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Letters to the Editor

Did ULI do their homework about schools?

Dear Editor,

As many now know, the Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel ("TAP") made a presentation to a joint session of the Orinda City Council and Planning Commission on April 11. One of the suggestions was that Orinda permit 240 new units of residential housing in the Village.

The TAP made this recommendation without even interviewing either the Orinda Union School District or the Acalanes Union High School District. Our schools were not considered to be "stakeholders" with respect to a proposal that would dramatically increase student enrollment in the schools. There was no discussion in the TAP presentation of the effect that the addition of 240 residential units might have on our schools.

The failure of the TAP to consider the effect on our schools of so many new residential units, and new residents, is troubling because the same TAP presentation listed, as the first asset Orinda has, our "outstanding schools." The extremely high quality of our schools was recently confirmed by published studies. The fact that the TAP overlooked our schools is even more troubling because this writer specifically asked TAP, in writing, well prior to the release of its report, to consider our schools.

Similarly, the TAP failed to explain how much worse our parking problems will be, and offered no suggestions to mitigate any of Orinda's many parking problems. One can only conclude that the TAP either lacks the qualifications or objectivity to present the tradeoffs, drawbacks, and costs of any recommendations it may make in its final report.

Some Orindans feel it would be desirable to add housing downtown, so that empty-nesters could move there. But bear in mind that a couple moving out of a four or five bedroom home to a condo downtown will likely see their house purchased by a family with three or more children, adding to the overcrowding in our already crowded schools. And also bear in mind that there is no legal way to give priority to current Orinda residents when new housing units are offered for sale or lease downtown, should that ever come to pass.

Nick Waranoff
Orinda

Orinda should choose energy plan

Dear Editor,

As a resident of Orinda, I am perplexed as to why the Orinda City Council refuses to consider community choice energy for the Orinda community. Moraga has approved MCE as has the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and other cities in Contra Costa.

Why the delay? What's stopping the council? What are their concerns? It's a no brainer in my opinion. It would be a shame for Orinda to be left behind in adopting clean energy while every other community moves forward.

Carolyn Knoll
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