

LA JOLLA LIGHT

Commentary: Future of La Jolla Village depends on a MAD

Come hear the details at 10:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 22 at La Jolla Recreation Center, 615 Prospect St.

Phyllis Pfeiffer; President of La Jolla Light and Chair of La Jolla Community Foundation
02:17p.m. May 18, 2016



Architect Jim Alcorn's rendering of the proposed Belvedere Project at Girard Avenue and Prospect Street in the Village of La Jolla.

OPINION / COMMENTARY:

Graffiti, grime and crime. My husband and I fled New York City in the 1970s to get away from it and found paradise, settling in La Jolla. During a visit to NYC last week, we were struck by seeing the fact that the graffiti and grime were gone, as was the appearance of criminal activity on every corner.

We were wowed by New York circa 2016.

The High Line, a public park built on the historic freight rail line elevated above the streets on Manhattan's West Side is terrific. The landscaping is stunning as is the street furniture design — benches and lounge chairs provided to relax and enjoy the scenery. It was spotless and a great place for people to congregate. The Friends of the High Line raise 98 percent of the park's annual budget through private donations and maintains, operates and develops programs for the High Line in partnership with the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation.

St Patrick's Cathedral has been restored and truly glowed. There are artfully designed and landscaped pocket parks scattered about the city with sculpture, fountains and flowers.

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The High Line is an elevated freight rail line transformed into a public park on Manhattan's West Side. It is owned by the City of New York, and maintained and operated by Friends of the High Line. *Courtesy/nycgovparks.org*

Our Village of La Jolla overlooks some of the most beautiful coastline in the world. But in comparison to NYC, the Village looks neglected, and tired around the edges and the core. Our sidewalks are dirty and falling apart. Our landscaping and street furniture are a hodge-podge of design. We have many vacant storefronts.

A group of local activists and philanthropists (myself included) have banded together to give the Village what Bird Rock enjoys — a Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) to take charge of cleaning and maintaining the Village, supplementing services the city provides. Back in 1973 when I came to La Jolla, Bird Rock was nicknamed “Baja La Jolla,” and La Jolla Boulevard was singularly the most unattractive street in town. Bird Rock is now the best maintained neighborhood; the pride and envy of all La Jolla neighborhoods.

But the fees that will be collected from property owners for the MAD are only a part of the overall plan. Those fees will go to sidewalk cleaning and power washing, augmented trash collection and landscape maintenance.

A goal of Enhance La Jolla, the group established to oversee the MAD, is to work with the La Jolla Community Foundation to raise private funds for capital projects, like the Friends of the High Line did in NYC. The MAD will provide the necessary vehicle to which the City of San Diego grants permission to work on city-owned property.

We need private funding and the vehicle of the MAD to build the Belvedere Project, a piazza at the intersection of Girard Avenue and Prospect Street, for La Jollans to enjoy. We need the umbrella of the MAD to plant a canopy of trees down Girard and Prospect, as well as uniform plants in tree wells throughout the Village, all funded by private donations. We need the MAD to create traffic calming projects such as landscaped roundabouts in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art and adjacent to the Seville.

A MAD is one of the only community organizations permitted to do any work on or with City of San Diego-owned property. The La Jolla Community Foundation was not even allowed to empty city-owned trash cans on the weekends due to liability issues. But a MAD can. Without a MAD,

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generous La Jollans can only dream about funding projects that will make La Jolla a more inviting and attractive place to live, work and play.

We need to pull together as a community to enhance our community. Learn more about Enhance La Jolla from its website enhancelajolla.com and attend one of two community outreach meetings 10 a.m. or 6 p.m., Wednesday, June 22 at the La Jolla Rec Center. Write a letter to *La Jolla Light* (editor@lajollalight.com) or to City Council President Sherri Lightner (sherrilightner@sandiego.gov) expressing your support. Talk with Enhance La Jolla steering committee and board members, whose names appear on the website.

Talk to your friends and neighbors. Get involved! Get MAD.



Founded in 1999 by community residents, Friends of the High Line fought for the High Line's preservation and transformation at a time when the historic structure was under the threat of demolition. It is now the non-profit conservancy working with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to make sure the High Line is maintained as an extraordinary public space for all visitors to enjoy. In addition to overseeing maintenance, operations, and public programming for the park, Friends of the High Line works to raise the essential private funds to support more than 98 percent of the park's annual operating budget, and to advocate for the transformation of the High Line at the rail yards, the third and final section of the historic structure, which runs between West 30th and West 34th Streets.

Courtesy/nycgovparks.org