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Published November 21st, 2012

Orinda Honored with International Award for Best Senior Housing Community Eden program set to start construction in December

By Laurie Snyder

Orinda, long an incubator of gold medal-winning Olympians, is now glittering brightly in a new arena - international architectural design. Orindans learned at the Nov. 7 Orinda City Council meeting that, in June 2012, Orinda's Eden Senior Housing program was awarded the Gold Nugget Grand Award for Best Senior Housing Community - On the Boards.

"Since 1963, the Gold Nugget Awards have honored creative achievements in architectural design and land use planning for residential, commercial and industrial projects," reads the staff report for the meeting. Judges pointed to "the design challenges posed by the sloping site," as they praised plans by the Dahlin Group, the architects selected to transform Orinda's old library site at 2 Irwin Way, for their "successful integration of the building into its natural and built environment."

Eden "really fits in with the community," echoed City Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu as he urged council and community members to take pride in the award. Orinda's affordable senior housing program competed against other designs from Pacific Rim countries and 14 western U.S. states.

The City Council also learned from Ursu and Eden's Senior Project Developer Woody Karp that, "financing from all sources has been committed to the Project and closing on the construction financing is scheduled for December 14, 2012." The council subsequently reviewed and approved Eden's \$22,506,166 Financing Plan and Development Budget.

Forty-five of the 66 one-bedroom units planned for the property will be occupied by residents at 50 percent of AMI (area median income), paying \$831 in monthly rent. Age restrictions dictate that at least one member of each household be over 62 years old. The rent for the 67th unit - a two-bedroom manager's unit - will be set at market rate.

Karp announced earlier via an Oct. 24 letter to the city's leadership that Contra Costa County's Housing Authority "has agreed to create with Eden a site based wait list, allowing people who express interest in living at this property to apply for housing and not simply draw from the housing authority's existing wait list. This means that qualified [applicants] living in the Lamorinda area will have an opportunity to apply."

"I'm thrilled that we're actually here at this spot," said Council Member Dean Orr. Vice Mayor Amy Worth described Eden's development efforts as "a solid plan for both construction and operation."

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