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## Orinda City Task Forces Plan Public Workshops

By Andrea A. Firth



Orinda's Planning Director (L), Emmanuel Ursu, introduced the new Assistant Planner, Richard Yee, at the most recent City Council meeting Photo A. Firth

Following a year filled with over 150 task force and subcommittee meetings, Orinda's Planning Process Review Task Force (PPRTF) plans to schedule a series of public workshops in November to get the community's input on a draft report of recommendations to streamline the City's planning process. "The volunteers on the [PPRTF] donated a tremendous amount of time over the past year," notes Councilmember Amy Worth who is also a member of the Task Force. "A lot of really thoughtful dialogue went into the development of this draft report," she adds.

The Task Force identified three main areas for review and revision within the City's planning process according to Councilmember Tom McCormick. The process subcommittee looked at ways to revise the planning, application, and review process to make it less cumbersome. A residential subcommittee identified over 20 specific areas where the development code could be simplified.

"The residential group tackled some sacred cows to make it easier to remodel and not overly burdensome," notes McCormick. A commercial subcommittee looked at the impediments to improving the downtown environment. "The commercial group has identified ways to create more of a village-like atmosphere to help revitalize the downtown area," he adds. An overview of the recommendations of changes and improvements to the commercial elements of the plan will be presented at the upcoming Chamber of Commerce luncheon next week.

"[In the workshops] the community members will have a chance to weigh in on the plan before it is in a more final format," states Worth. Based on the community workshops, the PPRTF report will be finalized and presented to the Planning Commission and Council for approval. The dates, times and locations for

the workshops will be posted at the City's website, <http://www.cityoforinda.org>.

The City of Orinda's Revenue Enhancement Task Force (RETF) is also hosting a public workshop to discuss their preliminary recommendations for generating additional revenues to fund Orinda roads, storm drain, fire flow, and downtown improvements. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, November 12th from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the Del Rey Elementary School Auditorium. Ideas to be discussed at the meeting include property tax reallocation, a sales tax increase, a utility users tax, a parcel tax, a business license tax, and a city reserve drawdown.

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