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## Orinda's Vision, Part II-General Plan Update

By *Andrea A. Firth*

As the next best step in the development of a cohesive vision for Orinda's downtown districts, Chris Benyon, a community planning and land-use consultant from Berkeley-based MIG, Inc., recommended that Orinda's City Council undertake a General Plan update with a focus on downtown.

"The City's General Plan is coming to, what the State would consider, the end of its term," said Beynon. Orinda's current, and only, General Plan was adopted 23 years ago shortly after the City was incorporated. According to Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu the projected lifecycle of the General Plan, which provides a comprehensive guide and direction for the physical development of the city, is about 20 years. The State has encouraged the City to re-evaluate the scope and content of its General Plan to ensure it remains valid and consistent with the goals and future vision of the community, according to Ursu. Without keeping the Plan current, the City could run the risk that the Plan is challenged in court.

According to Beynon the time is ripe for an update. "There's a nice tone in the community. The discussion has started," he said, referring back to two widely-attended public workshops held in November and December to discuss residents' visions for Orinda's downtown districts. He encouraged the Council to move forward with this next step in the planning process to build on the momentum in the community. "There's a lot of common ground and common elements," said Beynon, but he also acknowledged that there are some contentious aspects to residents' visions for Orinda's downtown, such as building height, density, and retail choices.

One major stumbling block for cash-strapped Orinda is the price tag of a General Plan update. A complete update will cost \$500,000 to \$650,000, Ursu told the Council. At this juncture the Council made no immediate plans for a General Plan update, opting to gather additional community input and to discuss a phased-approach to addressing the General Plan needs. "We don't want to the Task Force recommendations to be lost in the process, but we will look at the recommendations through the lens of the community input," said Ursu in a follow-up interview.

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

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