

Orinda Garden Club celebrates completion of median landscaping and offramp refresh



Photos Sora O'Doherty

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda Garden Club has been busier than usual lately, completing projects around downtown Orinda. Years in the planning, the replanting and beautification of the median strips on Camino Pablo from Santa Maria through El Toyonal has now been brought to fruition. Although the garden club conceived the plan and Shari Bashin-Sullivan did the original designs, club president Cathleen Sodos explained that the plans were eventually changed considerably owing to a requirement imposed by both the city of Orinda and PG&E. The median plantings are both drought tolerant and low maintenance.

The project was a joint endeavor by the garden club and the city. The club invested \$50,000, the proceeds from a garden tour they hosted and from donations, and the city matched it. Orinda put the installation work out for bid and hired a contractor to do the actual work, which included installation of an irrigation system and placement of soil and boulders.

Sodos explained that part of the club's mission statement is "to encourage and assist in the beautification of the community" and the Median Restoration Project was the recipient of funds from the 2015 Orinda In Bloom

garden tour. The idea was the brainchild of Sylvia and Tim Carter, who also donated generously to the project. Then garden club president Janet Riley initiated the process with the city which was passed along to next president Margie Murphy and finally to Sodos. "We all tried to keep the city of Orinda focused on the goal," Sodos said, "but it took a while." The intervention of the Minor Road sinkhole added to the delay. Sodos credits Larry Theis, director of public works and assistant city manager, with guiding the project to completion. "We are grateful to Larry, who was our hero, and look forward to working with the city on future beautification projects," Sodos said.

Another recently completed project refreshed the offramp opposite Theatre Square. The offramp has been augmented with plants and bulbs, including dwarf fruitless olive trees. Sodos noted that it is "difficult to do exactly what you want to do." The club had hoped to use the same trees on the medians, but PG&E wouldn't allow them. A variety of native oak was used instead.

The club will hold a community meeting on Fire Safe Landscaping at 11 a.m. March 28 in the Orinda Library Auditorium.



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