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## Downtown Development Subcommittee gears up for information gathering

By Sora O'Doherty

The public continued to take a lively interest in the progress of the Orinda City Streetscape Master Plan, attending and speaking out Aug. 9 at the Downtown Development Subcommittee's second meeting. The committee consists of Vice Mayor Inga Miller and Orinda City Council Member Eve Phillips. These meetings were the first steps in gathering the input of stakeholder groups.

This next step in the process will take place on Aug. 29, from noon to 5 p.m., when the stakeholder group interviews will be conducted by Orinda planning staff and the contractor on the project, Eisen-Letunic. The interviews will be short, just 15 minutes, with a five-minute break in between. On the same day, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., there will be a joint meeting of several committees and commissions that are subject to the Brown Act in the Library Auditorium, which will be open to the public.

The main objectives of the streetscape master plan are: 1) to connect the two sides of downtown Orinda; 2) to investigate pedestrian access to San Pablo Creek; 3) to preserve Orinda's sense of place; 4) to develop grant-eligible, fundable projects; 5) to beautify Orinda; and 6) to build consensus in the community.

Planning Director Drummond Buckley addressed what will be in the Streetscape Master Plan, explaining that the plan will cover projects in the right of way or on city-owned land that meet the objectives, plus San Pablo Creek, which is not on a right of way. Rights of way include parking spaces, vehicular lanes, sidewalks, bike lanes, transit stops, underpasses, pedestrian bridges, planting areas and Caltrans property. Publicly owned land includes public parking in front of the Community Center and underutilized land in the right of way. San Pablo Creek between Santa Maria Way and the Safeway parking lot is mostly on private land, except one parcel that is owned by the county.

Stakeholder groups (see list) will receive a questionnaire prior to the interviews to enable them to organize their thoughts about issues including traffic and parking, and their vision and experiences in downtown Orinda. Committees and commissions will not receive questionnaires, owing to Brown Act considerations. The meeting with the committees and commissions will be open to the public.

Roy Hodgkinson, president of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, urged the subcommittee to avoid asking too many questions that have already been answered, and to learn from past projects, such as the paving of Theatre Square. Kay Jenkins produced a graph of the age of Orinda residents. She found that over 80 percent of Orindans commute, and that 18 percent take BART. She stated that some 3,000 cars park at BART, including commuters from other communities, such as Lafayette and Richmond. She asked that her graph be included in the stakeholders' questionnaire, but Buckley demurred, saying that there were many things that could be included, but he didn't want to color the views of the respondents. However, he agreed that the graph would be appropriate for including in the briefing book.

Miller asked about including neighborhood groups as stakeholders, and Buckley agreed that there was enough "wiggle room" to add the downtown neighborhood groups, such as Bates, Brookwood, Northwood, Southwood, Orinda Woods, and La Plaza. Hodgkinson suggested joining residents of senior housing to the Contra Costa County Area Agency on Aging.

Following the stakeholder group interviews, there will be a public questionnaire, possibly in early September. Phillips suggested another meeting of the subcommittee to consider the public questionnaire. Also in early September, an interactive online survey map will be released. It is anticipated that the city council and planning commission will hold meetings on the streetscape master plan in late September, and that October will see the release of a briefing book on the project as well as a "Launch Event." After all these events, plus a lot of public engagement and meetings, options will be formulated and the plan drafted.

Stakeholder groups:

- Bike Orinda
- Contra Costa County Area Agency on Aging
- Downtown-adjacent Neighborhood
- Group(s) or HOAs
- Downtown Property Owners and Leasing Agents
- Friends of Orinda Creeks
- Lamorinda Arts Council
- Orinda Association
- Orinda Chamber of Commerce
- Orinda Community Foundation
- Orinda Garden Club
- Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation
- Orinda RoadRunners
- Orinda Rotary
- Orinda Union School District
- Orinda Vision
- Orinda Watch
- Save Orinda
- School Parent Clubs
- What's Up Downtown Orinda

Committees and Commissions  
Art in Public Places Committee  
Citizen's Infrastructure Oversight  
Commission  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Planning Commission Public Works  
Aesthetic Review Committee  
Traffic Safety Advisory Committee

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