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City approves lowering speed limit around Glorietta Elementary

By Alison Burns

It was late 2018 when Orinda's Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) first received a request from residents living in the Hillcrest Drive neighborhood to install traffic calming measures between Martha Road and Overhill Road, citing the speeding vehicles which had become a daily concern for young children walking to nearby Glorietta Elementary School.

Numerous Level II and III traffic calming measures were reviewed by Orinda city staff, the Neighborhood Advisory Team (NAT) and TSAC, such as adding "No Right Turn" signage onto Hillcrest from Martha Road and Overhill Road, speed cushions, fixed radar speed feedback display and reducing the speed limit.

Five years after receiving the request to deal with drivers who ignored the speed limit, the NAT reached a consensus to request a review of the existing posted speed limits and designation of a special speed limit in school zones.

On Sept. 5, the city of Orinda signed off on the recommendation that the speed limit on the Hillcrest Drive segment from Martha Road and Overhill Road be changed from the existing 25 mph to 20 mph.

In addition, the city accepted the recommendation of a special school zone speed limit of 15 mph on Hillcrest Drive for a distance of 500 feet from Glorietta Elementary School. City maintenance crews are now due to install the recommended signs.

Speaking after the success of the five-year-long campaign to make that particular area safer for Glorietta Elementary kids and their parents, local resident Meredith Kreis said that she was in favor of all traffic calming measures that have a good chance of increasing pedestrian safety for children walking to and from school.

"Why do we need extra protections and speed limit reductions around schools?" Kreis asked. "Because most young children are far less capable of navigating moving vehicles, assessing risk, and protecting themselves than adults are."

"Our youth," she added, "are the future of our society and we all have a duty to protect and help them thrive. I can think of no more basic way to prioritize this goal than to increase the likelihood that children make it safely to school, and home from school, each day."

Hopefully, motorists will adhere to the new rules.

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[back](#)

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