to build near downtown, the quick sellout of Pulte Homes' Orinda Grove collection of expensive homes is a testament to the level of housing demand in the area.

It only took 20 months, from the first model home opening in October 2013, to June 2015, when the very last of the 73 units was sold, to create a brand new neighborhood with close proximity to downtown and a walkable distance to the BART station. That process included building streets, side-

walks and retaining walls, landscaping, installing water service, sewer, electrical and cable – along with two baseball fields and a tot lot.

Natasha Grasso, husband Ernesto and their young daughter just love Orinda Grove. They had previously lived in Burlingame and found their dream home here in Orinda, getting much more bang for the buck – and they love the fact that there is no yard to take care of.

“Pretty much everybody moved here for the schools,” she said. The community easily came to-

gether – first there was the “OG Moms” group, then some of the dads wanted in, so now it’s called “OG neighbors.” During warm weather, around 4 p.m., families get together at what she calls “kid alley,” the central play area.

Residents include professionals from the technology field, finance, pharmacists, doctors and business owners, as well as some retired couples. Many came from Berkeley and Oakland, but some from Washington, D.C. and New York. More than half of the duplex units house local teachers. Reflecting on the newly-made neighborhood, Grasso says, “These people have made it so special.”

The community has already held Christmas parties and a huge Halloween bash in 2015 that the entire neighborhood attended. Everyone dressed up, there were organized games and prizes, a cake-walk and a photo booth.

While residents are becoming fast friends, some relationships were already formed – two siblings each purchased homes, and former high school pals also each bought a house in Orinda Grove.

Jessica Sinnarajah grew up in the Bay Area, moved to Cleveland, and came back here to settle down with her husband, Jason, and their young family. She has been amazed how well all the residents get along and that, “We’ve learned to lean on each other.” As co-director of the 800-plus member Lamorinda Moms, she personally feels the support from the group that hails from all areas of Lamorinda – parents who live in condos, apartments and homes – and sees the very same inclusiveness and sense of community in Orinda Grove.

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