

Dear Friend of OrindaVision:

This purpose of this message is two-fold: first, to bring you more detail on what's happening this spring with respect to the renewal of downtown Orinda and second, to ask you to send a brief letter or email to the Orinda Planning Commissioners.

You are familiar with the vision we have put forward for the future of our downtown, a summary of which is on our website [www.orindavision.org](http://www.orindavision.org). As we reflect on the most practical way for the Orinda community to realize something like this vision, we believe it is essential to identify the several, small (2-3 acres) land assemblies that are possible and even likely to occur over the next several years. These assembled parcels will be critical to the renewal process of our tired and declining downtown. The community should have its say in this process. We intend our voice and yours to be voices for rational planning.

The most feasible - and likely the earliest - of these assemblies involves those commercial properties in the vicinity of Avenida de Orinda. These include the Phairs' building and parking lot, Country Club Plaza, the former Orinda firehouse site and Village Court. Three property owners are involved. An assembly of these properties would produce a 3.2 acre parcel with some exciting redevelopment potential for downtown. It may well be the key to getting a renewal process begun.

The main obstacle to this assembly, unfortunately, is the proposed purchase of the Phairs' building by the Fountainhead Montessori School. We are among those who are grateful for the school's significant contributions to the education of generations of children in Orinda. We believe, however, that permitting the school to relocate to this site would be a serious mistake that would in all likelihood prevent the rational planning of this sensitive downtown block. It would leave us with three tired adjacent properties and a long-vacant parcel that cry out for a sensitive, well planned development – which is only likely to occur if the Phairs' corner site is included, and not converted to a school. If the school must move from its present location near the Santa Maria Church, we hope another site can be found for it in Orinda.

The school's application is currently being prepared for presentation to the Planning Commission in late May or early June. We intend to oppose a school use on the site of the Phairs' building and to favor the larger planning opportunity which we believe could produce much greater benefits for the community. We would welcome your support. Attached is a summary of OrindaVision's rationale, for your reference in composing your own brief (100-200 words is fine) letter or email to the Planning Commission. This is a significant opportunity for your views on the future of our downtown to be heard. To be considered prior to the May meeting, your message should arrive at City Hall by May 14. Please ask your spouse to sign as well. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Tom Trowbridge, Chairman, OrindaVision  
April 28, 2013