

LA JOLLA LIGHT

Outreach campaign begins for establishing a MAD

Enhance La Jolla meetings draw those interested in proposed MAD

By [Susan DeMaggio](#) 10:42 a.m. June 29, 2016 Updated 1:37 p.m.

It's coming down to the targeted September deadline for establishing a Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) in the Village of La Jolla, which organizers say has been three years in the planning. The La Jolla Community Foundation is leading the charge for a MAD, which it describes as a janitorial department of sorts that will enhance basic city services and ensure that public improvements are funded and maintained. The Foundation reports it has spent about \$100,000 on consultants, studies and materials to set the MAD up according to California Law.



A map of the Commercial Zone (red) and Residential Zone (blue) in the proposed La Jolla Maintenance Assessment District (MAD). *Courtesy*

The community outreach campaign included two question-and-answer sessions June 22 at La Jolla Rec Center, where MAD booster Mark Dibella (also manager of the La Valencia Hotel) explained the features of and reasons for a MAD in town.

“On my way over to this meeting,” he told the assemblage of 75 residents at the 10:30 a.m. session, “I walked by nine vacant storefronts, three dead trees, numerous tree wells filled with weeds and debris, three over-flowing trash cans, and dozens of cracked sidewalks. If not a MAD to address these ongoing frustrations, then what?”

“UTC is hot on our trail,” Dibella continued. “They’re establishing a massive mixed-use community that is offering ‘the La Jolla experience’ at UTC. On a galloping horse, La Jolla looks great, but if you get off and walk around ... it’s something else.”

The proposed MAD includes residential (16 percent), commercial, public and non-profit property owners in the Village. Residential property owners would pay a MAD fee through their property taxes (about \$87 annually), while commercial and public properties would be assessed based on lot square footage, and non-profit property owners would pay based on square footage, but at a reduced rate.



Both the 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. MAD community outreach meetings June 22 at the Rec Center, drew a full house.— *Susan DeMaggio*

Dibella said organizers have acquired the signatures of close to 40 percent of those within the MAD, including many residents and prominent property owners like The Museum of Contemporary Art, The Bishop's School, La Jolla Presbyterian Church and the La Jolla Music Society's new Performing Arts Center. "They get the big picture of what this investment would mean in the Village," Dibella said.

The next step is to submit the signatures to the city for validation, and then a city council vote. If the council approves the MAD proposal, the city would mail out a ballot in September to all parties within the MAD (required by State Constitution), putting the measure up for public vote.

If all steps get a green light, assessments would be made at the end of 2017, and the money would be available for civic improvements in January 2018.

Dibella said the MAD would be overseen by a committee called Enhance La Jolla, for which he is serving as chair of the Steering Committee. The initial board was appointed for terms ranging 1-3 years. Future directors would be elected by property owners in the district. He said San Diego currently has 62 MADs throughout the city, and he touted the success of the MAD in Bird Rock, which was established 10 years ago, spearheaded by resident Joe LaCava. Many credit the Bird Rock MAD for uplifting the community in many ways.

A MAD for the Shores is also being discussed by the La Jolla Shores Association.

Dibella said the Village MAD would support the efforts of other community groups, like the La Jolla Village Merchants Association and Parks & Beaches in their efforts to make improvements in town. Dibella pointed to the proposed Prospect Street Belvedere Promenade (which would give the Village a Town Square) and new restrooms at Scripps Park, as top priorities for MAD support.

"And because the MAD is first and foremost a janitorial service," Dibella stated, "It would supplement city trash pickup with additional stops, power-wash the streets as needed, provide graffiti control and maintain the trees, plantings and other streetscapes in the Village."

The city had three representatives at the meeting, who all spoke favorably about the power of a MAD to get things done. Business Improvement District (BID) specialist Liz Studebaker told attendees concerned that city services might be reduced with a MAD, that "general, baseline services would not be interrupted." Added Louis Ojeda of the city's Economic Development and Tourism Support Program staff, "With a MAD, you'll have an administrator to ensure the city is doing what it's supposed to do. It's extra accountability. You'll have someone connected to city departments to get it done! ... someone reporting potholes, city lights out, dangerous trees ..."

A resident who said she lived on Torrey Pines Road stood to thank the Community Foundation and all those involved with the MAD proposal. "It's hard to imagine anyone who wouldn't

support this. It's time for action if we want to restore La Jolla's beauty for both residents and visitors.”

Dibella acknowledged her comment and added that misinformation must not derail a MAD for the Village. “That's why we're meeting with the community and willing to talk with anyone or any group who has concerns. I heard a rumor that the MAD wanted to put a Ferris Wheel at Scripps Park, crazy stuff like that ... the real facts and figures are all online at enhancelajolla.org”

Once the MAD is up and running, Enhance La Jolla would begin private fundraising for capital projects including new, upgraded trash cans; benches; tree canopies; signage improvements; public art; and traffic calming projects. The Enhance La Jolla board includes Bill Tribolet, Steve Haskins, Ed Witt, Dawn Davidson, Mark Dibella, George Hauer, Kathryn Kanjo, Leon Kassel, David Marino, Andy Nelson, Phyllis Pfeiffer, Hans Peter Wagener and Nancy Warwick.