

Published June 26th, 2019

Annual review of Wilder progress shows the development coming to life

By Sora O'Doherty

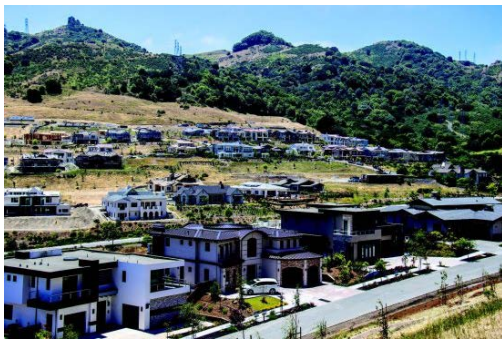


Photo Sora O'Doherty

The developer is continuing to remove and replace 3-foot sidewalks with the required 4-foot sidewalks. Most have already been removed, and the new sidewalks are now being poured. The 6-foot sidewalk on Wilder Road is finished. Yamamoto stated that all slope landscaping will be completed by Oct. 31, noting that it is a "big, big project" of over 4 million square feet of slopes.

He also mentioned that Wilder residents have mixed opinions about the Wild Rye Path, and the developer will work with staff to find a solution. Yamamoto said that wildlife is thriving at Wilder, and discussed ideas about "the ponds," located near the play fields. He also talked about the wetlands at the end of the project, where there is a major newt migration path. In public comments, Alison Bannisad told Yamamoto, "We really appreciate that you took our son seriously about the newts. We appreciate your attention to the trails, all the trails in Orinda. We didn't even know our son had written you a letter!"

Madelyn Mallory also commented. "I want to give a great big thank you to Drummond (Buckley, director of planning), to Winnie Mui, (assistant planner) and Bruce Yamamoto for the good faith effort they have given," she said, adding, "I'm a little optimistic." She still has concerns about transition slopes, and the lack of continuous ground cover. "Plants are sparse, she said, "and we have an excessive amount of gorilla hair; if there aren't sufficient plants, there may be possible slides." Yamamoto said that there are some problems caused by seven years of intense drought. In addition, builders have damaged some areas during construction, and some homeowners have accidentally destroyed irrigation lines. All native plant materials are being used in the landscaping of Wilder. As plants become mature, Yamamoto said, water use will decrease.

City staff recommended that council find developer OGLLC in substantial compliance, noting only two differences. The trail that OGLLC has constructed to connect with a sewer bench/path along Brookside Creek in the vicinity of Rabble and Wilde Rye Roads has been obliterated. Either the trail needs to be reconstructed, or the circulation plan needs to be revised to eliminate the trail. Staff also had some concerns about consistency with the landscape master plan. After hearing concerns from residents, staff has been working with a landscape consultant, Cultivate Studio and Amy McPhee, who had been the lead landscape architect on the landscape master plan. Work will continue through summer and fall with city on potential amendments to landscape master plan, which would have to be approved.

Council Member Nick Kosla expressed hopes that a way can be found to make the ponds look great all year round, and Council Member Amy Worth said that there is still work to be done on the landscaping master plan, ponds, and trails.

The council was also thanked for its help with parking enforcement, which residents are finding significantly improved.

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