

La Jolla Town Council first to support proposed Maintenance Assessment District (MAD)

By [Ashley Mackin](#) 3:48 p.m. Jan. 20, 2016

La Jolla Town Council trustees Cathy Jones, Al Ramirez and Brandon Heess — *Ashley Mackin*

La Jolla Town Council unanimously voted to support efforts to establish a Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) in the Village of La Jolla, during its Jan. 14 meeting.

In presentation similar to the one given at the La Jolla Community Planning Association meeting Jan. 7, La Jolla Community Foundation executive director Julie Bronstein and steering committee chair Mark Dibella explained what the MAD would achieve and answered Town Council trustees' questions.



La Jolla Town Council trustees Cathy Jones, Al Ramirez and Brandon Heess — *Ashley Mackin*

“This is something whose time has really come,” said Town Council president Steve Haskins, of the MAD. “It should have been done a long time ago. We are being asked to support this so it can move forward. That’s exactly what we should do, support these people trying to improve La Jolla.”

Bronstein said the MAD would be managed by a nonprofit organization called Enhance La Jolla, under the auspices of La Jolla Community Foundation. As previously reported in *La Jolla Light*, the proposed MAD (which is similar to the MAD in Bird Rock managed by the Bird Rock Community Council) would beautify and improve the Village through maintenance above what the city can provide and some capital improvement projects.

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“La Jolla is one of the most beautiful and iconic locations in San Diego if not all of 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.”

She said Enhance La Jolla would manage the MAD funds and contract for ongoing maintenance services for the district. A MAD is funded through annual assessments on property taxes and supplemented with private donations. The amount to be assessed residents is being determined, but at the Town Council meeting, Dibella said it would likely be around \$95 annually.

Enhance La Jolla would create its own volunteer board of directors to determine which projects get implemented, comprised of stakeholders in La Jolla, and Dibella urged Town Council members to join. “Committees like this one have streetscape sub-committees, and if (that committee gave us) guidelines on the look of trashcans, our role would be to look at how many would be needed, how much they would cost and raise private donations for them,” he said.

When questioned by Town Council trustee Charles Hartford as to whether raising private dollars would limit city dollars for services, Bronstein said, “The projects we are looking at doing are ones the city couldn’t touch with a 10-foot pole because they don’t have the funding.” She said she found that other areas with MADs work “hand-in-hand” with the city to ensure services provided by the MAD supplement those provided by the city.

The La Jolla MAD would be comprised of a residential zone and a commercial zone that encapsulates most of the Village. “The professionals advising us say this is a good size to start with,” Dibella told trustees. “If it works, we can expand it, but we don’t want to bite off more than we can chew. We want it to work.”

Town Council trustee Ron Jones questioned whether a MAD conflicts with the Business Improvement District (BID), which imposes a fee on business owners and is managed by the La Jolla Village Merchant’s Association (LJVMA). Dibella answered that the goal of a BID is usually marketing and business development, with maintenance programs such as the Sparkle and Shine project spearheaded by bookstore owner Nancy Warwick, LJVMA “is in the maintenance business,” he said. “We want to get them out of that business so they can redirect BID money to merchants and marketing.”

Trustee Jessica von Buelow offered her support for the MAD, stating, “I remember 20 years ago when I came here, Bird Rock was referred to as ‘the Tijuana of La Jolla,’ but now look at it. The MAD works hard. I would be happy to support this any way possible.”

Meeting attendee John Horst of Mira Mesa said in his area, he found that by having a MAD, it freed up funds for the City’s General Fund.

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“The city doesn’t have to worry about funding landscape maintenance with General Fund money if it’s coming from the MAD. It works well in Mira Mesa, we like it,” Horst said.

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 the affected property owners.

Although the entirety of the 92037 ZIP code would not be eligible to vote, anyone who would be assessed a MAD fee 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.