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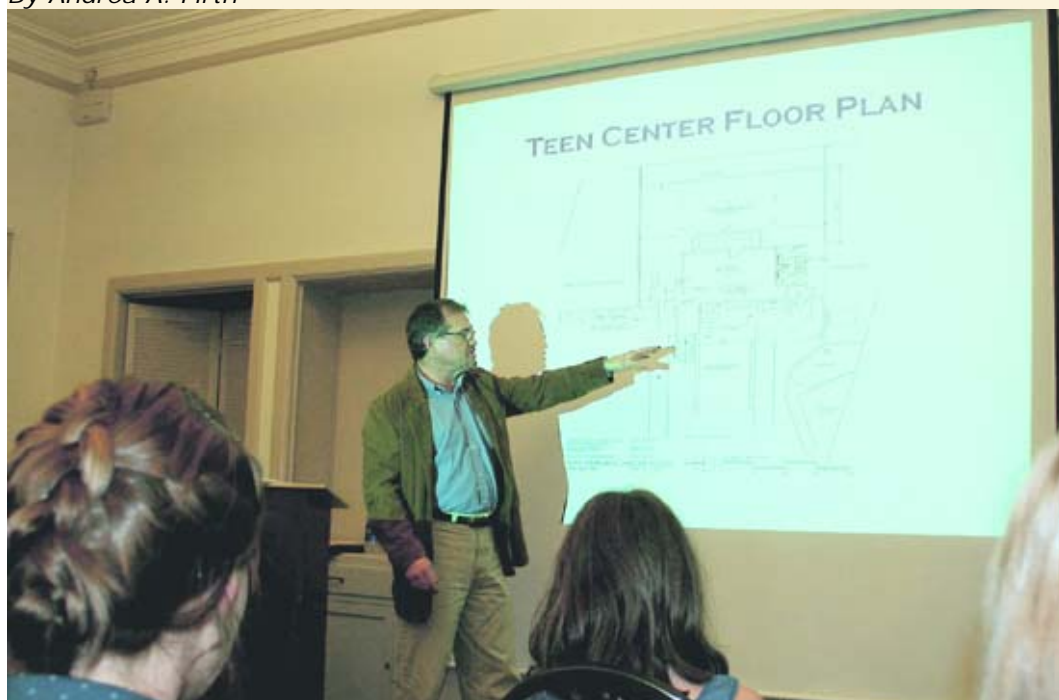
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Lamorinda Teen Center Plans in The Works

By Andrea A. Firth



Tom McCormick presents the floor plan and design for the proposed Lamorinda Teen Center Photo A. Firth

Over sixty interested residents, parents, and teens recently piled into a crowded meeting room at the Orinda Community Center to listen as Orinda-based attorney Tom McCormick presented plans for the Lamorinda Teen Center. Described as a center that will be primarily operated by the youth of the community, a point that was repeatedly emphasized throughout the meeting, the center will provide teens with recreational and social options in a safe and healthy environment. "This will be a good opportunity for adults to work with teens and provide teens with the exposure to how a business is operated," stated McCormick.

Several area teens, who have been involved in the planning of the project, addressed the group confirming the fact that there are not many places for young people to go in Lamorinda and not much to do once they get there. With the closure of the bowling alley in Moraga and the theater in Lafayette, evening entertainment in a public setting has been confined to the movie theaters in Orinda and Moraga. The skate park in Moraga has filled a niche but shuts down when it gets dark. The lackluster reputation of the area amongst teens has led to the hometown monikers of Borinda and Boraga and left area youth with a strong desire for someplace nearby to go with friends. "We really just want a place to hang out with our friends," said one teen representative from the Orinda Teen Advisory Council.

In addition to serving as a place to meet with friends informally or as part of a study group, organizers plan for the teen center to include a small stage for bands to perform, pool and ping pong tables, and a food and beverage service. Teens

involved with the creation and management of the center will get first-hand experience with how to operate a business, according to McCormick. There will be six teenagers, two from each community, who will serve on the 13-member Board of the teen center. "The development and operation of the center will be structured so that the kids' voices are not overshadowed. The teens will come up with the ideas and work with a facilitator to distill the ideas for presentation to the larger Board," he explained.

McCormick, currently Orinda's Vice Mayor and a father of four including a Miramonte freshman and a seventh-grader at OIS who were both involved in the planning process for the proposed center, has already secured the 1,500 square-foot basement space of Europa, a family-owned restaurant about one block from the Orinda Theater, as a site for the teen center. Local architects Rick Kattenburg and George Miers have developed a design for the unfinished space, and local building contractor Tom Stevens has agreed to do the work at cost.

As they progress to the next step in the process, the first business lesson Lamorinda teens may be exposed to is how to raise money for a not-for-profit organization in tough economic times. The building and initial operational costs for the teen center are estimated to be \$500,000. While the concept of raising a half a million dollars may seem daunting to some noted McCormick, he was encouraged to find the teens involved were not overwhelmed by the amount or task at hand. The next meeting general meeting for the teen center will beheld on February 11th at 7:00 pm in the Community Center; everyone interested in welcome.

Reach the reporter at: andrea@lamorindaweekly.com

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