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Summer Makeover Enhances Colors and More at Orinda Schools

By Victor Ryerson



At Orinda Intermediate School, a fresh coat of Bulldog gray paint (left) contrasts with the Navajo white color formerly used on all Orinda schools. Photo by Victor Ryerson

Orinda students will return from vacation to find their schools brighter and more inviting, thanks to major improvements and maintenance work accomplished over the summer. Construction projects run the gamut from the addition of major new facilities to the replacement of aging plumbing, and every campus in the Orinda Unified School District will sport a fresh new look. Most of the work is funded by developer fees and the proceeds of the sale of school district property to Pulte Homes.

The most obvious change is that each school is newly painted in its own colors, rather than the institutional Navajo white that was standard throughout the district.

"Every school had the opportunity to select its color scheme rather than using a uniform color," said Stuart House, director of facilities maintenance and operations. For example, Orinda Intermediate School now sports the snappy blue and gray Bulldog colors of the school's sports teams. The painting cost was paid from fees from so-called

Fund 40, a legacy of the sale of property for Orinda Grove. No taxpayer dollars were spent, House emphasizes.

Major construction projects include the reconfiguration and expansion of the parking lot at Wagner Ranch School, which will improve traffic circulation. That change enabled expansion of the kindergarten playground in response to growth of the school population at that level; a portable classroom was added last year because of that growth. A new portable was also added at Glorietta School this summer to accommodate growth. Again, these improvements were made without taxpayer funding, because the cost of school growth is paid from developer fees.

Other projects are less obvious, but they will improve students' lives perceptibly. At Del Rey and Sleepy Hollow schools, new water lines have replaced rusty pipes that produced unsightly, albeit safe, brown drinking water. Both schools are also being reroofed. The Kennel Club lunch facility at OIS is being expanded to accommodate an increased lunchtime crush.

There are various smaller projects being completed over the summer, many to improve safety and security at the schools. These include the addition of new lighting and security cameras, and a new fire hydrant at Glorietta. Other changes are in the works, such as the addition of car charging stations at most schools, made feasible by the installation of new solar power facilities under a separate program.

Orinda's high school students will notice at least one big change, too. Two large irrigation pipes originally installed when the Miramonte campus was built in 1955 are being replaced, a project that

has transformed the large lawn into something resembling a trench warfare battlefield this summer.

"The old pipes were shot," says district facilities director Dave Humphrey. Replacing them was a big job.

In just weeks Miramonte students will return to find that the lawn is no longer a swamp, and elementary school students will not have to wonder whether they are getting coffee from the water fountain. This may be a small recompense for returning to books and homework, but at least it should ease the transition.

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