

AMENDED
NOTICE OF PREPARATION
of a Draft
Environmental Impact Report

Date:	January 4, 2022
To:	State Clearinghouse and interested parties and organizations
Project Title:	City of Orinda Downtown Precise Plan, Housing Element Update and Safety Element Update (“Plan Orinda”)
Lead Agency:	City of Orinda Planning Department 22 Orinda Way Orinda, California 94563
Contact:	Winnie Mui, Associate Planner, Planning Department
Original Date of Public Notice:	January 4, 2022
Amended Date of Public Notice:	January 25, 2022
Extended Public Review Period:	January 25, 2022 to February 24, 2022, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082

This amended Notice extends the public comment period to February 24, 2022.

Purpose of the Notice

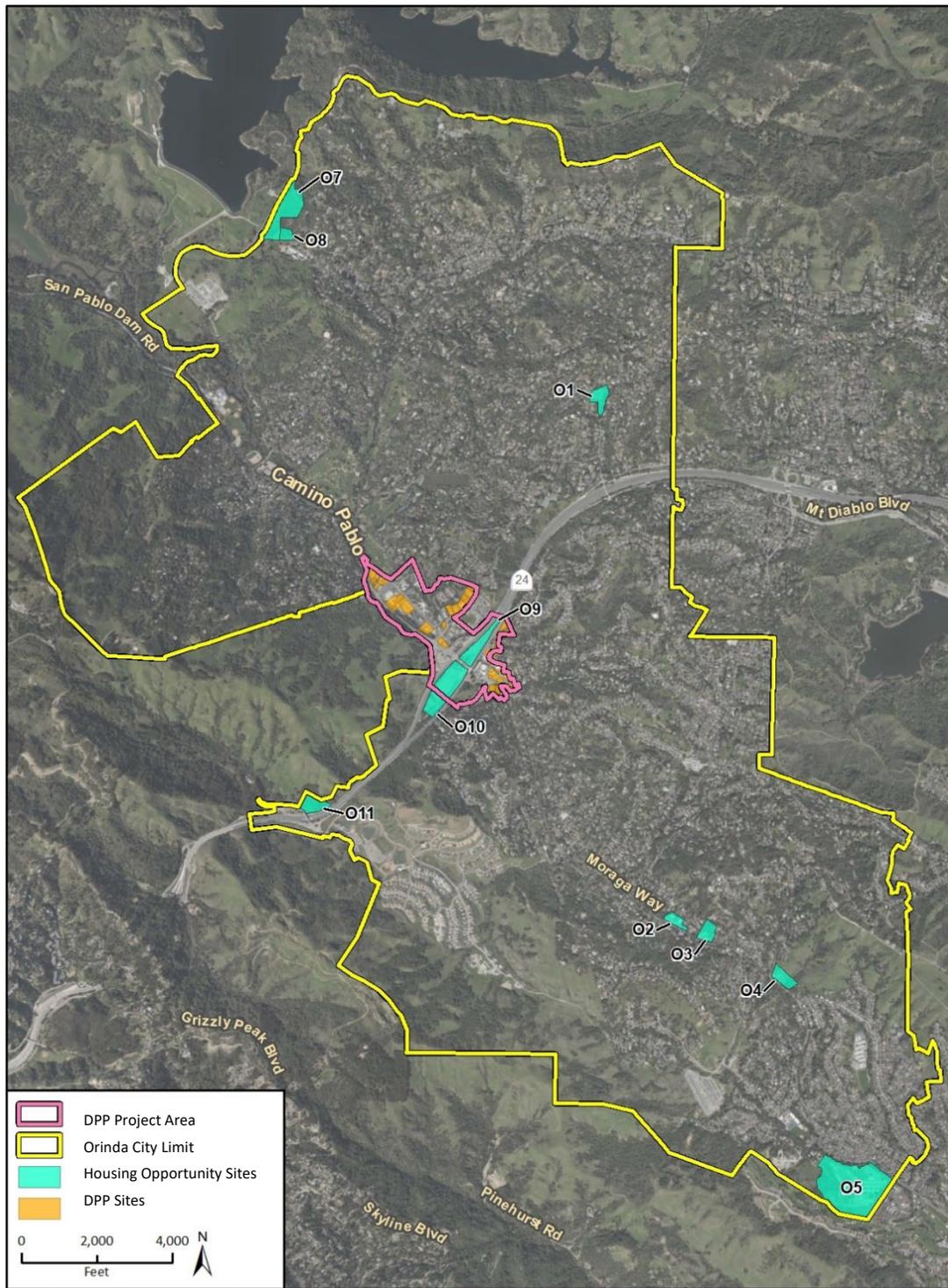
The intent of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to inform agencies and interested parties that the City of Orinda will prepare a programmatic-level Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Downtown Precise Plan (DPP), Housing Element Update, and all affected/related General Plan elements (collectively known as Plan Orinda) in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15082. This NOP provides information about the project and preliminary scope of the EIR, which examines potential development throughout the planning area at a programmatic level that does not include specific project components or proposals. Comments from interested agencies are requested as to the scope and content of the environmental information pertinent to each agency’s statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Comments from individuals and organizations are also welcome during the 30-day scoping process, during which commenters can present their questions about environmental topics related to the General Plan update, the 2023-2031 Housing Element, and the DPP. The project locations and development descriptions are summarized below.

Project Location

The 2023-2031 Housing Element affects the entire city of Orinda and includes sites in the DPP as well as elsewhere in the city (See Figure 1 and Figure 2). The DPP area would span approximately 146.3 acres in the center of Orinda. The DPP plan area is bounded by the Orinda Way and El Toyonal intersection at the north, Camino Encinas at the south, single-family residences to the east, and Siesta Valley Recreation Area to the west. Figure 1 shows the proposed DPP plan area in its neighborhood context. The second part includes parcels outside the DPP plan area, including 10 Housing Opportunity Sites, as

depicted in Figure 2. Among others, the Housing Opportunity Sites include parcels near or adjacent to the Orinda Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station, some of which are under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The combined DPP plan area and the Housing Opportunity sites throughout the rest of the city comprise the Plan Orinda Planning Area.

Figure 1 Housing Element Update and DPP Planning Area with Housing Opportunity Sites



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 Additional data provided by City of Orinda, 2020.

Fig 2-4 Housing Opportunity Sites

Project Description

Plan Orinda would provide a vision and planning framework for future growth and development in the city with an emphasis on intensifying land uses in a way that meets future housing needs in response to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation.

Downtown Precise Plan

The DPP would focus on the City's downtown area as shown in Figure 1. The City's downtown zoning and development standards would be intended to revitalize the Theatre and Village districts to encourage mixed-use and higher density residential development downtown. The planning horizon for the DPP is roughly 27 years and extends from 2023 to 2050. Under the DPP, two new downtown mixed-use zones, the Downtown Core and the Downtown General zones, would be established to replace the existing Downtown Commercial and Downtown Office zones to allow a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, and office. Zoning standards under these two new zones would allow development up to 85 dwelling units per acre that could be up to 55 feet tall with 5-foot parapets and rooftop screening projections. These rezoning actions would facilitate mixed-use development on the rezoned parcels but would likely not apply to development that may occur at 2 Theatre Square. In addition to the zoning changes, the DPP would include guiding principles, design concepts, objective design standards that streamline housing development, a description of existing conditions, recommendations for land uses in the DPP plan area, development standards, and a discussion of utilities and infrastructure improvements needed to accommodate future growth. It will also include a framework discussion regarding restoration of San Pablo creek as well as development standards pertaining to properties that front San Pablo creek.

2023 to 2031 Housing Element

The City is updating its Housing Element to address its 6th Cycle RHNA and meet its projected housing demand. During the previous, 5th Cycle RHNA, the City was allocated 227 units that were accommodated in the 2015-2023 Housing Element. For the 6th RHNA Cycle, the City was allocated 1,359 dwelling units plus an approximately 25 percent buffer that would ensure "no net loss" if preferred sites are found not suitable for development during specific project approval. This results in approximately 1,700 total potential dwelling units under the 2023-2031 Housing Element. Depending on existing and future zoning on the identified Housing Opportunity Sites, potential densities and heights could increase. For example, on Housing Opportunity Sites 01 through 05, 07, and 08 (Figure 1), up to 20 du/ac are proposed, with up to 27-foot building heights. On the BART sites (labeled 09 and 010 in Figure 1), densities of up to 75 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) could occur, with up to 50-foot building heights possible. On the Caltrans Gateway site (011), 40 du/ac is proposed, with buildings up to 40 feet in height.

The 2023-2031 Housing Element will discuss the feasibility of meeting the City's RHNA by revitalizing the existing Housing Element goals, objectives, policies, and implementation actions to promote housing across a range of affordability, in accord with the latest State legislation. The planning horizon for the 2023-2031 Housing Element is the eight-year period from 2023 to 2031. Through the 2023-2031 Housing Element update process, the City will identify approximately 1,700 potential Housing Opportunity Sites on undeveloped and underutilized sites and determine parcels that can be rezoned to accommodate increased housing density to ensure the City will meet the RHNA allocation plus the no net loss provision (approximately 25 percent). The rezoning needed to meet the RHNA allocation would occur concurrently with the 2023-2031 Housing Element update and will be analyzed in the DPP and Housing Element Update EIR.

Safety Element and Other General Plan Elements

The City's Safety Element, which is in the General Plan under Chapter 4, *Environmental Resources*, was adopted in 1987 and last amended in 2011 to incorporate policies in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65302(g)(3), the City is required to update its Safety Element concurrently with updates to the Housing Element. For this project, the Safety Element update would revise existing policies and establish new policies related to future development to minimize the risk of personal injury, loss of life, property damage, and environmental damage associated with natural and man-made hazards, in accord with the latest State legislation. The Safety Element would support the guiding principles established for the Housing Element and General Plan, while ensuring wildfire, climate change, evacuation plans, and other current topics are addressed. These updates would be in line with the longer planning horizon associated with the DPP (2023 to 2050).

Depending upon the goals and policies identified in the Housing Element Update, the Land Use and Circulation Element may also be updated to include the rezoning efforts and other details. For more information about the project, please visit the City's website: <https://www.planorinda.com/>

Environmental Analysis

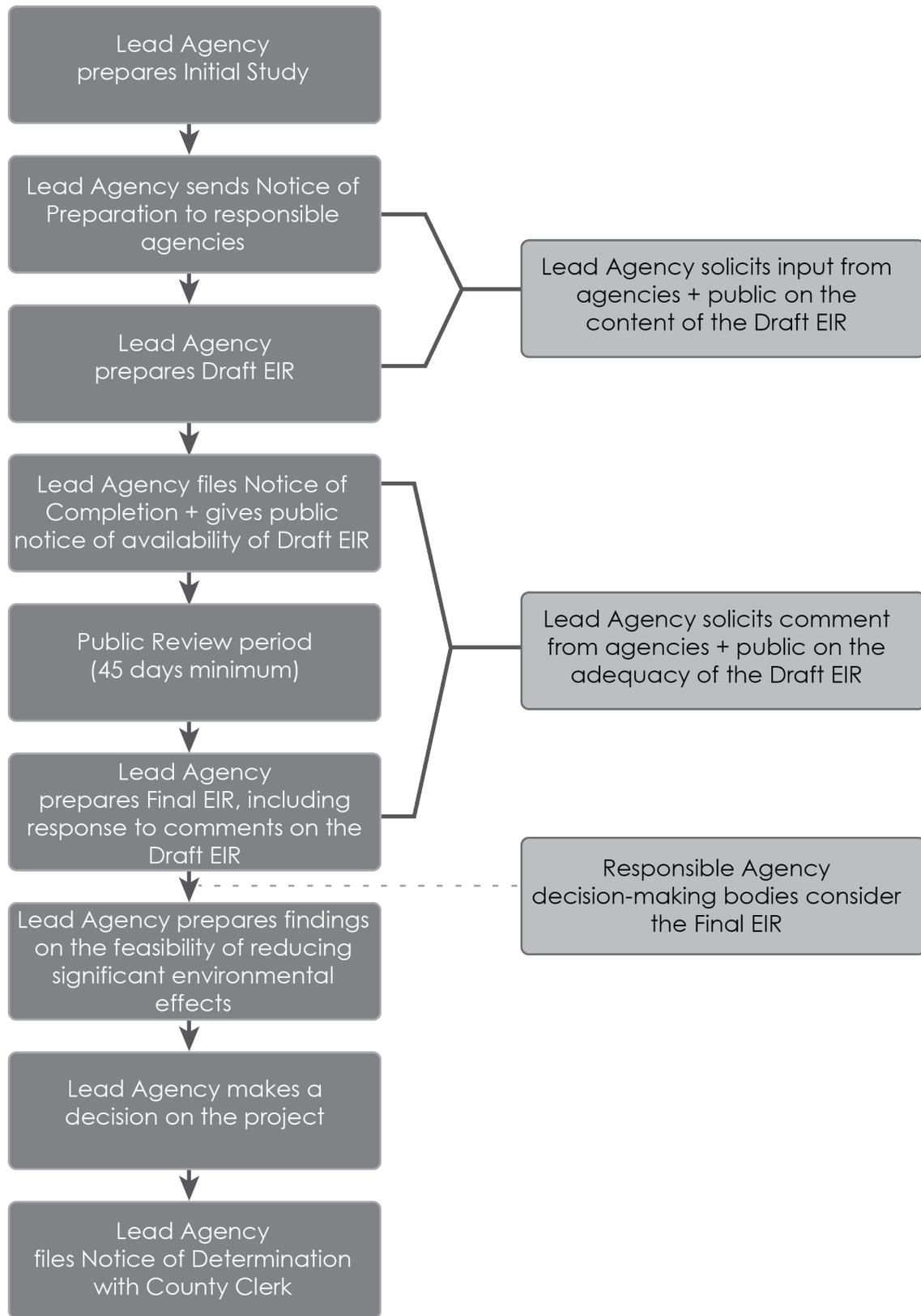
The City determined an EIR was the appropriate level of CEQA review, following a preliminary review of the project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), because an EIR is needed, an initial study has not been prepared. Therefore, this programmatic EIR presumes potential impacts for many required CEQA topics and will analyze them in full. The following environmental issues are anticipated to be analyzed in detail in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

Other environmental topics, including agriculture and forestry resources, energy, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, and mineral resources, are anticipated to be less than significant as projects would be subject to existing review requirements and regulatory stipulations. Thus, they will be discussed in the EIR in a limited analysis. The environmental review process is depicted graphically in Figure 2.

Alternatives to the project will be defined and analyzed in the EIR based on their potential to reduce or eliminate significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. The specific alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR may include, but are not limited to, the "No Project" alternative as required by CEQA and a reduced intensity development alternative.

Figure 2 Environmental Review Process



Providing Comments on the Environmental Review Process

At this time, the City solicits comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from all interested parties requesting notice, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, and involved agencies. This information will be considered when preparing the Draft EIR discussion of environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives. Because of time limits mandated by State law, comments must be received no later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Comments may be submitted by U.S. mail or by email prior to the close of the scoping period.

Mail comments to:

Winnie Mui, Associate Planner
Planning Department
City of Orinda
22 Orinda Way
Orinda, California 94563

Email comments to Winnie Mui at WMui@cityoforinda.org

For comments submitted via email, please include "Scoping Comments: Plan Orinda" in the subject line and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email.

All comments on environmental issues received during the public scoping period will be considered in the Draft EIR, which is anticipated to be available for public review in mid-2022. This NOP and other public review documents for this project will be available for viewing online at <https://www.planorinda.com/>. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, paper copies will be mailed upon request rather than accessible to the public at a physical location. If you need a paper copy of the NOP or any of the documents referenced therein, please contact Winnie Mui, Associate Planner, at WMui@cityoforinda.org or (925) 253-4210, and she will mail one to you at no cost.

Public Scoping Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City will hold a virtual scoping meeting to provide an opportunity for agency staff and interested members of the public to submit comments, either written or verbal, on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The scoping meeting was held on Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 4:30 p.m. during the regularly scheduled Downtown Planning & Housing Element Subcommittee Meeting hearing. Please contact the City if you wish to obtain access to a recording of the meeting. Written scoping comments are welcome through the extended date of February 24, 2022.

If you have any questions about the environmental review process, please contact Winnie Mui at the contact information provided above.



Winnie Mui, Associate Planner
Planning Department
City of Orinda