



Urban Land San Francisco Institute
Serving the Greater Bay Area



DOWNTOWN ORINDA

Technical Assistance Panel



April 10–11, 2017





Urban Land Institute

San Francisco

Serving the Greater Bay Area

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About ULI

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 40,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 76 countries, including over 2,300 in the ULI San Francisco (ULI SF) district council (sf.uli.org). ULI San Francisco serves the greater Bay Area with pragmatic land use expertise and education.

About ULI TAPs

The ULI San Francisco Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program is an extension of the national ULI Advisory Services program. ULI's Advisory Services panels provide strategic advice to clients (public agencies, nonprofit organizations, or nonprofit developers) on complex land use and real estate development issues. The program links clients to the knowledge and experience of ULI and its membership.

Since 1947, ULI has harnessed the technical expertise of its members to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. More than 600 panels have been conducted in 12 countries. Since 1996, ULI San Francisco has adapted this model for use at the local level, assisting 25 Bay Area cities.

TAPs include extensive preliminary briefings followed by a one-and-a-half-day intensive working session in the client's community. A detailed briefing package and guided discussion is provided by the client to each TAP participant before the working sessions. In the working sessions, ULI's expert panelists tour the study area either by bus or on foot, interview stakeholders, and address a set of questions proposed by the client about a specific development issue or policy barrier within a defined geographic area. The product of these sessions is a community presentation and final report. This report presents highlights of the panel's responses to the client's questions as well as contains a diverse set of ideas and suggestions.

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Downtown Orinda Technical Assistance Panel

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Introduction

Context

The city of Orinda, located east of Oakland on Highway 24, is a small community of 12.8 square miles and 18,400 people. Highway 24 and the Orinda Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station split Orinda in half, separating the downtown into two portions referred to by the city as the Village and the Crossroads. Located in the center, the BART station is framed by the eastbound and westbound curves of Highway 24. (The BART station was not included in the study area per direction of the city. However, the impacts of BART on the community were briefly discussed by the panel.)

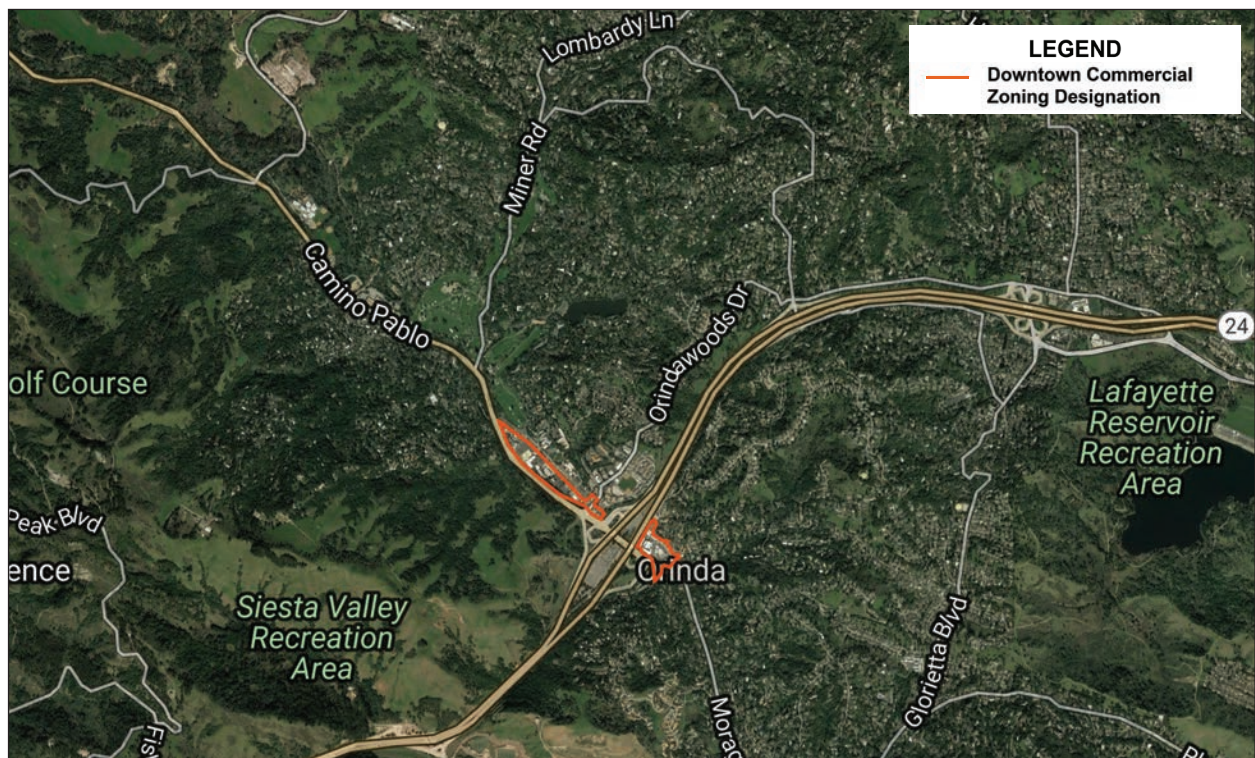
The Village area is primarily automobile-dominated and has a suburban quality. It contains a Safeway grocery store and other retail businesses that serve the daily needs of Orinda residents. At the north end of the Village across from the Orinda Country Club Golf Course, the buildings contain retail businesses such as restaurants and specialty stores.

To the south on Orinda Way at the corner of Avenida de Orinda is the historic Phair's Department Store building. This structure, which was once an important shopping destination for Orinda residents, has been vacant since the late 1990s, according to Kay Norman, former member of Orinda's Historic Landmark Committee. On the eastern side of Avenida de Orinda across the street from Phair's is another historic building, Orinda Motors. This building has served as an auto-repair garage for many years and sponsors the annual Orinda Classic Car Show.

The southern portion of the Village, closer to Highway 24, has a different character than the north side. Beginning at about Camino Sobrante, the retail businesses are similar to those in a strip mall, with parking located along the street frontage and surrounding the retail buildings on most sides.

Across Orinda Way, the Orinda Library, the Orinda Community Center and Community Park, and Orinda's City Hall, joined together by a plaza filled with public art, serve as a civic hub for the community.

City of Orinda regional context.



Google Maps

The Crossroads on the south side of Highway 24 is anchored by Theatre Square, a mixed-use office and retail complex containing the historic Orinda Theatre. This area generally contains smaller-scale buildings in a traditional downtown setting. The Crossroads has a more pedestrian-friendly environment with sidewalks that make the area more conducive to walking than other parts of downtown Orinda. The buildings are adjacent to the sidewalk with no setbacks, creating a more interesting downtown experience for the pedestrian.

Running along the western edge of the Village is San Pablo Creek; on the Crossroads side, this creek is mostly channelized.

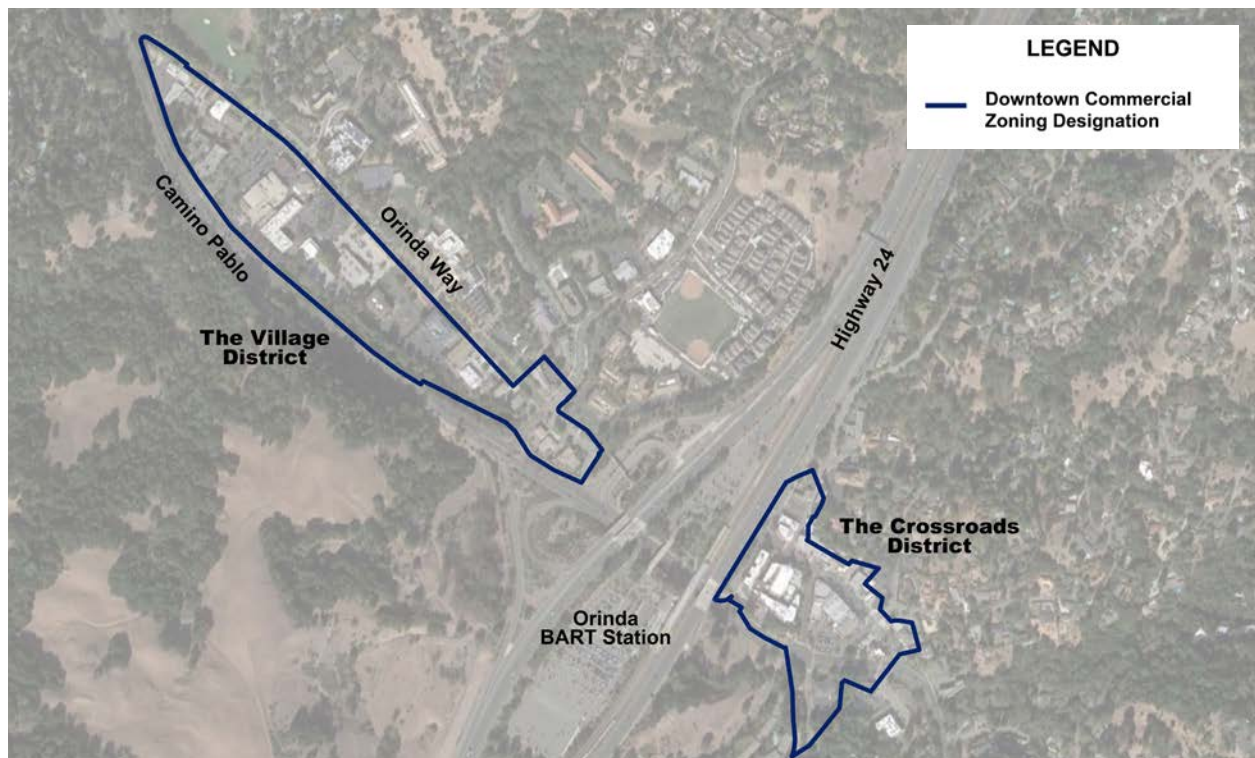
The study area considered by the technical assistance panel is in the Downtown Commercial zoning district, which encompasses a significant portion of the Village and the Crossroads. (See figure 1.)

Restaurants and stores in the Crossroads District.



Drummond Buckley

Figure 1: Study Area



Team Assignment and Process

The city of Orinda asked ULI SF for help in initiating the planning efforts for Orinda's downtown. Orinda has undertaken multiple downtown planning discussions, including a three-year effort that was paused in 2012. The city asked the panel to help restart the "downtown conversation" with concrete and actionable next steps while also building on the research and previously gathered input.

On April 10 and 11, 2017, panelists gathered at the Orinda Community Center to interview stakeholders to discuss the city's future. Over the two-day working session, the panelists were asked to provide recommendations based on the following questions:

1. Based on the interviews, what is the collective vision for downtown Orinda? Provide a draft mission statement for downtown.
2. Based on the community's vision for downtown Orinda, what streetscape design concepts, if any, are recommended?

3. Based on the community's vision for downtown Orinda, what are the restoration and planning recommendations, if any, for San Pablo Creek?
4. Based on the community's vision for downtown Orinda, what changes, if any, are recommended to downtown development standards and allowable land uses?

The panel was composed of professionals from a wide variety of disciplines reflecting diverse perspectives, including market analysis, land use and design, retail consulting, architecture, finance and development strategies, governance and policy, and real estate development.

Orinda Theatre and the surrounding area.



Drummond Buckley

TAP panelists tour the study area, April 2017.



Major Stakeholders

Government/Agencies/Consultant

City staff—City Manager, Parks and Recreation Director, Public Works Director, Planning Director, Planning Department staff

Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) staff

Downtown Subcommittee—Mayor Eve Phillips and Councilmember Inga Miller, Planning Commission Chair Willy Mautner and Vice Chair Brandyn Iverson

National Main Street Center

Property Owners

Paul Ugenti (25A Orinda Way)

Danny Goldberg (Vintage House)

Breed family (CVS, BevMo, Nations, et al.)

Johanna Guidotti, Phair's Properties

Theatre Square property owners

Other Stakeholders

East Bay Municipal Utility District

Friends of Orinda Creeks

Historic Landmarks Committee

Leasing agents

Orinda Association

Orinda Chamber of Commerce

Orinda Vision

Orinda Watch

SaveOrinda

Teen Advisory Council

What's Up Downtown Orinda

Stakeholder Input

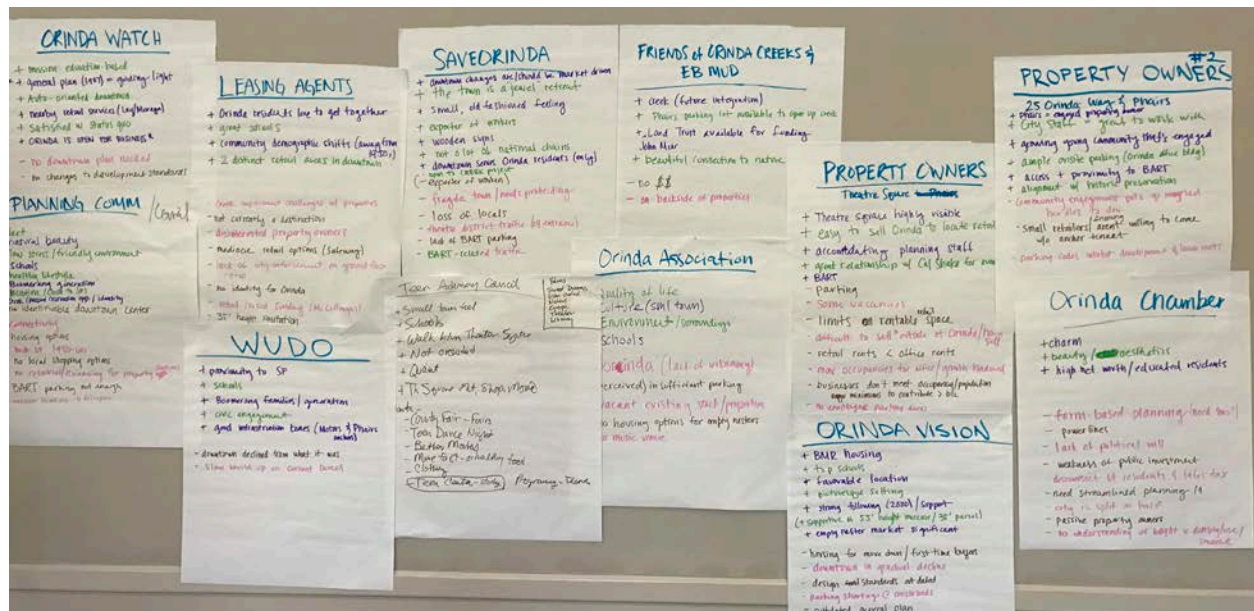
What We Heard

On April 10, panelists spent most of the day speaking with community members from a wide variety of stakeholder groups. The city provided the panelists with a detailed briefing book that included basic information about the stakeholder groups and, where applicable, links to their websites. The city also provided the results of an online survey in which stakeholders opined on the four questions being addressed by the panel. During the brief stakeholder interviews, the panelists were able to ask clarifying questions and learn more about each group's mission and goals. Other questions aimed to gain insight from stakeholders about the things they liked most about living in Orinda as well as some of their concerns or perceived threats to the future of downtown Orinda. The panel documented the variety of responses received. Among the major themes that emerged were the following.

The Character of Orinda

- Orinda is a small, old-fashioned place with a small-town feel.
- The schools in Orinda are outstanding.
- Orinda is a retreat from the rest of the Bay Area, an oasis.
- The city is stuck in the past and aging rapidly.
- The appearance of buildings downtown needs to be improved, and the current design standards that apply to Orinda's downtown are outdated and "embarrassing."
- Opinions that "Orinda is not a suburban community" and "Orinda is a totally suburban community" were both represented.

Notes taken during stakeholder interviews during the two-day TAP panel.



Crossroads Area

- The Orinda Theatre is an iconic landmark, a jewel in the community.
- The Crossroads is a destination where multiple generations of Orinda residents spend time, including teenagers that see it as the closest thing they have to a downtown.
- Some buildings in the Crossroads area need physical improvements; they appear unkempt, creating the impression that the owners do not care.
- Orinda's current downtown design standards are out of date and inadequate.
- The Crossroads area has parking challenges because of its proximity to BART. Commuters park wherever they are able because the BART parking lot is filled early in the morning.

Village Area

- Although many convenience retail opportunities are available in this area as well as the Crossroads, Orinda residents often do not shop locally to meet their other daily needs.
- The Orinda Library and Community Park are important assets for the community. Programs held in the park during the summer are great community events.
- This area does not have parking or traffic issues like those experienced in the Crossroads area.
- The Village feels separated from Crossroads by the highway.
- In its current state, the Village is not very walkable and is very auto-oriented.
- The zoning code relating to this area needs to be updated.

San Pablo Creek

- San Pablo Creek represents a huge opportunity for downtown and could serve as a passive recreation area; however, restoration and gaining access to the creek without infringing on the rights of property owners would be a major challenge.
- Combining the creek restoration with other downtown revitalization efforts could make sense.

- If creek revitalization is to occur, it should have state-of-the-art bioengineering, and publicly accessible pathways along the creek should be provided for residents to use.
- Currently, it is difficult to gain access to the creek. Either the creek is channelized underground or a fence prevents people from going down to the waterway along most of its length through the downtown area.

BART and Parking

- The Orinda BART station is a huge asset: it is only a 20-minute ride into San Francisco and other employment centers.
- The BART parking lot is insufficient. Despite its size, the parking spaces fill up early in the morning, and there is a multiyear waiting list for parking permits. As a result, commuters park in neighborhoods and downtown areas, occupying parking spaces not intended for long-term parking.
- Only limited public transit options are available to get to BART. The only efficient way to get to BART is to drive or take a taxi, many residents said.
- No parking is available for employees who work downtown.

Housing

- Orinda has a growing “boomerang” generation—residents who grew up in Orinda, left, and then returned.
- Housing options are lacking in Orinda. The housing stock is made up almost entirely of expensive single-family homes.
- A significant empty-nester market exists—older residents unable to downsize their large homes and remain in Orinda. Similarly, Orinda needs more options for market-rate, in-town living.
- Interest exists in pursuing creation of small-scale, lower-density housing along San Pablo Creek.

Strengths, Challenges, and Community Perceptions

Following the stakeholder interviews, the panel reconvened and summarized its discussions. Panelists shared their notes and discussed what had emerged from those interviews as the primary strengths and challenges facing Orinda.

Strengths

The following is a summary of the major strengths the panel heard from stakeholders.

- *Schools and community.* Most of the stakeholders expressed admiration and pride regarding Orinda’s high-quality schools. Families with children in school are also a strong asset.

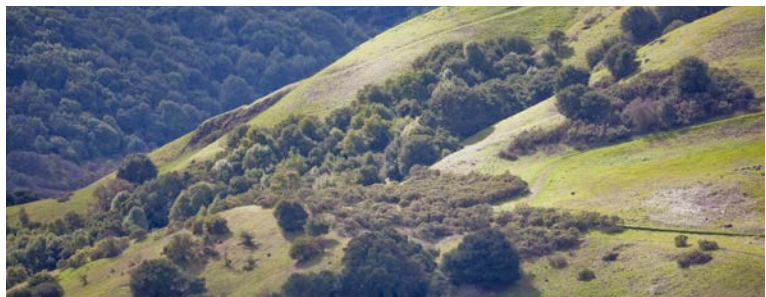
Residents are also engaged and heavily invested in their community. During the stakeholder interviews, the panel got a sense of how much Orindans care about the future of their community and treasure living in Orinda. Disagreements exist; some stakeholder groups are active, determined, and taking action to make changes that they think will improve the community, while others are passionate about Orinda’s existing strengths and preserving the status quo. Although the stakeholder groups have sizable differences in position, the panel recognizes that they all have the best interests of Orinda at heart and encourages further dialogue among the groups in order to create more positive consensus and establish a path forward.

- *Location.* Orinda is ideally situated in an area of natural beauty with ideal weather conditions. The rolling hillsides are visible as the backdrop from most downtown locations. Many stakeholders want to preserve a clear and open view of the surrounding hillsides from downtown. Both residents and visitors to Orinda take advantage of Orinda’s access to outdoor recreation. Multiple nearby recreation areas provide places to hike or bike.

Orinda is also located just a short travel distance from San Francisco and other parts of the Bay Area because of the BART station. Passengers can board a San Francisco-bound train and arrive there in less than 30 minutes. Similarly, Highway 24 provides convenient access to destinations in Oakland and San Francisco. Orinda’s proximity to San Francisco, excellent schools, and quality-of-life offerings make it an appealing place to live for people of all generations.

- *Historic assets.* The panelists were impressed by the condition and quantity of Orinda’s historic assets. Buildings such as the Orinda Theatre and the Orinda Community Center have been well-preserved and continue to serve Orinda’s needs. Historic assets add interest and character to the community and should be preserved and celebrated by residents for years to come.
- *Parking assets.* Although the panel frequently heard concerns regarding a lack of adequate parking within downtown Orinda, it believes that many of these concerns can be alleviated through better management and leveraging of the existing public and private parking stock.

Orinda’s assets include the natural beauty of the surrounding hillsides and multiple historic structures.



Drummond Buckley

Challenges

The following summarizes the major challenges that the panel heard from stakeholders.

- *Decline of downtown.* The panel heard from various stakeholders that the downtown has lost its relevance, meaning the retail businesses located there no longer serve the community's needs. Some is of poor quality both in terms of the goods and services provided and in the physical condition and appearance of storefronts. A related challenge observed by the panel is defining Orinda's downtown: the study area lacks unity and faces challenges in uniting the ends of downtown separated by the highway. Many stakeholders said the downtown lacks a focal point or clear center.
- *Retail leakage.* Although Orinda is a prosperous community, the residents spend most of their money at businesses located outside the city. The June 23, 2017, version of the "City of Orinda Market Research and Transformation Strategy," a study by the National Main Street Center (NMSC), states that more than \$630 million in consumer spending from the Orinda trade area on an annual basis is being spent outside Orinda, either online or in other competitive markets. This means that residents are traveling outside Orinda for nearly all their shopping, daily goods, and entertainment needs. This indicates limitations in the city's current retail mix, according to NMSC. Because residents are shopping outside Orinda, the sales tax revenue is profiting other communities.

The communities where Orinda residents are shopping include nearby Lafayette, with its revitalized downtown, and Walnut Creek, which is growing rapidly. Combined, these destinations add more retail amenities each year while Orinda's downtown stagnates. With Orinda having only approved one new commercial building since 1985, the community is losing substantial sales tax revenues to these neighboring jurisdictions.

- *Limited financial resources.* Despite the high income of most of its residents, Orinda's government does not share the same financial bounty as its residents. Limited funding is available to undertake many projects at this time, creating the need for inventive funding solutions.
- *Regulatory barriers.* The Orinda General Plan has not had a comprehensive update since 1987. Many stakeholders believe that some of the General Plan's downtown policies are outdated and even prohibit growth. The first "guiding policy" in the land use section of the General Plan reads, "Maintain the semi-rural character of Orinda." During interviews, the panel heard mixed

The Village District has many specialty businesses and multiple restaurants.



The courtyard in Orinda's Theatre Square.



Drummond Buckley

reactions to this statement. Whereas some residents favor encouraging a semi-rural character, others believe that striving for that character, at least as it pertains to downtown, is antiquated and does not align with the vision they have for the future of Orinda or with the city's proximity to major urban centers.

The study area is zoned Downtown Commercial, which allows for retail and office uses. Multifamily housing is also allowed maximum density of ten units per acre, provided the residential use is part of a mixed-use project. The study area's zoning also dictates a 35-foot height limit, which equates to two-and-a-half stories. Although it is important to many of Orinda's residents to preserve a small-town character and feel, the low density and strict height limit dictated by the zoning code make some forms of development challenging.

- *Highway barrier and downtown access.* Highway 24 bisects the study area, physically separating the northern and southern parts of Orinda's downtown. Camino Pablo is a major arterial that moves vehicular traffic beneath the highway overpass, but the connection is lacking for both pedestrians and bicyclists. The pedestrian route between the Crossroads and the Village areas is circuitous, unclear, and unpleasant. Pedestrians must cross under and over multiple roadways in a landscape dominated by concrete and vehicles. Even from the nearby BART station, walking to Theatre Square is challenging for pedestrians, in part because no signs

clearly indicate which direction to walk to reach any destination. Bicycles must largely follow the same route. Although there are bike lanes in the northerly direction, the route is unclear and complicated by freeway on- and off-ramps.

- *Lack of housing diversity.* Orinda has very few affordable or diverse housing options available. The one major exception is the presence of two affordable senior housing developments next to downtown, including the recently completed 67-unit Monteverde project owned and managed by Eden Housing. Otherwise, Orinda is a community with primarily spacious single-family homes on big parcels. Many people said they would like to downsize from their large homes, but doing so would mean they would need to leave Orinda because there are no other options available. Because of high home prices and lack of diversity in housing type, first-time homebuyers are largely excluded from the Orinda market.

There is a 35-foot height limit for buildings in the Downtown Commercial zoning designation. A view to the northwest on Moraga Way.



The study area has a diverse mix of land uses. Clockwise from top: Orinda Theatre viewed from Brookwood Road, one of the parking lots in the Village District, the historic Orinda sign, San Pablo Creek Bridge, the drug store on the Crossroads side of town, and the fenced off San Pablo Creek.



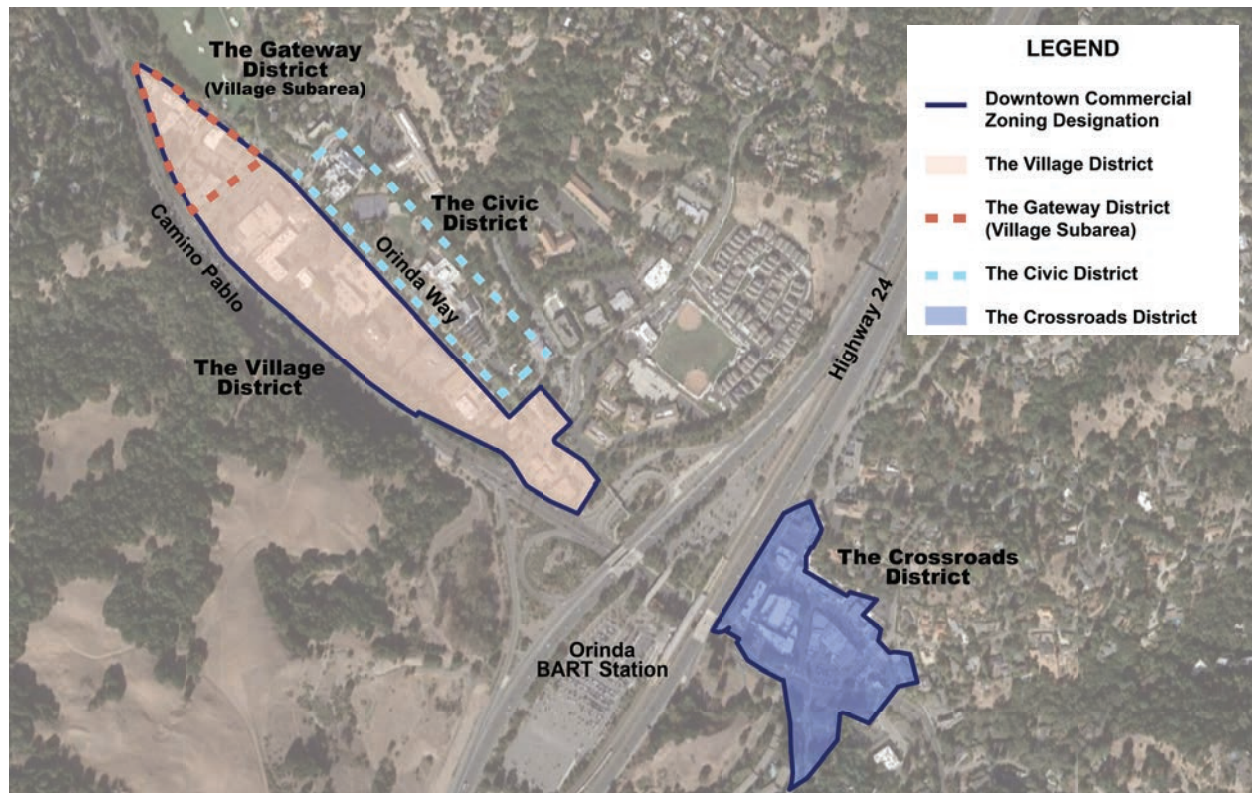
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Panel Recommendations and Responses to the City's Questions

After hearing from the stakeholders, the panel synthesized the information received to present the following preliminary, broad ideas, most of which will be described in detail later in this report:

- Update the General Plan in a very inclusive and very Orinda way.
 - Keep the process local and involve community members in all steps of the process.
 - Create three distinct downtown districts and one sub-district (see figure 2):
- Village District: create a more walkable district with shops, possibly housing, active retail businesses, and creek access—while also respecting its more automobile-oriented nature. This district should include the Gateway District—the western gateway of Orinda, where visitors first enter downtown.
 - Civic District: the place where residents go for community services and community events.
 - Crossroads District: the community's place to hang out, eat, and shop.
- Create a San Pablo Creek Action Plan focusing on rehabilitation of San Pablo Creek.

Figure 2: Orinda's Downtown Districts



- Provide new housing opportunities, including multi-unit projects and townhouses at a higher density than currently proscribed by zoning or the General Plan.
- Implement fast prototyping of new ideas to build community camaraderie and establish a unique sense of place. These can include the following:
 - Parklets, pop-up retail, and food trucks (Crossroads and Village districts);
 - Landscaping and programming of the library arcade and the plaza between the library and the Orinda Community Center (Civic District); and
 - Programming, including events and spaces geared toward teens, art fairs, book clubs (Civic District).
- Implement the “Downtown and Affected Neighborhoods Parking Study,” prepared in 2016 by TJKM Parking Consultants, to alleviate parking impacts, specifically overflow from the BART station. This includes implementation of a parking permit program (PPP) to reduce parking conflicts in residential areas adjoining downtown.
- Implement parking district strategies.

Events and fairs can build community in Orinda.



CBS San Francisco

The arcade space in front of the Orinda Library.



Responses to the City's Questions

The panel's responses to the city's questions are described below.

Question 1: Based on the interviews, what is the collective vision for downtown Orinda? Provide a draft mission statement for downtown.

After visiting Orinda's downtown and hearing from residents and stakeholders, the panel first reviewed Orinda's existing citywide mission statement in order to draft a mission statement for the downtown. It states:

Orinda strives to provide excellent service in a fiscally responsible manner and to promote a safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

In creating a mission statement specific to downtown Orinda, the panel determined that the existing citywide vision could be enhanced to reflect the comments from the stakeholder interviews and community priorities, specifically regarding the downtown area.

The panel's proposed mission statement for downtown Orinda is:

Downtown Orinda is made up of inclusive spaces for all community members that respect Orinda's history and natural beauty and provide opportunities to celebrate, gather, shop, and eat, sustaining a safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

This proposed statement augments the original mission statement by first adding a statement of commitment to providing inclusive spaces for all community members. A theme of the interviews was that Orinda does not fully serve all generations, meaning teenagers feel they lack places to meet with friends in the downtown area. Multiple residents also noted the lack of housing diversity for empty nesters and first-time homebuyers. This report contains recommendations for Orinda to make short- and long-term improvements to the downtown that will help the city become a community that caters to all residents.

The proposed mission statement also highlights the importance of Orinda's historic assets as well as the city's natural resources, two things nearly all stakeholders mentioned as unique to Orinda. During the interviews and the study-area tour, panelists were shown multiple historic buildings. These assets are important features of the downtown and are treasured by many residents. Given the importance of these historic features, they should be maintained for future generations to enjoy.

Orinda is also a community with significant natural beauty. From most parts of downtown, the nearby hills are visible, particularly the East Bay Municipal Utility District's Siesta Valley Recreation Area located west of the Village. These hillsides are mostly grassland dotted with California scrub oak and other tree species. Multiple stakeholders mentioned that Orinda attracts outside visitors to recreate in the nearby natural areas.

The panel's proposed mission statement for downtown also focuses on providing places where residents can celebrate, gather, shop, and eat. Although Orinda already has a few well-attended and popular events each year, such as the Fourth of July parade, stakeholders said more informal events would enhance downtown life. Possibilities envisioned include food truck events, pop-up markets, and other casual gatherings that could be held downtown. These possibilities are discussed further under subsequent questions.

“Downtown Orinda is made up of inclusive spaces for all community members that respect Orinda's history and natural beauty and provide opportunities to celebrate, gather, shop, and eat, sustaining a safe, healthy, and vibrant community.”

Question 2: Based on the community's vision for downtown Orinda, what streetscape-design concepts, if any, are recommended?

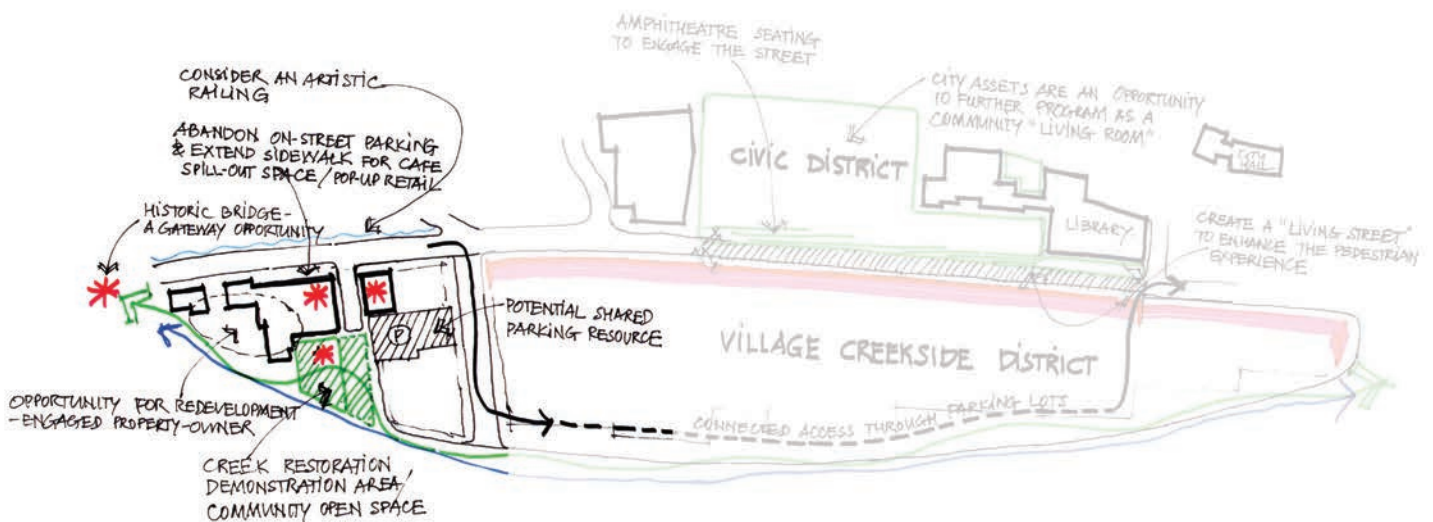
As noted, one panel recommendation is to celebrate three downtown districts—the Village District, the Civic District, and the Crossroads District. A subdistrict of the Village District would be the Gateway District. The Gateway District warranted special consideration because it would serve as the entry or gateway to Orinda from the north and because it contains most of Orinda's significant historic structures.

In considering streetscape concepts, the panel examined each district separately. However, the following overall goals were set for the proposed recommendations:

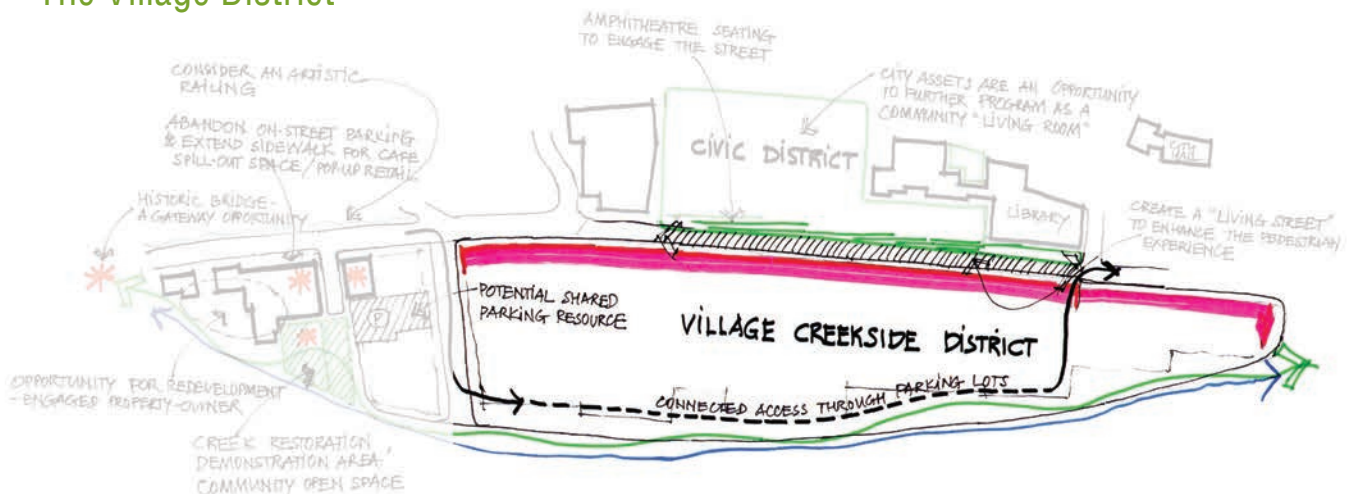
- Build image and identity for downtown Orinda.
- Leverage both public and private assets.
- Build community.

The sketches drawn by the panel are shown enlarged below and described in more detail in the following sections.

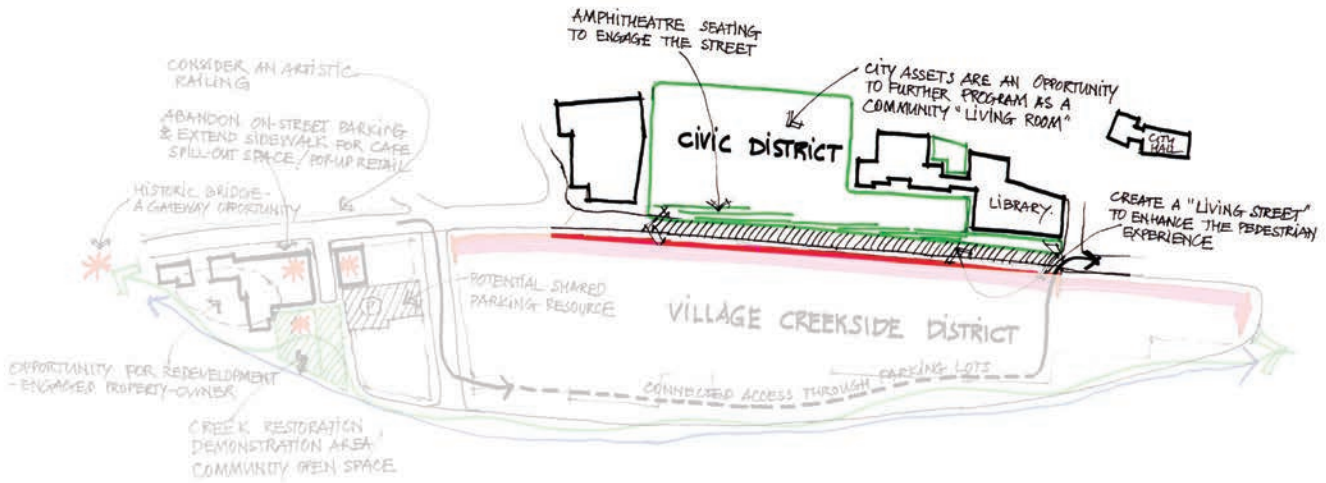
The Gateway District



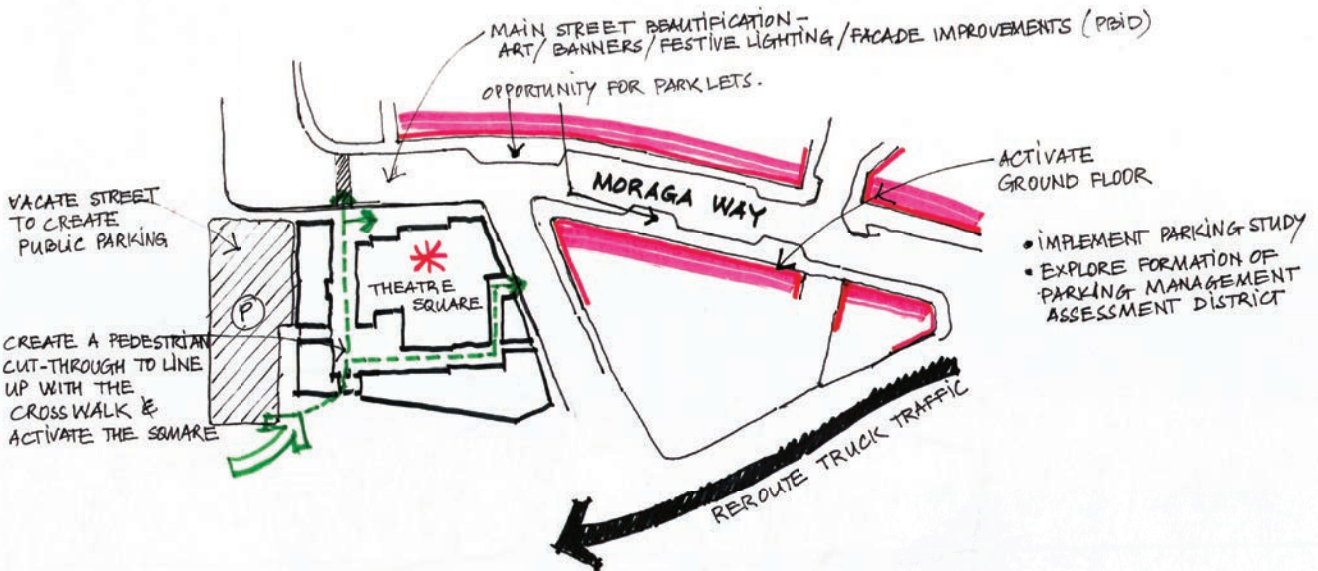
The Village District



The Civic District



The Crossroads District



Gateway District

The Gateway District—considered a subdistrict of the Village District—is the northernmost end of the study area (see figure 3). This portion of the study area is adjacent to the Orinda Country Club and contains the historic Phair’s building, the San Pablo Creek Bridge, and Orinda Motors. It is at this point that Camino Pablo splits into two streets—Camino Pablo and Orinda Way—forming a triangular area. Locally, this area is known as the Country Club Plaza. This part of Orinda is quaint in nature and has the feel of a small village, something that should be maintained. Any future development in this area should match and build on this established scale and character.

Given that the Gateway District is the northernmost portion of the study area and the location where vehicles driving to Orinda from the north enter downtown, it serves as a northern gateway. Upon entering this area, vehicles, bikes, or pedestrians must cross the San Pablo Creek Bridge, built in 1920. The crossing of this bridge signals to visitors that they have entered a unique and special place.

The panel specifically recommends that Orinda partner with the owner of the Phair’s building and integrate the existing historic structure with some form of redevelopment that includes creek enhancement and activation of the Avenida de Orinda, one of the streets fronting the Phair’s building. Because Avenida de Orinda ends where it intersects with the creek, the panel views this as an opportunity for the city to create a pedestrian zone that fosters a welcoming route down to the creek. In addition, this zone could have a special paving treatment to distinguish it from surrounding streets.

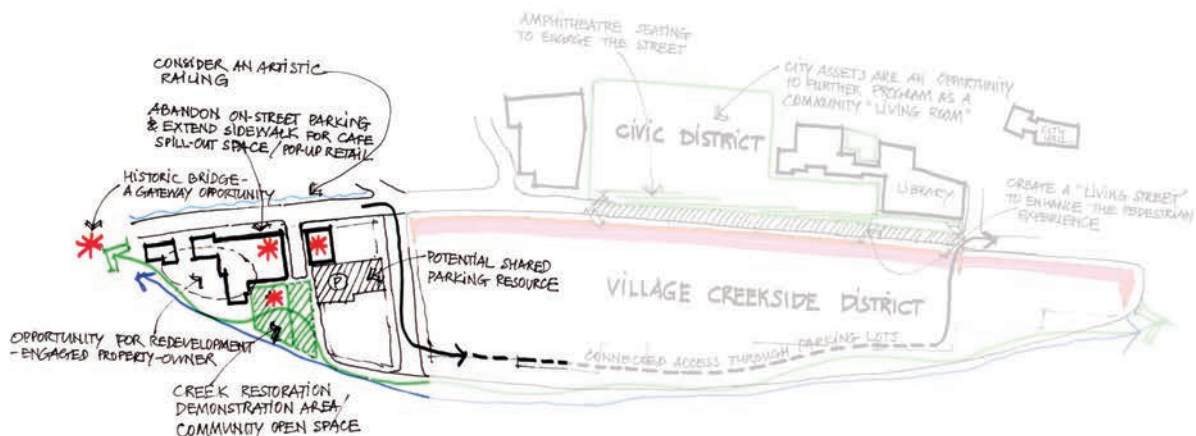
Similarly, relinquishing some of the on-street parking along Orinda Way would provide space to widen the sidewalk and allow areas for pop-up retail, outdoor dining, and other features that create an active pedestrian realm that encourages visitors to walk and shop along this corridor. The Phair’s surface parking lot across the street from the store building is currently used only as informal parking. The panel proposes that this parking area serve as a more formal shared parking resource, thus consolidating parking and creating shared resources, allowing for a more thoughtful use of space.

The city of Orinda or the Orinda Country Club should be encouraged to put an attractive railing along Orinda Way between the golf course and the street. At the exit from the San Pablo Creek Bridge, the visual of an artful rail or transparent wall in this area will help create the impression of a vibrant formal entry into Orinda.

The Gateway, Village, and Civic districts.



Figure 3: The Gateway District, a subdistrict of the Village District.



Village District

The Village District is the portion of the study area framed on the northeastern side by Orinda Way and on the southwestern side by Camino Pablo. Camino Sobrante serves as the northern border of this district and the westbound Highway 24 off-ramp as the southern border. Main land uses in this district include a Safeway grocery, a Rite Aid store, and the U.S. Post Office; it is also traversed by high-voltage electric lines. This area also contains an undeveloped lot bordering Orinda Way, referred to by the city as 25A Orinda Way.

After touring this area as well as examining aerial imagery, the panelists were struck by how much surface parking is available on these properties (some of it underneath power lines). Though the panel heard many comments regarding parking shortages in other parts of Orinda, that is not true of this area. The character of this area is auto-dominated, with the feel of a standard suburban strip mall. In an informal conceptual exercise, the areas of surface parking were highlighted on an aerial image, illustrating the dominance of that land use in the district (see figure 4). Despite this, the parking lots are not well connected, meaning a motorist must leave one parking lot and enter the roadway in order to enter an adjacent lot.

Because the area is so heavily dominated by private parking lots, the panel proposes considering a cross-access easement solution making parking a shared resource. As properties are developed or improved in the future, less parking for the entire area could be required, ultimately reducing the pavement footprint. A shared parking resource would allow privately held parking spaces to be available to other users in the district at certain

times of day. In addition, enhanced pedestrian access to this entire district would connect it to the other parts of downtown. Encouraging people to park here and walk to other entertainment or dining venues in the Crossroads District or elsewhere would make this district less disjointed from other parts of Orinda.

Surface parking is the dominant land use in the Village District.



Figure 4: The Village District, dominated by surface parking.



The street frontage along Orinda Way in the Village District, currently occupied by surface parking, is not conducive to a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. As improvements and development occur in this district, moving the building frontage closer to the street where feasible would create a more vibrant streetscape. Parking can be shifted behind the buildings. Also, given the extensive depth of these parcels, it may be possible to develop both along Orinda Way as well as along the creek toward the back of the parcels. An internal circulation system could be created through the central portion of the Village District to better allow people to walk between Orinda Way and down to the creek, as well as from one end of the Village to the other.

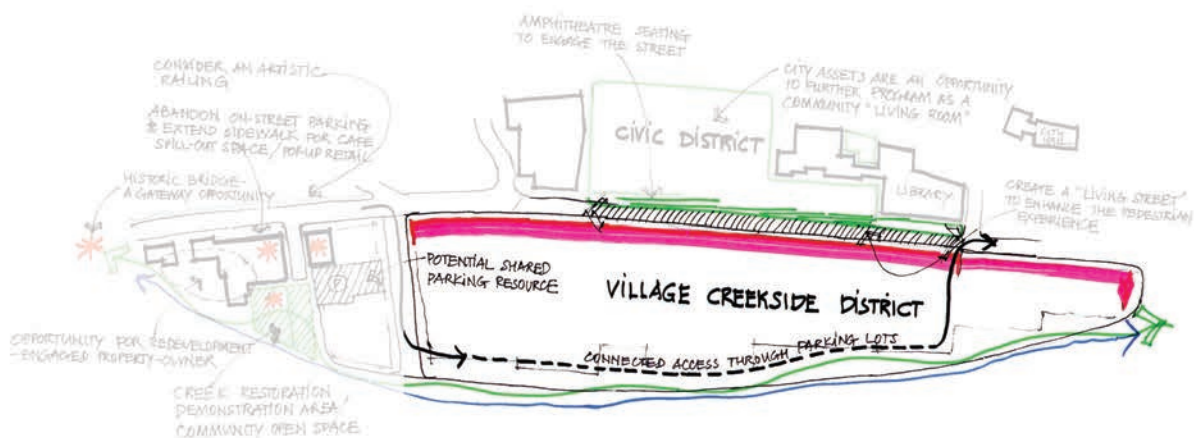
San Pablo Creek represents a significant opportunity for this area. This portion of the study area has 1,500 linear feet of San Pablo Creek in a semi-natural state above ground. Although the panel understands that significant costs and efforts would be required to restore the ecological integrity of the creek, this cost could be offset in several ways. (See Question 3 for details.) The San Pablo Creek presents an extremely valuable resource that both residents and visitors could enjoy. Despite the challenges of developing along the creek, retail development with some residential apartments on the upper floors, facing the creek, could bring additional activity and liveliness to this underused area. Initial streetscape design concepts conceived by the panel are shown in figure 5.

Street frontage along this portion of Orinda Way is visually dominated by surface parking.



GoogleEarth

Figure 5: Village District Streetscape Design Concepts



Civic District

Across Orinda Way from the Village District is the Civic District, which contains the Orinda Community Park, the Orinda Community Center, the Orinda Library, a large plaza, and other civic uses. This district is already active, with many community members attending classes, visiting the library, or attending summertime activities and concerts in the park. The panel envisions this area as the city's "living room"—a comfortable and safe place for people to gather. Though many separate destinations in this area are currently well used by the community, further streetscape enhancements could serve to tie them together.

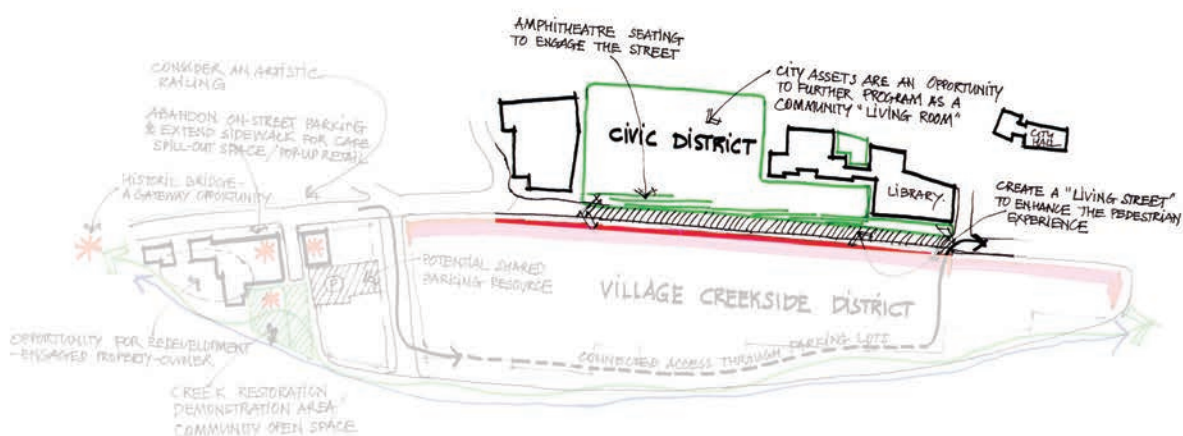
Without removal of any of the well-used parking spaces, Orinda Way could be turned into a "living street"—a roadway that is engaged by both pedestrians and vehicles. This transformation would involve removing the curb and gutter and adding bollards for safety—a design similar to that of the popular European *woonerfs* seen throughout the Netherlands. Orinda can take advantage of existing resources, such as the terraced, landscaped area in front of the library that was originally designed to host events. These areas could be slightly redesigned to allow for small events such as book fairs. The large plaza area between the library and the Parks and Recreation Department building could be used to host larger community events such as an art fair or music festival. (Figure 6 illustrates these concepts.)

An example of a European *woonerf*. Some *woonerf* concepts could be used on Orinda Way.



Pinterest

Figure 6: Civic District Streetscape Design Concepts



Crossroads District

The Crossroads District has a small-town feel and character that can be enhanced by adding a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The connection between the Orinda BART station and the Crossroads District, which is the closest commercial area to the station, should be enhanced and improved to encourage and invite BART riders to walk to the Crossroads District to partake in the many eateries, entertainment opportunities, and retail choices. At the time the panel was conducted, pedestrians and bicyclists arriving in this area from BART emerged from a non-Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant stairway onto Bryant Way. (ADA improvements here are currently under construction.)

Although wayfinding and pathway improvements are underway or planned in this area, pedestrian links could be realigned to guide people to walk through Theatre Square, thereby providing a more vibrant, welcoming, and interesting experience than the current route along Bryant Way, which is wedged between the three-story blank wall of the Theatre Square development and the freeway. In order to do this, a cut-through passage could be created through the southern wall of Theatre Square near the Fourth Bore restaurant. Realigning the flow of pedestrians through Theatre Square dually would improve pedestrian safety and engage Theatre Square as a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Under current conditions, pedestrians arriving in the Crossroads District from BART walk to the northeast along Bryant Way and suddenly emerge in the middle of a traffic circle on Moraga Way. This intersection has no pedestrian infrastructure, and people on foot are suddenly

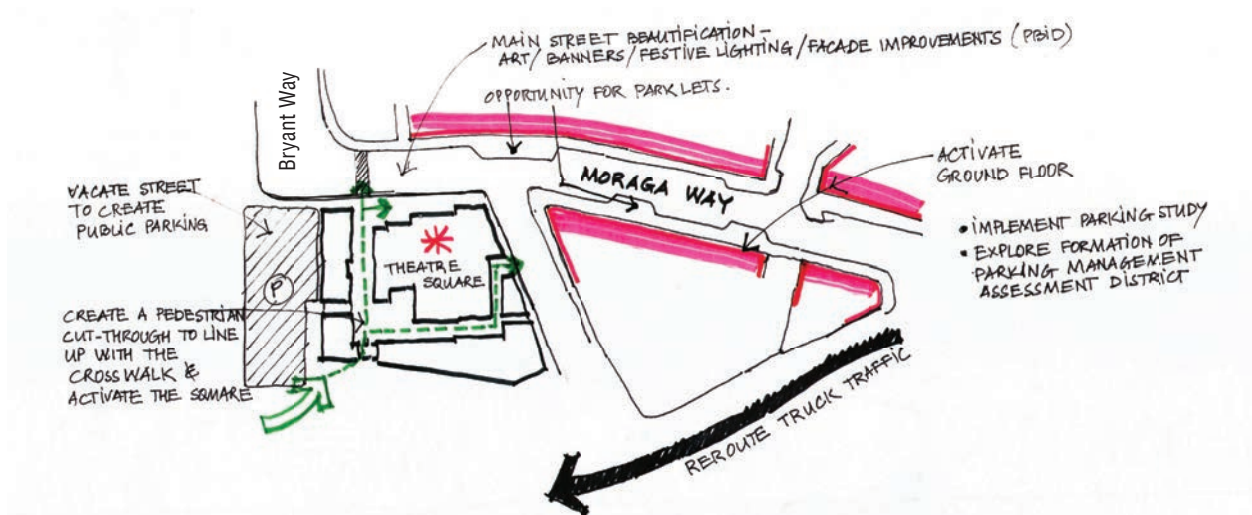
commingled with vehicles in the circle. Rerouting the pedestrian path through Theatre Square would align pedestrians with the existing crosswalk across Moraga Way, improving safety as well as activating the interior courtyards of Theatre Square by attracting additional pedestrians and commuters. (This proposed realignment is shown with a green dashed line in Figure 7.)

The Crossroads District does not have adequate parking. To address this issue, Bryant Way, an essentially single-purpose street for vehicles entering or exiting the Theatre Square subterranean parking garage, could be converted

The Crossroads District.



Figure 7: Crossroads District Streetscape Design Concepts



into public parking. A variety of configurations could be implemented to allow cars to continue to drive through this area to reach the garage as well as use some of the unprogrammed area for parking.

“The Downtown and Affected Neighborhoods Parking Study” provides a concrete implementation plan with a variety of strategies and action items for easing the Crossroads District parking problems. Orinda should begin implementing these strategies and explore the possibility of forming a parking maintenance assessment district. Like other such assessment districts, a parking maintenance assessment district is a legal mechanism for property owners to receive services above and beyond what the city can provide.

A variety of stakeholders said some retail businesses along Moraga Way could benefit from facade improvements that would impart a more pedestrian-friendly feel. The CVS Pharmacy, in particular, has received scrutiny for its expansive windows that are blocked off, essentially creating a wall on a prominent corner. Facade improvements, along with other street beautification strategies such as festive lighting or banners, could be funded through a property-based improvement district

(PBID). PBIDs are private initiatives undertaken by a business district to create self-imposed and self-governed property tax assessments. PBIDs do not replace city services but are designed to enhance them.

Orinda should also consider putting parklets along Moraga Way. Even temporary parklets—defined by the National Association of City Transportation Officials as “public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces”—can activate the streetscape and encourage residents to stay and enjoy their downtown. The city could allow businesses interested in hosting a parklet in front of their building to use a few parking spaces for tables and chairs, benches, other street furniture, or street art. As a pilot program, businesses could do this for free and later be charged a fee for the parking places they occupy, generating revenue for the city.

A parklet in downtown Oakland.



City of Oakland

Question 3: Based on the community's vision for downtown Orinda, what are the restoration and planning recommendations, if any, for San Pablo Creek?

From stakeholder interviews, panelists gauged a strong community interest in integrating San Pablo Creek into the planning of downtown and converting the creek into a usable community asset. Despite general support, many challenges must be overcome in order to restore the creek. As noted, Orinda has limited fiscal resources available to undertake such a project, particularly for a costly right-of-way acquisition program. The breadth of the creek restoration would require the commitment of external funding sources.

As a first step, the city should develop a San Pablo Creek Action Plan that would build on and implement the next steps outlined in the 2001 "San Pablo Creek through Downtown: Orinda Preliminary Restoration Plan." This plan, created by the Waterways Restoration Institute, indicates that Orinda can "join the growing list of local communities that have showcased their creeks and rivers and embraced them as an important element of community life." The preliminary restoration plan's recommended next steps to achieve that goal include the following:

- Perform hydraulic modeling.
- Confirm proposed natural creek design.
- Develop an accurate topographical map.
- Gain the consensus of property owners and regulatory agencies for rights-of-way.
- Install a gauge to monitor water flows.

Though the panel agrees with these next steps, it is clear that establishing a consensus among owners and purchasing multiple rights-of-way from property owners along the creek poses a challenge logistically and financially. The panel proposes several creative solutions that would benefit both property owners and the city. It recommends that as part of the proposed San Pablo Creek Action Plan, Orinda focus on the segment of creek between Santa Maria Way and the junction of Orinda Way and Camino Pablo.

San Pablo Creek, April 2017.



In addition to the next steps outlined in the Preliminary Restoration Plan, the panel recommends the following:

- Step 1: Identify and evaluate opportunities for and constraints on repurposing of property along the creek.
- Step 2: Formulate and test incentives to stimulate reinvestment.
- Step 3: Demonstrate the city’s commitment to creek restoration in order to obtain external funding.

In step 1, Orinda should engage in a robust opportunities and constraints analysis for restoring the creek. The panel acknowledges that in addition to the high cost, some additional major challenges to development along the creek include the high-voltage overhead power lines over a segment of the creek, and the fact that many of the abutting parcels are partly in a flood zone.

In step 2, in order for property owners to dedicate their rights-of-way along the creek, they must dedicate portions of the surface parking adjacent to the creek. The loss of these parking spaces may necessitate their replacement with a more expensive form of parking such as structured or underground parking.

Fortunately, this cost can be recouped in the value created through the development strategy for the parcels along the creek. Housing is a high value-generating use. Orinda can pool the currently permitted ten-units-per-acre (or more) allotment and allow a density bonus for property owners willing to dedicate their rights-of-way along the creek. Up to six 40-unit mixed-use residential projects could be allowed in the Village District. The panel recommends that such projects be allowed flexible height limits—35 to 55 feet—measured from the curb on Orinda Way. (Height limits are discussed further under Question 4.) The city could allow parcel owners to engage in higher-density residential development—while respecting the overall existing residential density for the Village—in exchange for dedicated creek right-of-way. (In other words, the city could continue to cap the overall residential density within the entire Village District at ten units per acre by allowing a lower density on some parcels and a higher density on others, based on criteria such as topography, creek restoration contributions, etc.). In this way, the city could avoid costly right-of-way acquisitions and focus available resources on restoration and public improvements.

The panel believes that to address community skepticism regarding increased density, the city should demonstrate the additional value created by a modest increase in density. In addition to the higher property values and sales tax revenue that would be generated by modestly higher

densities, this strategy would also provide more housing diversity to fit the needs of empty nesters and first-time homebuyers.

In step 3, restoring the creek would have many benefits, including imparting a unique identity to the Village District. Creek restoration would dually restore habitat and improve flood control. Allowing high-quality development along the creek would further impart a village-like feel to the area and create a community amenity viewed as a “jewel” for all residents.

The final NMSC “Market Analysis and Transformation Strategy Development Report” suggests that, based on psychographic characteristics pertaining to Orinda, a “Health and Wellness Transformation Strategy” may highly appeal to residents of Orinda. Such a strategy involves consciously cultivating businesses and services oriented toward improving people’s well-being. The report suggests that San Pablo Creek is a high-potential natural asset that could provide the opportunity to link miles of recreational trails to the downtown area. Employing San Pablo Creek to establish a connection between the surrounding natural area and downtown would further impart the healthy lifestyle that appeals to many residents and visitors to Orinda.

Orinda should show strong support for this effort and work with property owners who express interest in these proposed development solutions. By preparing an action plan with concurrent changes to the zoning ordinance to establish the voluntary density bonus for creek dedications, the city would demonstrate its commitment to third-party grant makers for natural resource restoration and preservation.

San Pablo Creek could someday become a defining feature of Orinda.



<http://www.novorestaurant.com/>

Question 4: Based on the community's vision for downtown Orinda, what changes, if any, are recommended to downtown development standards and allowable land uses.

Design guidelines are important for preservation of the architectural and place-setting character of Orinda. Equally important, guidelines should ensure that renovations and new projects respect the historic character of the existing downtown. An updated set of design guidelines should do the following:

- Be relevant.
- Acknowledge important historic elements.
- Provide clarity to property owners and investors.
- Identify requisite off-site/streetscape improvements.
- Provide consistency.
- Be transparent.

The current design guidelines identify 11 distinct districts encompassing the study area and a wider area surrounding downtown. Each district provides specific guidance about allowable setbacks, materials to be used, and architecture. The panel believes that 11 districts is too many and suggests reducing the number to three:

- The Village District (including the Gateway subdistrict);
- The Civic District; and
- The Crossroads District.

Orinda's "Downtown Design Guidelines," dated June 1990, have never been updated. Updated guidelines should be the result of a robust, locally based community engagement process that includes residents, property owners, and business owners. Because the characteristics and vision for each district are different and distinct, the design guidelines for each should be responsive to the driving factors that make that the case.

Overarching Guidelines

Broad guidelines should be applied to the following elements of the downtown.

Parking management. The TJKM parking study identified more than 500 public parking spaces in the downtown area, excluding the significant private parking stock downtown. In order to maximize the existing parking inventory, the city can undertake the following actions:

- Be more active in managing existing time limits.
- Develop an employee parking program.
- Encourage partnerships with private property owners.
- Consider parking management as a potential revenue stream.
- Consider a park-in-lieu fee to generate funding for a public parking garage or lot.
- Consider a future parking district.
- Keep an eye on future impacts of autonomous vehicles.

Walkability. In order to create meaningful and attractive places in downtown Orinda, close attention must be paid to the pedestrian experience. This pedestrian experience can be enhanced through a variety of design solutions, including but not limited to special pavement treatment, cross-slope pavement, drainage, signage, outdoor seating in front of restaurants, widened sidewalks, and landscaping and plantings, among other solutions. Providing a pleasant experience for pedestrians and bicyclists should be a goal of all projects.

Building heights. Building height was one of the more contentious topics explored by the panel, and development standards for downtown Orinda should address the issue with more specificity. Existing downtown zoning requires height to be measured from existing grade at any given point. In all cases, documents should be clear about building heights—from where they are to be measured (e.g., sidewalk/grade at front of property), and what is included in building height (e.g., top of parapet, rooftop equipment screens, etc.).

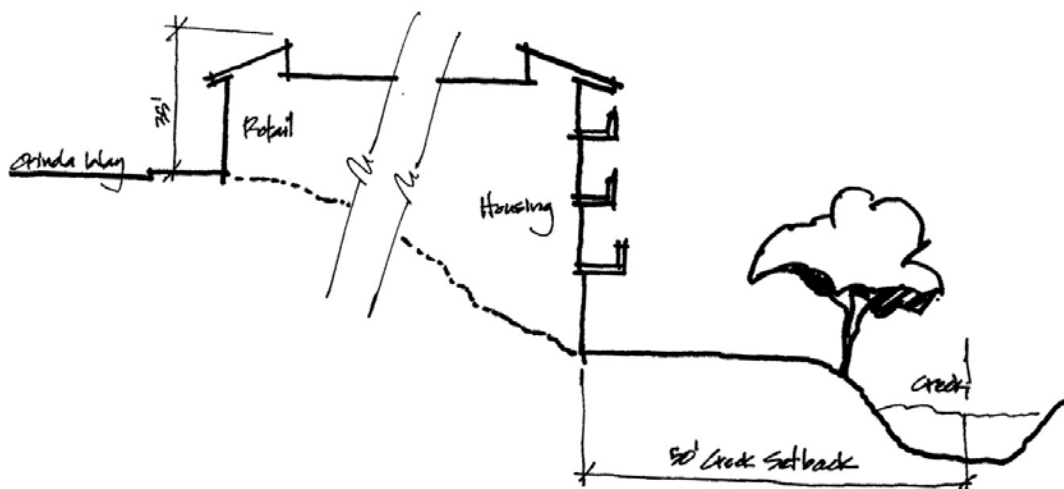
Figure 9 shows a preliminary sketch of a conceptual development along the creek. As shown, the building frontage along Orinda Way could be occupied by a retail business with a 35-foot building height. As the topography slopes down toward the creek, the building height relative to Orinda Way remains the same but the slope allows for a taller structure in the rear overlooking the creek. Flexibility in the number of stories within this height limit would allow for buildings that still respect the established height limit as measured from Orinda Way instead of existing grade at any given part of the parcel or parcels.

Historic assets. Orinda has a legacy of historic buildings in the downtown area that still stand today. The value of these assets should be recognized in any updates to downtown development standards. Updated design guidelines should provide clarity on how these buildings can be renovated and updated and how projects adjacent to these properties respond to these buildings. The guidelines should cite the “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties,” and a process for design review should be established for development involving these structures.

San Pablo Creek has steeply sloping banks on both sides.



Figure 9: Conceptual Development along San Pablo Creek

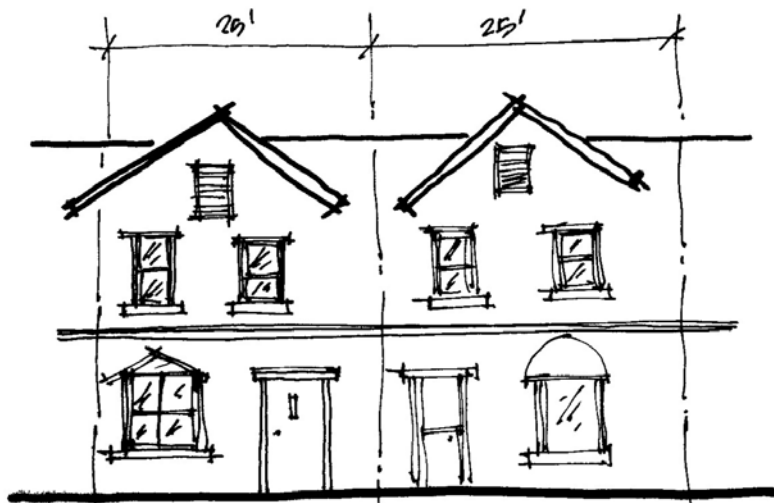


Village District (including Gateway Subdistrict) Architectural and Site Design Guidelines

The historic buildings and the creek in this neighborhood are major architectural influences. The city should leverage the historic and Craftsman style of buildings, as well as the opportunity to open up the creek for passive recreation and as a place for dining. Design considerations should include the following:

- Modulate new structures on Orinda Way to project a “small village” feel (e.g., 25-foot modulation), activate the street, and provide a mix of uses. (Figure 10 illustrates building facade modulation.)
 - Encourage use of architecture that reflects the Craftsman style or other styles of building suitable for Orinda.
 - Encourage location of storefronts on the sidewalk on Orinda Way.
 - Encourage use of large windows to allow pedestrians to see into stores.
 - Minimize the number of driveways off Orinda Way in order to provide a continuous fabric of storefronts.
 - Encourage provision of shared/reciprocal parking.
 - Consider connecting parking areas located behind buildings.
- Consider the aforementioned recommendation to redevelop the Phair’s building site, including creek restoration, as a pilot project to introduce passive use of the creek.
 - Look to place appropriate uses facing the creek (for instance, housing and dining).
 - Consider the Gateway District along Orinda Way north of Camino Sobrante as an entrance into this district and preserve it for ground-floor retail space and service-oriented businesses.

Figure 10: Building Facade Modulation



Civic District Neighborhood Architectural and Site Design Guidelines

The Civic District is the place where Orinda comes together to enjoy a concert in the park or attend a class at the Community Center. As noted, the panel refers to this district as the “living room” because residents will visit this area to relax in their free time and meet with friends. The architecture should promote civic pride. More important, outdoor spaces should be flexible and provide places for programming, including food truck events, pop-up retail space, and smaller community events within the library terrace areas, such as the book fair.

The city should activate this neighborhood with increased community programming during off-peak hours. Pop-up events are more than just tents. For example, in Los Altos and Menlo Park, a side street was closed and synthetic turf placed on the street with lawn furniture, Ping-Pong tables, and other activities to provide space for casual community programming, activating the neighborhood and encouraging residents to visit during a time when they may not normally have gone there.

Crossroads District Neighborhood Architectural and Site Design Guidelines

The Crossroads District is the entertainment and dining hub of Orinda. Design considerations should include the following:

- Place attractive and significant signage announcing this neighborhood at the intersection of Camino Pablo/Brookwood Road.
- Encourage creation of outdoor/sidewalk dining opportunities.
- Require ground-floor retail space along Moraga Way to activate the street. Service-oriented businesses should be encouraged to locate on upper floors.
- Incentivize the transfer of ground-floor office uses to upper floors.
- Open up storefronts/provide visibility into stores.
- Encourage provision of shared parking.
- Physically and visibly connect Theatre Square to the BART station and parking lot by removing a corner of

An Off the Grid event in the Bay Area.



Berkeleyside

Theatre Square and encouraging pedestrians to walk through the square instead of using Bryant Way.

- Prioritize Bryant Way for parking (see figure 7 under Question 2).
- Treat Camino Pablo—the “back” of the district—appropriately in order to screen employee parking and back-of-house-functions, and to provide wayfinding to this district.

Incentives for Change

Orinda should develop a toolkit of incentives for early adopters and owners to lead change. The incentive toolkit may include:

- Parking trade-offs, e.g., reduced on-site parking requirements.
- In the Gateway subdistrict and the Crossroads District, reuse of existing buildings with more intensive uses, encouraged by not requiring increased parking, payment of in-lieu fees, etc.
- Improved building facades through expedited permitting, creation of an architecture toolkit, and

financing provided through a PBID or a central business improvement district (CBID).

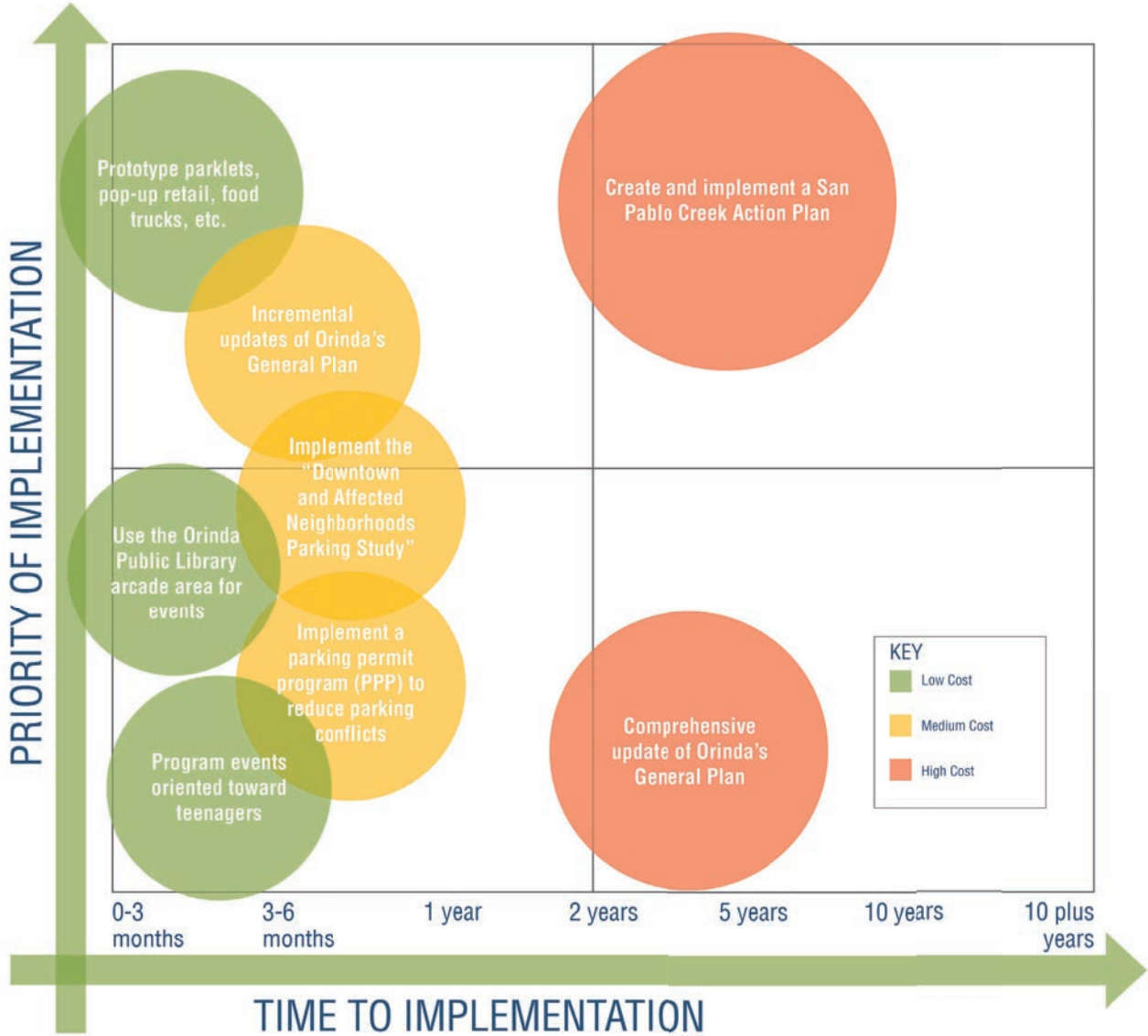
- Incentives provided to owners who voluntarily relocate office uses off ground floors.
- City-provided off-site improvements.
- Options for using on-street parking for parklets, etc.
- Priority given to businesses/owners that want to participate first; their leadership will create momentum and encourage others to participate.

Streetscape changes proposed by the panel can improve the connection between BART and Theatre Square.



Implementation/Prioritization Strategy

The panel created this graphic to represent some of the recommended actions for downtown Orinda. It shows the relative priority, cost, and time required to undertake the strategies contained in this report



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About the Panel

David Cropper, TAP Chair, Director of Development, TMG Partners

David Cropper has 30 years of experience in real estate development, including project design, entitlement, construction, and finance. He is responsible for TMG Partners' development activities in the greater Bay Area and is a member of the firm's investment committee.

He has been a partner in more than 15 million square feet of development transactions at TMG and was responsible for the Crossing | San Bruno, an award-winning, \$250 million mixed-use transit-oriented development, as well as 650 Townsend, a large mixed-use office and retail project in San Francisco. Most recently, he leads the acquisition and redevelopment of Champion Station, an 810,000-square-foot rehabilitation of the former Cisco Systems headquarters.

Cropper's career began in commercial real estate finance at Union Bank and Comerica Bank; he oversaw Comerica's real estate lending practice throughout the West. After leaving banking, he spent several years developing infill retail projects and acquiring properties for a private family foundation.

Cropper has a bachelor of arts degree in English literature and religious studies from Occidental College.

Jessica von Borck, Assistant City Manager, City of Fremont

Jessica von Borck is assistant city manager of Fremont, serving the community in multiple capacities. She has more than 20 years of experience in providing strategic input and leadership on policy and administrative areas/projects for the municipalities of Los Gatos and Mountain View. She currently oversees project management

Panelists at work in the Parks and Recreation Department building in Orinda, April 2017.



and implementation for Fremont’s major development initiatives—building a downtown from scratch and creating an innovation district in Warm Springs.

She has a bachelor of science degree in urban planning and design from Arizona State University.

Jeff Gee, Vice President, Swinerton Management & Consulting

Jeff Gee is a member of the City Council of Redwood City, serving his second term. He was mayor of Redwood City in 2014 and 2015, and vice mayor in 2012 and 2013.

Previously, Gee was a member of the Redwood City Planning Commission, which included a term as commission chairman. He also is a former member of Redwood City Architectural Review Committee.

Gee represents Redwood City and San Mateo County on several regional public agency committees and boards, including as a director and past chairman of the SamTrans board of directors; current chair and director of the Joint Powers Board (JPB), which oversees CalTrain; vice chair and director of the Transbay Joint Power Authority; immediate past chairman of the San Francisco Airport Community Roundtable; and chairman of Commute.org, formerly known as the Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance.

Gee is a vice president/general manager with Swinerton Management & Consulting in San Francisco and a licensed architect. He graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, with a bachelor of science degree in architecture.

Geeti Silwal, Associate Principal, Perkins + Will

Geeti Silwal is a senior urban designer/planner with more than 15 years of experience working with communities to identify issues and develop visions with an emphasis on placemaking, identity building, vibrancy, connectivity, accessibility, social justice, and regeneration of the urban environment.

The breadth of her experience includes regional plans, master plans, waterfront developments, urban mixed-use projects, and public realm enhancement along heavily challenged transportation-infrastructure corridors. Often faced with multi-headed client teams, she believes in urban designers playing a role both as advocates of good urban cities and as diplomats facilitating dialogue among agencies, departments, and various stakeholder groups to reach consensus on solutions of function and inspiration. In an effort to find closed-loop, zero-waste solutions that address issues of food security, water scarcity, and climate change within the dense urban fabric, Silwal has

researched, published, and spoken widely on the reuse of urban wastewater for urban agriculture.

Craig Semmelmeier, Principal, Main Street Property Services

As founder and principal of Main Street Property Services Inc., Craig Semmelmeier acts as development partner and leasing agent on downtown properties and shopping centers throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Property owners, developers, municipalities, and retailers alike seek his ability to provide retail solutions that respond to the marketplace and the needs of the communities they serve.

David Shiver, Principal, BAE Urban Economics

David Shiver is a principal and shareholder of BAE Urban Economics Inc., a real estate consultancy based in Berkeley with offices in Sacramento, Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington, D.C. He has extensive national experience in community planning, community revitalization, and public/private partnerships. His recent local experience includes real estate market and financial feasibility analyses for the cities of Foster City, Los Altos, Los Gatos, Menlo Park, Milpitas, Mountain View, and San Ramon.

Shiver received his undergraduate degree from the University of Chicago and a master of city and regional planning and an MBA from the University of California, Berkeley.

Megan Keith, Urban Planner, AECOM, Lead Author

Megan Keith is an urban planner in the Master Planning and Urban Design group at AECOM in San Francisco. She has experience working with private, local, and federal government clients. Her professional skills include land use and master planning, data collection and analysis, and community workshop facilitation.

She is a graduate of California Polytechnic State University with a degree in city and regional planning.

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