



Published August 31st, 2022

## City Council gives final approval to Vista Verde, new senior housing development

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council listened to concerns expressed by neighbors of the new Vista Verde senior housing development at its meeting on Aug. 16. In response, the council asked the developer to work with the city to provide additional screening, particularly to protect the views of residents of nearby La Plaza Drive. However, as to concerns about pedestrian and bike safety at the intersection of Irwin Drive and Orinda Way, the council decided that problem was in the domain of the city itself and vowed to address the issue, without placing any requirements on the developer.

Like the Planning Commission, the City Council warmly welcomed the addition of 52 new low-income housing units in the development, which was initiated and financed by Orinda Community Church, already the location of a second, larger senior housing development. The city's third senior housing development is also located on Irwin Drive, creating a real sense of community, according to Orinda Mayor Dennis Fay. The applicant's presentation to the council was given by former mayor Victoria Smith.

Smith noted that the existing senior housing project on church property, Orinda Senior Village, has already served over 1,000 residents but currently has a waiting list of over five years, and sadly, Smith noted, some applicants never make it.

Community Church pastor Elizabeth Robinson, who previously worked with chronically unhoused people in Boulder, Colorado, told the council that the congregation voted overwhelmingly to support this project, which, she said, "fits our mission." Orinda Community Church continues to provide housing through the Winter Nights program and also works with Hope Solutions. In the Bay Area, Robinson noted, the fastest rising element of unhoused are seniors.

In public comments, the Wallace Family, who live at the end of Mira Loma, asked about an established walking trail which is highly utilized by the community. John Wiro, Vista Verde project manager, assured the council and the public that the development is protecting the trail. The use of the trail will continue and the trail as it crosses Vista Verde property will be improved, Wiro affirmed. Other public comments included residents of Watchwood Drive in Orinda Woods, but the council considered that the project would not have a negative impact on that community.

All of the city council members had words of praise for the development, with Fay very pleased to see that the project has architectural interest. Council Member Nick Kosla was delighted to see the inclusion of the first roof-top decks in Orinda and said that affordable housing designed by Dalan is really high quality, "pretty much as nice as it gets, and nicer than most market rate housing." Council Member Amy Worth expressed appreciation to the planning team and to Orinda Community Church. She noted that the unique aspect of this project is that it is self-financed and fully funded. "The project that is before us tonight will be delivered," she said.

Reach the reporter at: [sora@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sora@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA