



Established 1971 To preserve and enhance the unique village character of Laguna Beach

September 2021 newsletter

Hybrid

City Council:

Defensible Space Guidelines

Tuesday, September
21, after 5 p.m.

Via Zoom

Community Summit

Monday, September
27, 6 p.m.

October Board Meeting

Saturday, October 2,
9 a.m.

Community Summit Scheduled for September 27

Village Laguna is hosting a second Community Summit, modeled on the Save Laguna Summit that drew more than 200 participants in the spring of 2019 except that this one will be virtual. Participants will assess where Laguna stands two years later and talk about our shared future.

There will be brief presentations on the issues of overdevelopment (by David Raber), the environment (by Bob Borthwick), and heritage (by Cathy Jurca)—followed by facilitated small-group discussions and sharing of their results. We'll meet via Zoom on Monday, September 27, at 6 p.m. The meeting will be recorded and be made available later on the web site (villagelaguna.org) for those unable to join us then. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83380920459?pwd=OSt6Wj-Fac3V1WmcrNzFnVE1lbjN6QT09>.

Council Set to Discuss Fire Dept.'s Defensible-Space Guidelines

The City Council is expected to consider and adopt the Fire Department's defen-

sible-space guidelines on September 21. Village Laguna will be arguing for an approach that is consistent with the City's General Plan. Talking points based on Meg Monahan's presentation at our last meeting have been posted on the web site (click on "Issues") for those who want to call in when the Council meets.

Signature-Gathering Under Way for Laguna Residents First Initiative

According to David Raber, speaking at our last meeting, the initiative launched last month by Laguna Residents First is based on the idea that there's room in Laguna Beach for constructive change but not intensification. By allowing residents to accept or reject large-scale projects, it is designed to produce better (more appropriate) development proposals. Signature-gathering has begun, with a goal of 2,400 (to be sure of getting the required 1,750). Detailed information is on the LRF web site (lagunaresidentsfirst.org), and Chris Catsimanes, who is in charge of the signature campaign, can be reached at 949-300-7424.

September's Historical Home Walk

To promote public awareness and preservation of Laguna's historic resources, Village Laguna will be exhibiting drawings of historical homes here and on its web site for the next few months. The writeups and drawings come from a brochure created by Village Laguna and the city's Heritage Committee for a self-guided tour by city bus. September's walk is in what is now known as Laguna Village but was originally called Arch Beach, first subdivided in 1887 by William Brooks for use as farmland. In the late 1880s, the first attempt at establishing the area as a destination resort was made with the construction of the Arch Beach Hotel. While the success of this hotel was short-lived, it did ultimately give rise to the blossoming of Arch Beach into a beach house community. It was not until approximately 1915 and the attraction of Laguna Beach as an art colony that considerable construction took place there. It had no governing body prior to the city's incorporation in 1927, so, without guidelines, home builders were able to assert individuality and variation in the design and construction of homes. Through the 1920s, Arch Beach saw the building of many summer cottages, artists' studio homes, and dream houses, all of which established the character of future development in the neighborhood.

571 Graceland (1900)

What is now a private home was originally located downtown and served as an all-purpose community building hosting weddings, dances, and town hall meetings. Later, as artists increasingly came to Laguna, the building came to serve almost exclusively as the local art gallery. In 1928 when the present art gallery was built, the "pavilion" was moved here and became the playhouse.



411 Arroyo Chico (1884)

This is not only the oldest remaining house in Laguna but the only surviving Victorian example. Originally located on the bluff above Main Beach, it served as a



beach house early on for a Riverside family. In recent years the house has been moved and restored at this location. It is an important part of Laguna's pioneer past.

541 Thalia (1931)

This Colonial Revival bungalow is an excellent example of those being built in the 1920s when most of America was feeling very patriotic. The beveled clapboard siding was also very popular at the time. This house remains nearly as it was when constructed.

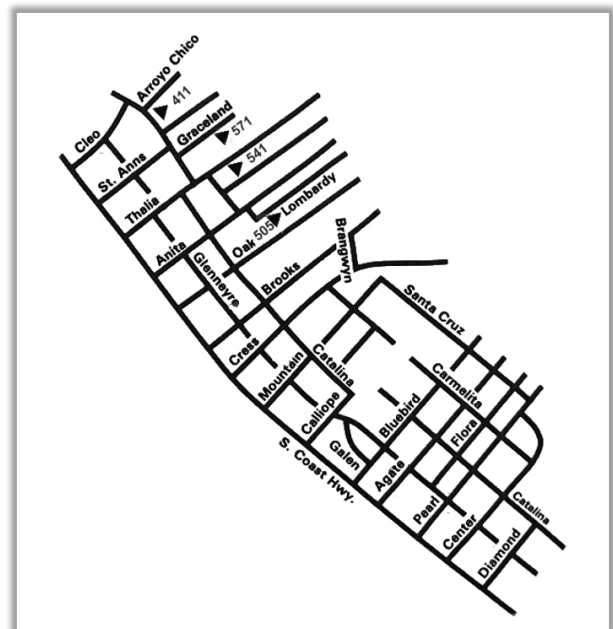


505 Lombardy Lane (1927)

Here along one of Laguna's most hidden streets lie several small English-influenced cottages. This one was originally owned by Isaac and Bettie Frazee. Mr. Frazee was an artist, poet, and dramatist, most known for his play "Kitshi Manido," which he wrote and produced in 1921 to raise money to build the new art gallery.



Drawings by Karen Wilson Turnbull



Fifty Years of Village Laguna: Part 2, Early Days

In Village Laguna's first newsletter, in February 1977, VL chair Fran Engelhardt wrote:

“Since February 1971, Village Laguna has confronted at least a hundred issues, supporting some, protesting others, and producing innovative ideas, but always with dedication toward its goals—to preserve and protect the village atmosphere, the unique and charming community character, the environment, and quality of life in Laguna Beach. The developers do not sit idly by while we who live here enjoy what we have; it takes . . . the awareness and participation of all of us to maintain our village.”

From the beginning, Village Laguna held monthly meetings and periodic town hall meetings (among them one in January 1977 on the proposed widening of Laguna Canyon Road, in which speaker after speaker opposed the widening and suggested alternatives) and put out a newsletter on city issues. Members helped stop the Irvine Company from running a road through Boat Canyon to the coast, saved the star pine on the North Coast Highway, and replaced a proposed development of 721 units above Morningside Drive with city open space. They commented on, among other things, the EIR for Sycamore Hills (now the Dilley Preserve) and an ordinance for rezoning the city's mobilehome parks to help residents keep their homes. In June 1977 Fran explained why: “‘Citizen participation’ is an expression that is heard more and more frequently to define a vital need in our democracy. Nowhere is this more important than where we live.” When newsletter readers were asked to identify their concerns, 81 reported that their top issues were “type, height, and density of buildings that will enhance the village character,” “protection of our beaches, marine life, tidepools,” and “protection of views.” In 1975 Village Laguna initiated an annual award of an environment-oriented scholarship to a Laguna Beach high school senior that continues to this day. In 1973 it introduced what became the annual Charm House Tour, which, until interrupted by the pandemic, celebrated Laguna's unique village character and provided funding for Village Laguna's activities.

At first, you were a member of Village Laguna if you considered yourself one, and plans were made by consensus of a steering committee of charter members. In time, membership dues were introduced, and an elected board met to set the agenda for the monthly membership meeting. Village Laguna was first incorporated as a nonprofit in 1977, identifying its purposes as “(1) to protect, retain, and improve the distinctive character of the City of Laguna Beach and its environment, (2) to foster and encourage concern for the protection of the environment, and (3) to sponsor public exhibitions and educational forums which exemplify the unique character of the Laguna Beach community” and listing as its directors Fran Engelhardt, Thelma Musick, Bruce Hopping, Arnold Hano, and Mildred Hannum. In 1978 its officers, in addition to Fran, were Mary Gibian (secretary) and Thelma Musick (treasurer), and in 1980 the board consisted of Arnold Hano (chairman), Belinda Blacketer (vice-chairman), and Fran Engelhardt, Bruce Hopping, and William Leak (directors), with Nelda Stone and Betty Holm as secretaries. By 1988 the board had expanded to include Sinclair Jones (president), Betsy Jenkins (first vice president), Phyllis Sweeney and Jeff Powers (second vice presidents), Evelyn Munro (secretary), Theresa O'Hare (treasurer), and Tom and Laura Alexander, Gary Jenkins, Verna Rollinger, Bill O'Hare, Betty Swenson, Judy Rose, Bill Buckley, and Sal Maddi (directors at large).

The newsletters report the endorsement of candidates for City Council in 1978 (Phyllis Sweeney, Diana Dike, and Jim Bishop) and in 1980 (Sally Bellerue and Neil Fitzpatrick), and since 1990 there have been regular “candidates' nights” with speeches in preparation for an endorsement vote of the membership. City Council members endorsed by Village Laguna over the years were Sally Bellerue, Kathleen Blackburn, Ann Christoph, Jane Egly, Neil Fitzpatrick, Paul Freeman, Bob Gentry, Toni Iseman, Dan Kenney, Lida Lenney, Bobbi Minkin, Verna Rollinger, Phyllis Sweeney, George Weiss, and Rob Zur Schmiede. Throughout the 1980s the Council majority was Village Laguna-endorsed. This decade saw the creation of an update of the City's General Plan, the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Heritage Tree program, the Downtown Specific Plan, and design review for residential development.



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News Briefs

1—The annual Bluebelt photo contest is on, with a deadline for entries of September 22. Contact www.contest.lagunabluebelt.org.

2—The Coast Inn project has received Coastal Commission approval with the new turrets and signage originally proposed but the roof deck and pool gone.

3—SB 9 and SB 10, overriding local zoning to permit increasing the density of residential neighborhoods statewide, have passed, leaving it up to the governor to decide whether they become law.

4—The Council has decided to buy the site of a restaurant on the Coast Highway in South Laguna, likely for a new fire station. Public input at the hearing was overwhelmingly opposed to the purchase for that use or any other, but Peter Blake opined that “residents of South Laguna don’t consider these speakers their representatives.”

5—A report estimating evacuation time indicates that if all three exits were available the city could be evacuated in 4 hours and 20 minutes. Among the consultants’ recommendations: educate households to take only one car and to evacuate only when advised to do so; not making all highway lanes outbound; and considering identification of safe shelter locations for use when evacuation is infeasible (see lagunabeachcity.net/cityhall/police, “Evacuation Neighborhood Maps”).

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