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Published December 13th, 2017

## Letters to the Editor

Orinda Must Chart its Own Course

The State of California recently passed Senate Bill 35 which expedites housing development approvals in cities like Orinda. It is one that Orinda residents should pay attention to. In short, it's the opening salvo by the state against cities like Orinda that have prime access to regional transit like BART, but have outdated general plans that continue to govern land use policies and prevent new housing from being built. With so many communities in the Bay Area claiming they are "built out" and unable to fit new housing in, the region now faces a severe housing shortage. The result of this shortage is skyrocketing rents and home prices that may benefit longtime homeowners, but condemn future generations to a lifetime without the possibility of affordable home ownership in communities close to their place of employment. Some say another negative consequence of restrictive housing policies is the enormous environmental cost of sprawl in outlying areas. SB 35 is one way that state legislators are beginning to address the problem with a potential outcome of reining in cities who are resistant to the addition of new housing stock. What should Orinda's response to this new law be? Some want us to retreat further into our cocoon, closing off our downtown for any new investment. But that will only increase the state's bulls eye on us, given our convenient freeway and BART access. The longer we try to prevent new development through restrictive zoning, the more likely it will be that the state and outside developers will do it for us, without our input. Fortunately, there is a better way forward. Orinda should take action and chart its own course for downtown. Residents here are already frustrated with its ongoing decline. We should begin planning for a more convenient, fun and beautiful downtown, where empty nesters, young professionals, and other locals can live and support better retail amenities and public spaces that will benefit everyone in the community. Our City Council shouldn't retreat from Sacramento's warning shot. It should immediately begin a process for a comprehensive update to the rules governing downtown development with the end goal of creating a Downtown Specific Plan. Earlier in the year, a City Council downtown subcommittee was created to discuss the process of downtown renewal. We urge this subcommittee to get to work and address our call for action. State and local agencies provide grant opportunities for such a process. Our current general plan is outdated, and its restrictive codes provide no incentive for the investment need required to bring in new retail, public spaces and a revitalized downtown creek. It is time for Orinda's City Council to begin the long overdue process of updating our downtown planning policy right away, before others end up doing it for us.

Tom Trowbridge Kirsten Larsen  
for the OrindaVision for the What's Up Downtown  
Steering Committee Steering Committee

Who's bullying who?

The gun control advocates, Safemoraga.org, are perfectly entitled to voice their opinions. This is a constitutionally protected right. And as such, even if the remaining 98 percent of us believed that they should not be allowed to speak their minds - it still wouldn't matter. This is what having a constitutionally protected right means. They are not subject to the whims of local government or pressure groups. Our Founding Fathers designed it this way for a reason. However, Safemoraga.org doesn't seem to understand this when it comes to Second and the Fourth Amendment rights. Apparently, only their opinions matter, here. Make no mistake. The "safe storage" ordinance is about telling us what we can (and cannot) do in the privacy of our own homes. If you don't like guns, then pick any other thing you might do in your home. Ask yourself - are you certain that all of your neighbors approve of your life style? If not, should they be able to affect the way you act in your home by passing a town ordinance? In the half dozen towns that have enacted this ordinance - not a single citation has ever been written. Not one! San Rafael PD has stated they will not enforce their ordinance because it "causes neighborhood tensions." This ordinance can only be enforced by one neighbor calling the police on another. This sort of thing was tried in Germany in the 1930's and it didn't turn out well. Amazingly, our PTA went on record "unanimously supporting" this ordinance BEFORE the first draft was completed. I was not aware our PTA is clairvoyant. I guess we need waste no more time STAR testing our children because the PTA already knows the scores. On cue, Safemoraga dismissed a letter by the NRA as "bullying tactics". I've read the letter and have no idea what Safemoraga is talking about. Rather, the letter clearly illustrates how this ordinance would be in direct violation of current State and Federal law. Isn't this something we should be aware of? How is this "bullying"? Perhaps it is time to put aside our ideologies and actually try to understand what the letter is telling us. Better yet - we might try actually reading the ordinance before throwing ourselves blindly behind it.

Call me crazy.

Doug Home  
Moraga

Support for RVR stop signs

I appreciate that the City of Lafayette has added new stop signs and a cross walk on Reliez Valley Road. I used to walk and ride my bike to Springhill elementary and cars were always driving too fast. I support efforts to reduce the amount of traffic and the speeds on my road.

Mac Follmer  
Lafayette

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[back](#)

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