

Published June 24th, 2020

New Food Hall approved for downtown Orinda

By Sora O'Doherty



Rendering provided

city council agreed with Orange Theory, but nixed a bank as an anchor tenant on the grounds that a bank did not bring the kind of traffic to downtown that was consistent with downtown development.

The new plan for the project has a smaller footprint, with a large outdoor gathering area across from the community center. Orange Theory is still an anchor tenant. Some residents objected to the international chain, including the owners of Atma Yoga and In Forma gym, which occupies the building next door at 23 Orinda Way. Commissioner Ann Parnigoni did not support Orange Theory, but her objections were not strong enough to cause her to oppose the project.

Another commissioner suggested that Orange Theory will be less of a competitor to local gyms than another local fitness business would be.

Other public commenters objected to the parking provisions for the project, in which the developer pays fees of over \$450,000 in lieu of 50 parking spaces. The project provides for 36 parking spaces on site, instead of the 86 spaces that would be required otherwise. The developer suggested that patrons may require less parking, owing to trends toward ride sharing, bicycling and walking.

All of the commissioners praised Ugenti for the way he responded to previous suggestions from the commission and the public and improved the project now approved. "The plaza center makes the whole thing work," said one commissioner. Parnigoni said that the developer should be really proud of himself for bringing a very different project forward. She said it felt like a community extension to the community center, and hoped that the plaza area would include a water feature. Other positive comments included, "fantastic for the city," "really goes along with the city master plan," and "consistent with what we expected in downtown Orinda." Several members of the public also commented favorably about the new development during the meeting.

The lot at 25A is 22,000 square feet. The approved project will contain 19,300 square feet over two levels and a mezzanine. The height of the building will be slightly under 38 feet at its highest point, which goes up about three feet to the north of the building owing to the slope of the land. The mezzanine and second floor will house office space, while the ground floor has Orange Theory at one end and the market hall extending to the other end, beyond which is the outdoor open plaza, of approximately 3,000 square feet. The plaza is called "The Yard." There are also a few smaller retail spaces at the front of the building, which is only slightly set back from the street.

One issue that attracted a lot of discussion is the potential removal of some existing street trees to conform to the fire code. Planning Director Drummond Buckley urged the commission not to tie the approval of the project to the requirements of the fire code vis-a-vis the trees because neither the city nor the developer controlled those requirements. He added that the MOFD fire marshal has been very cooperative.

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA