



**ORINDA**

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**City of Orinda:**

www.cityoforinda.org  
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# ConnectOrinda Celebration scheduled for May 16 as planning process draws to a close



Photo Sora O'Doherty

ConnectOrinda demonstrates how Vashell Way can be used for city events by hosting their Celebration event at the location, which is also being used by Orinda's Restaurant Tour. The quiet street is located opposite the iconic Orinda Theatre.

**By Sora O'Doherty**

The last step before the unveiling of the final plan for ConnectOrinda will take

place in the Theatre District from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, May 16. The Celebration, the fifth of six planned steps, will be a time for Orindans to

view and comment on the work staff and the consultant team have done to date. The project launched last October and held a public workshop in January. In March, the city council reviewed progress of the group, and the suggested projects.

The event will be staged at the intersection of Vashell Way and Moraga Way. Participants will be able to view and comment on the eight projects the Orinda City Council directed to further develop, and the draft companion downtown-wide design guidelines. They'll also be able to experience the potential benefits of one of the proposed projects, a part-time pedestrian alley at Vashell Way. According to Victoria Eisen, partner of Eisen | Letunic, the project consultant, it is hoped that some will stroll over after dining in the Theatre District while others will swing by on their way home from the Village's food trucks.

Since last October, staff and the consultant team have been meeting with and listening to the Orinda community's assessment of what is lacking in downtown Orinda. As a result, ConnectOrinda has been focusing on how to help make the Theatre District and the Village feel more connected and make travel between the two safer and easier. The process started with the Oct. 13 launch, with its walking tours, blank maps, community surveys, and stakeholder interviews. The community provided hundreds of comments at this

stage, which were used to develop 19 potential projects, which were presented at a Jan. 29 workshop in conjunction with a city council meeting. The Orinda community submitted over 1,000 project-specific votes/likes and over 1,000 comments about these projects, which were used to distill and reconstitute the projects into eight projects plus the beginnings of a set of design guidelines that can be applied throughout the downtown.

At its March 5 meeting, the council expressed support for most of the projects, asking staff and the consultant team to further assess the feasibility, cost and preliminary design of each. Since then, staff and the consultant team have been working to further develop the other projects and downtown design guidelines, drawing from similar precedents elsewhere and new sketches of what they could look like in downtown Orinda. The analyses that allowed considering various changes to Camino Pablo are also being documented so that, if and when a comprehensive traffic study is pursued, it will be able to benefit from this earlier work.

Community members are invited to provide additional feedback at and following the May 16 event, which will be used to transform the design guidelines and projects into a plan document that the council will consider adopting in the fall.

# Council reviews parking options for downtown Orinda, chooses pilot for employees

**By Sora O'Doherty**

A pilot program for permit parking for Orinda employees on Altarinda Drive was the city council's favorite of the proposed parking remedies presented by Adele Ho, Project Management Consultant on parking solutions projects.

City staff asked the council for further direction on how to proceed with some suggested parking management tools. Another idea that gained traction with the council was the concept of entering into agreements with local churches to use parking spaces that are otherwise un-

derused during the work week. Although the council stated it cannot afford to provide shuttle service from these lots to BART, it was noted that several factors make connecting to the county bus system more attractive now. The frequency of buses on the Moraga Way route has been increased, and riders can track the buses in real time with the County Connection's app, making it easier for commuters to park in a church lot and then take the bus to the BART station.

Another pilot program the consultant suggested was rejected by the council after

hearing from local residents. That pilot would have affected lower Bates Boulevard, which contains a mix of commercial and residential properties. The commercial property at 2 Bates Blvd. has some 40 parking spaces, which it offers for rent to the public at \$115 per month. The council was surprised to learn that eight of these spaces have yet to be taken up.

The council also considered a pilot permit program for BART parkers, but did not move forward with this. The council is only interested in such a program if it can be limited to Orinda residents,

and there is some question about whether the use of public streets can be limited in that manner.

Another major item that was part of this latest parking study was the issue of a "parking in lieu" fee. Commercial buildings are required by Orinda municipal code to provide for a certain number of off-street parking spaces, depending on the size of the building. Currently, according to the staff report submitted by Director of Public Works and Engineering Larry Theis, if a proposed development or change in use is unable to meet the requirements, the

zoning administrator or planning commission must make findings for an exception to the requirements. If an exception is adopted, there is no associated mitigation or fee required. Other cities have an in lieu fee that requires the owner to pay a certain amount for each parking space required but not provided. These fees range from a high of \$57,344 in Danville to a low of \$19,200 in Lafayette. The city council members were very interested in the concept, but believed that it needs more study before being adopted by Orinda.

# Council considers new capital projects

**By Sora O'Doherty**

Orinda City Council members loved the new format staff chose to present them with the Draft Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Years 2019-23. The new format is streamlined to include four lists of potential projects, as well as one to list last year's approved projects. The lists include projects that staff recommends as new capital improvement projects, another list contains projects that staff recommends, but for which there is inadequate funding; while another list contains the projects that staff recommended be added to the unfunded project list.

The final list is other potential capital improvement projects.

The council was impressed with the ease with which they could review the projects. However, one or two projects alarmed one council member or another. Vice Mayor Darlene Gee wondered about a 60-inch culvert in poor condition at Great Oaks Circle and Orchard Road. The replacement and upgrade of the culvert to a 100-year storm capacity is estimated at a cost of \$1 million. Gee said that the idea of a very large culvert in poor condition scared her. City Manager Steve Salomon noted that the replacement of the culvert is in the storm

drain master plan, but not the increase in capacity. Council Member Dennis Fay spoke about expanding the trimming and removal of trees on city-owned property. This emergency preparedness item is included in the strategic plan. Staff recommends bumping up the effort by increasing funding from \$20,000 to \$50,000.

Council Member Amy Worth asked about designing and constructing two to four bocce ball courts in Orinda. Apparently, bocce enthusiasts have offered funding, but the problem appears to be finding a suitable location for the courts. Fay and Miller expressed interest in accelerating the upgrade of all existing curb ramps and Fay said he was concerned about the item that deals with stabilizing city hall in the face of "large transverse cracks in the

parking spaces." While the building itself is not in danger, being constructed on a deep pile foundation, the upper parking lot, sidewalk, and the enclosures for mechanical equipment are being affected. The work is estimated at somewhat over a half million dollars.

Ian and Penny Baird waited through the long meeting to talk to the council about item A7 concerning the Icabod Lane storm drain extension. Penny Baird appealed to the council to undertake the work for safety reasons. She slipped in the wet conditions and broke her leg. Four to five months of the year there is a heavy flow of water down Icabod Lane, according to the Bairds, in addition to mud, branches and rocks. Ian Baird said that sometimes the water is more than an inch deep at the

crown of the road, so obviously much deeper over the rest of the road. The cost is estimated at \$50,000 and staff recommended that the project be added to the list of Capital Improvement Projects as a funded project for construction in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Other projects ranged from modest, such as the Vashell Way pedestrian activation and the library terrace area pedestrian improvements, each estimated to cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000, to projects expected to cost over a million dollars, such as repairing the slide on the north side of Happy Valley Road or widening El Toyonal to accommodate a school bus. The complete list of projects is available online as part of the agenda packet for the April 23 city council meeting. **Info:** www.cityoforinda.org



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**City Council**

Tuesday, May 7. 7 p.m. Regular Meeting  
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

**Orinda  
Public  
Meetings**

**Planning Commission**

Tuesday, May 14, 7 p.m.  
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

**Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission**

Wednesday, May 8, 6:30 p.m.  
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,  
22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

**Orinda Union High School District Board Meetings**

Monday, May 13, 6 p.m.  
Regular Board Meeting  
8 Altarinda Rd., Orinda, www.orindaschools.org  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2