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Orinda Pursues PDA Designation

By Andrea A. Firth

At their meeting on September 2nd, the Orinda City Council decided to move forward with their efforts to apply for the designation of Downtown Orinda as a Priority Development Area (PDA). "This designation opens the city up for eligibility for potential funding and grants," explained Orinda City Planner Emmanuel Ursu. PDAs are defined as areas that seek to accommodate growth as mixed use, infill development near transit and job centers, with an emphasis on housing. Orinda's proximity to BART and projected development projects appear to fit the definition to the letter, and Ursu reported to the Council that he anticipated their application would be approved. PDAs are part of a regional planning initiative to encourage future development patterns that are compact, transit oriented, and responsive to the need for housing in the Bay Area. The discussion of the PDA application also included a review of the status of the Planning Process of Review Task Force (PPRTF), which has been spearheaded by City Council members Amy Worth and Tom McCormick. The PPRTF is one of the several task forces established by this Council over the past year. The goal of the group is to come up with recommendations for a streamlined, objective, user-friendly planning review process. Council member Worth reported that the task force's work had made steady progress and that several recommended changes were under review. Preliminary recommendations will be presented to the Planning Commission in November of December of this year. Another item to note: The City Council proclaimed September as National Preparedness Month for the City of Orinda. "Orinda is joining cities across the nation to build awareness about the importance of being prepared," stated Mayor Victoria Smith. "[It's] a useful reminder about our responsibility to be able to fend for ourselves during a disaster," added Orinda Public Safety Advisory Committee Chair Bruce Macler. "We want Orindans to ask themselves the question 'Am I ready?' Then make sure they are," he said. "Even more we want those with the capacity and wherewithal to help others to be ready in advance, so that in the event of an emergency, they can offer assistance to those who are unable to help themselves."

Reach the reporter at: andrea@lamorindaweekly.com[back](#)

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