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Public input requested at Orinda downtown development workshop

By Sora O'Doherty

A workshop to receive public input about the Connect -Orinda Streetscape Master Plan will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29 at the Library Auditorium. Hundreds of community members have been involved in the process through online public surveys, the project's October launch event and stakeholder interviews. Now Orinda staff and the project consultant have taken these ideas and concerns and turned them into a list of projects for Orinda.

The workshop will be an opportunity for Orinda residents to discuss and provide feedback on a list of potential ConnectOrinda projects which has been created based on survey comments and staff and consultant input. At this stage the list of potential projects is quite long, and the feedback received at the workshop will help the city council decide which projects should be included in the final ConnectOrinda Streetscape Master Plan.

The preliminary list of projects will be unveiled at the workshop. Members of the city council, staff and the consultant team will be available to hear what the public thinks about the suggested projects. Feedback received at the workshop will be then used to whittle down the list to those projects that will be pursued for funding and implementation. Staff and consultants would like to celebrate a final project list in May.

The ConnectOrinda project includes three milestone meetings. The launch event was held on Oct. 13. The purpose of this event was to explain the project scope and solicit community input regarding how to improve Orinda's downtown streetscape. Approximately 150 people participated in the event and hundreds more filled out surveys.

The Jan. 29 workshop, which will be a special meeting of the city council, will include a presentation by staff and the consultant team to the city council regarding the projects under consideration, including how they were arrived at based on community input. There will also be a breakout workshop session where participants can review and provide feedback on the projects under consideration, which will be depicted on several large maps, with staff and consultants present at each "map station" to answer questions. The workshop will include a format for participants to indicate which projects they want to see included in the final plan. After the breakout session, there will be an opportunity for public comments to the council as well as remarks by council members. The council will not be asked to take any actions or make any recommendations at this meeting.

The final milestone meeting will be the "ConnectOrinda Celebration" sometime in the spring. At this meeting, staff and consultants will provide detailed information regarding the projects the council selects for inclusion in the Streetscape Master Plan. The final plan document will be completed in the months following the Celebration meeting.

For those who cannot attend the workshop, there will be an opportunity to provide comments on a new map survey that will be released the day after the workshop.

Based on the feedback received at the workshop as well as feedback from the map survey, staff will return at a regular council meeting some time in February or early March with a recommended list of projects to be included in the Streetscape Master Plan. Once the projects are finalized, staff will work with consultants to do a "deep dive" into these projects in preparation for the Celebration meeting and, ultimately, for inclusion in the Master Plan.

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

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