

LA JOLLA LIGHT

Planners hear Community Foundation idea for a MAD

Petitions on the way to garner community support for July 31 assessments

By [Ashley Mackin](#) 2:31 p.m. Jan. 13, 2016



Enhance La Jolla: A map of the proposed Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) for La Jolla. Zone 1, in blue, is residential. Zone 2, in red, is commercial. Courtesy

With its goal a lovelier, cleaner Village of La Jolla, the La Jolla Community Foundation (LJCF) is exploring the creation of a Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) and a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, “Enhance La Jolla,” to manage it.

At the Jan. 7 La Jolla Community Planning Association meeting, LJCF executive director Julie Bronstein told the group what Enhance La Jolla is and what it will do, why it’s needed, and she offered a timeline for its progress. The Foundation’s proposed MAD, similar to the MAD in Bird Rock that is managed by the Bird Rock Community Council, would beautify and improve the Village through maintenance above what the city can provide (and independent of the city’s financial ebbs and flows) and capital improvement projects, she said.

“La Jolla is one of the most beautiful and iconic locations in San Diego if not California. But it is also an older community and suffers from a lack of ongoing maintenance,” Bronstein said. “We often see overflowing trash cans, dirty sidewalks and untended landscape areas. This leads to the degradation of the Village, and as a result, we are seeing more vacant storefronts, impacts to property values, and less vibrant public spaces.”

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Julie Bronstein, La Jolla Community Foundation executive director — Ashley Mackin

However, private entities are not allowed to conduct work on city public right-of-ways due to the City of San Diego’s liability laws and that has frustrated La Jolla residents and businesses anxious for improvements. Mark Dibella, head of the Enhance La Jolla steering committee and managing director of the La Valencia Hotel, said there are donors in La Jolla willing to pay for Village enhancements, but are simply not allowed.

“The most important thing about a MAD, aside from creating a mechanism to maintain the Village, is its ability to accept private donations for projects,” Dibella said. “We have people who are interested in paying for new benches across the Village, but we can’t do that today. We have people who want to invest in the Village right now.”

A MAD, funded through annual assessments on property taxes and supplemented with private donations, would allow these improvement projects to be carried out. The amount to be assessed residents is being determined, however, if comparable to the Bird Rock MAD rate, residents of single family homes could be assessed about \$90 annually.

“Enhance La Jolla would manage the funds generated by (the MAD) and would contract for ongoing maintenance services for the district,” Bronstein said. “We can fundraise additional private dollars to do important additional capital improvement projects within the Village ... and see them through to completion.”

All funding decisions — including what services to provide and projects to pursue — would be made by the Enhance La Jolla board of directors, comprised of property owners and other key stakeholders in the community, said Bronstein.

LJCF established a website – enhancelajolla.com – with information and more details for interested parties. According to the site, the maintenance services under discussion could

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include: trash collection, litter abatement, graffiti control, landscaping and power washing the sidewalks. Capital projects could include: upgraded trashcans, new benches, enhanced signage, traffic calming, park improvements (including La Jolla Rec Center), tree canopies and public art.

The proposed MAD includes two zones. The commercial-based Zone 2 is bound by Pearl Street up to Coast Boulevard South, between Bishop's Lane and the north side of Herschel Avenue. The residential Zone 1 is primarily the residential area to the north and south of Zone 2, with pockets on the east and west.

Bronstein said LJCF would like the MAD established by July 31 to allow the assessments to be available for use by Jan. 1, 2017. "For the next few months, we will reach out to the community with information about Enhance La Jolla and the MAD, and seek signatures of property owners on petitions," she said. "These petitions will indicate that property owners are interested in the formation of the MAD, and does *not* commit a property owner to a financial assessment."

As early as this spring, the San Diego City Council could vote to approve a resolution of intention to form a MAD, which triggers a vote of affected property owners. Although the entirety of the 92037 ZIP code would not be eligible to vote, anyone who would be affected would receive a ballot in the mail in late spring. Ballots are weighted based on the size of the property owned. The results of the vote would go to the City Council for verification in the summer.

"If we get all this done by July, we can start enhanced services by 2017," Bronstein said. Dibella noted the MAD would be re-evaluated in five years for efficacy.

Bronstein added, "This could be a major benefit to the residents, businesses and visitors who enjoy the Village."