

LA JOLLA LIGHT

Opinion - A MAD (Maintenance Assessment District) for La Jolla can transform a community: Bird Rock case study

By Joe LaCava 1:54 p.m. April 6, 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*

• *OPINION / GUEST COMMENTARY: Joe LaCava*



By now, many of you are aware of the effort underway to establish a Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) for the Village of La Jolla. The goal of this effort, led by residential and commercial property owners and community leaders, is to develop a dedicated source of revenue to improve the public spaces in the Village. There is little argument that the Village is in need of improvement. Trash cans are frequently overflowing. The sidewalks are dirty. Landscaped areas are not maintained. And all this has taken its toll on our community.

The City of San Diego provides a basic level of services to all of its communities, but it is not enough for many neighborhoods. As one of San Diego's older neighborhoods, this is especially true for the Village. This is why MADs are so important. They provide a tool for property owners to directly affect the quality of life in their community — funds are generated locally,

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used locally, and managed locally. With a self-managed MAD decisions about the services to be provided are made by the property owners and other stakeholders that will benefit from them.

So the question is, how do we know that the MAD will work? There are 63 MADs in communities throughout the City. From Mission Hills to Downtown to Carmel Valley, these places have successfully used MADs to ensure a steady stream of funding that is guaranteed to be used to improve their neighborhood.

In La Jolla, we have a successful example of a MAD in my neighborhood of Bird Rock. Prior to the establishment of the MAD, La Jolla Boulevard, the heart of our neighborhood, was in decline. Businesses were struggling and there was little pedestrian activity, reflecting poorly on our neighborhood. The city's installation of the roundabouts changed the appearance of the community, but a MAD was needed to maintain them, and to address maintenance issues throughout Bird Rock.

Like the MAD proposed for the Village, the Bird Rock MAD is self-managed and includes residential and commercial property owners and services are provided to benefit both. With 10 years of operation under its belt, I've seen firsthand how a MAD can transform a community. Maintenance is consistent and issues are addressed promptly. Bird Rock's public spaces are clean, beautiful, and activated. And the commercial district is thriving from the increase in pedestrian activity.

The real measure of success of the Bird Rock MAD is that residents and merchants came together for the common good of our neighborhood.

La Jollans now have a similar opportunity to come together to create this same success for the Village. By pooling investment by all property owners — commercial and residential alike — the entire Village will benefit. We all agree that additional services are needed and are long overdue. A MAD can help us ensure that the quality of life we all value in the Village is maintained and enhanced.

— Joe LaCava is a member of the Enhance La Jolla Volunteer Steering Committee and a co-founder of the Bird Rock MAD. If you own property in the Village learn more at EnhanceLaJolla.org or e-mail info@EnhanceLaJolla.org