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## Art & Garden Center rises in Wilder

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The Art and Garden Center groundbreaking in June 2017 Photos Sora O'Doherty

It has been a long time coming, but the Art and Garden Center at Wilder is taking shape and will open to the public this year. The Center is a 6,600-square-foot building that features a 3,150-square-foot room that can accommodate many different uses. Accordion walls enable this space to be subdivided into three separate studios, and the building also features an additional, separate studio to maximize programming potential. The building wraps around a small amphitheater area, which serves as an outdoor gathering space. Behind the building will be a garden area and one of the five sports fields that make up the Wilder field complex. The overall facility offers tremendous flexibility for uses by Orinda's parks and recreation department.

The history of the project goes back more than a decade. In 2003 the Orinda City Council subcommittee approved Wilder's development agreement. In 2004, the developer worked with the Sierra Club, Save Open Space, and

Golden Gate Audubon Society to resolve key community concerns and reserved a location at the south end of the valley for an Art and Garden Center. In March 2005, the City Council approved the Second Amended and Restated Development Agreement, which included the terms for a 6,000 square foot Art and Garden Center.

Construction on the Wilder project began in July 2006, but the economic recession of 2008-11 presented many challenges. In 2011, Wilder and the city of Orinda entered discussions to considered relocation of the Art and Garden Center to the Community Playfields to increase recreational use and synergy. Ground was broken in June of 2017 and it is anticipated that the center will be open to the public by this summer, some 15 years from the beginning of the development agreement.



The Art and Garden Center at Wilder as of Jan. 5.

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back

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