



ORINDA

See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:
www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:
www.orindaassociation.org

- ◆ HARDWOODS
- ◆ CARPETS
- ◆ RUGS
- ◆ LINOLEUM
- ◆ TILE
- ◆ LAMINATE

FAMILY -OWNED
30 YEARS !

3344 Mt Diablo Blvd
in Lafayette
925-284-4440
lamorindafloors.com

LAMORINDA
FLOORS



Orinda approves revised accessory dwelling unit law

By Sora O'Doherty

The city of Orinda is ready to adopt a revised ordinance on accessory dwelling units (ADUs) prepared by staff in response to changes in the law at the state level. According to Planning Director Drummond Buckley, the state shows no signs of letting up in its push to somehow accommodate more housing in California and to limit the discretion of the cities to restrict building. The new law is scheduled to be adopted upon its second reading on May 19.

Orinda has chosen to avail of its right to limit ADUs to 16 feet in height with the exceptions that an ADU that is built over a garage or is attached to a residence and within the required set-back for the zone in which it is located can rise to 27 feet. In accordance with state law, an ADU that is limited to 16 feet can now be as close as 4 feet to the side and rear lot lines. Beyond that,

things have gotten somewhat more complex, with several different categories of ADU. A junior ADU (JADU) is very small, only a maximum of 500 square feet, and is wholly within an existing residence. Residents of Orinda are now allowed to have one ADU and one JADU on their property.

A streamlined ADU, which includes JADUs, applies to wholly contained units within the existing residence as well as smaller detached ADUs to a maximum of 800 square feet. Streamlined ADUs and JADUs within the allowable size are never subject to design review. A standard ADU is now limited to 850 square feet for a one-bedroom unit and 1,000 square feet for a two-bedroom unit. Standard ADUs no longer trigger the maximum FAR (floor area ratio) and design review is not required under any circumstances.

When Council Member Nick Kosla asked about the difference between variance and an exception, Buckley

said that a variance is type of permit for something that does not comply with local rules, and Orinda has something like a "variance light permit," called an exception. Variances do not apply to uses, but only to development standards, and exceptions are even more limited.

Deputy city attorney Sara Clark explained that variances usually accommodate unusual circumstances, for example, a lot shaped like a pie or steeply sloped in one area. A variance provides very limited discretion, has to comply with state regulations and can't be used, for example, to ask for a variance of 300 square feet to build an ADU of 1,500 square feet. Kosla asked if the city could set conditions for approving a variance and Buckley said that they can.

Council Member Inga Miller complimented staff on their really thoughtful proposals. She said she thinks that the 27 feet allowed for an over-the-garage unit is a nice

thing for the city to adopt, while not obligated to do so.

Vice Mayor Amy Worth thanked the planning and legal staffs for their work on "very complex issues as we weave our way through the state requirements." The ordinance, she said, "enables members of our community to have the opportunity to provide ADUs for their families." There are "more and more multi-generational families, people who would need care in their homes," or otherwise have need of an ADU. Worth supported the ordinance, and praised the incredible care that went into crafting it.

However, she also urged that staff return to the council as soon as possible with an ordinance on accessory structures. In the interests of preserving aesthetics and privacy, she said that both ordinances should be consistent. Mayor Darlene Gee agreed.

There was no public comment on the ordinance.

Orinda is moving forward on downtown development

By Sora O'Doherty

Downtown development subcommittee members Inga Miller and Nick Kosla were delighted by a large virtual turnout for the subcommittee meeting at the end of April.

Having received a presentation on progress and heard public comments, the subcommittee gave Planning Director Drummond Buckley further direction on how to proceed. Four months ago the city, having failed to obtain a robust response to a request for proposals for development of a downtown specific plan, decided to use its own planning department to develop a downtown precise plan. The project is chiefly being worked on by Buckley and Senior Planner Mayank Patel, with additional work by Senior Planner Adam Foster and intern Darren Hughes.

Buckley began by reviewing the work done on downtown development during the past decade, including the work done by the National Main Street Center and Urban Land Institute in 2016 and 2017,

and the downtown streetscape Connect Orinda work undertaken in 2018. In addition to working closely with the Friends of the Orinda Creeks on daylighting San Pablo Creek in downtown, the work has focused on near-term projects, limited to the public realm and predicated on existing conditions. This has included a concerted, coordinated effort to improve parking downtown by means of enhanced parking enforcement, residential parking permits in certain areas, a pilot employee parking scheme, and revisions to the parking in lieu fees ordinance, including changes in use.

Staff is currently working on an existing conditions report, and the draft report is about 90% complete. Buckley explained that this report will be an educational tool to help the public better understand the constraints on development, which include natural features, infrastructure and existing development standards. For example, he pointed out,

current standards call for 10-foot setbacks and a maximum lot coverage of 50%, which leaves less than 20% available for development.

One topic that was discussed both by the public and the subcommittee members involves potentially moving or undergrounding the electrical lines that run through downtown. Unfortunately, undergrounding them would help only aesthetics, but would not enable more development because building over the lines would be prohibited. Additionally, moving the lines would be prohibitively expensive.

Hughes presented the models he has been developing in two and three dimensions, to aid in visualizing the massing and density of the existing build conditions within the project area. Both the subcommittee members and the public praised his work, and members of the public suggested that the models should be included with upcoming surveys to give residents more information.

Another informational tool that staff has been developing are property profiles. The profiles are the project of Adam Foster, who is using the Airtable Data Base with images. Each property profile shows the APN, parcel size, square feet, zoning existing and future developments standards and the applicability of existing and proposed regulations, which could later be changed to show regulations before and after any change. Patel said that the planning department is excited about this tool, which he called "a living and dynamic document that can be updated over time."

Buckley sought input from the meeting on next steps, which include an online survey, new stakeholder

interviews on the precise plan, and three visioning workshops, culminating in a city council meeting.

Orinda resident Nick Waranoff told the subcommittee members that the city should be "ashamed of themselves" for failing to express empathy with its business community who have, he said, served the city for decades. He also urged the planning department to conduct a "scientific study" before proceeding, stating that the last survey showed that citizens didn't want any changes. "I don't know what Mr. Buckley and his department are afraid of in a scientific study," he said. He criticized the city for undertaking "all this costly work ... including the cost of staff to be working on something this complex and extravagant," and accused the city of "freely spending other people's money." Charles Porges said he was also concerned that this is going a little too fast during Covid. He asked the subcommittee, "Please don't spend money on downtown development until you know what your financial shortfall is going to be owing to Covid."

Tom Trowbridge and Aaran Schultz of Orinda Vision, who are glad that Orinda is going through a robust downtown planning effort, enthusiastically approved the work. Richard Weston, a member of the 2012 task force that met over a hundred times on downtown development was also positive. Michelle Jacobson warned that in the current environment things will take longer than anticipated, as many people are not yet fully comfortable with online communications. She reiterated her previous belief that Orinda needs a very able community engagement consultant, but praised "some creative and thoughtful work to be on board so quickly."

Broad Goals for Orinda's Downtown Planning Process Ahead



OrindaVision is a volunteer group of local citizens who see the potential for significant improvement of downtown Orinda. **Visit our website www.orindavision.org** The vision is of a lively and intimate town center that provides better-designed places in which to work, shop and dine,

a more pedestrian-friendly circulation pattern and the introduction of attractive and convenient in-town residential living. The vision embraces thoughtfully planned renewal of downtown that preserves its village character. We offer the following broad goals for the community's planning process ahead:

Goal #1: Preserve Orinda's history and sense of community; complement its beautiful natural setting with better design in downtown.

Reflect the existing community that values its strong brand as an established, beautiful, friendly, safe, stable, family-oriented place to live. Build upon and enhance Orinda's village character while preserving buildings of historic value. Preserve views of the hills from downtown. Protect downtown's heritage trees. Create access to San Pablo Creek and investigate the feasibility of its restoration in relation to adjoining land uses.

Goal #2: Generate vibrancy in downtown. Create a sense of place, a downtown that serves better as the heart of our community.

Through comprehensive downtown planning and City-led initiatives, give local residents more reasons to shop, dine, recreate, gather and obtain services in downtown. Plan for and incentivize a network of public spaces, pedestrian/bicyclist access and circulation, a more pleasant link to BART and more consistent streetscape design standards. Plan for more rational and attractive parking arrangements for the Theater and Village Districts. Promote the development of in-town housing to bring more life to downtown. Commit to engage in business development to create a healthy mix of retail, services and restaurants to meet the needs of the community.

Goal #3: Renew downtown Orinda and improve the commercial environment.

Create a cohesive, connected vision for downtown, providing better direction for commercial property owners. Update zoning codes to provide greater clarity and increase flexibility for downtown development. Incentivize desired development of targeted commercial zones.

Goal #4: Realize to a greater extent the potential of under-utilized downtown property.

Protect Orinda's interests in potential future development of the 20-acre Orinda BART property by pursuing a joint planning effort with BART and CalTrans. Encourage and incentivize property owners to better-utilize creek-facing parcels.

Arran Schultz
Chair
arranschultz@gmail.com

Tom Trowbridge
Co-Founder
tomtrow@comcast.net

Peter Hasselman
Co-Founder
hassel2@comcast.net

GoFundMe campaign helps keep Orinda Theatre afloat during SIP

Submitted by Jenny Perillo

A GoFundMe campaign organized by Orinda Theatre operator Derek Zemrak to help offset fixed costs during the coronavirus pandemic raised over \$11,000 in nearly four days. "The outpouring of donations is simply amazing," Zemrak wrote about the campaign. "It really shows how we all love our historic iconic theater."

The theatre first opened in 1941, but has been closed since March 16 due to the county's shelter-in-place or-

der. While Zemrak said they have been doing wine, popcorn and Red Vine sales each Friday to help them through this difficult time, with the stay-at-home order extended until May 31, the sales drive was not enough to cover the theatre's fixed operating costs of \$15,000 a month, such as rent, utilities, insurance, and equipment maintenance.

"Every donation is so very much appreciated," Zemrak wrote. "I look forward to the day that I can welcome you all back into the theatre."