



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

March 2025 newsletter

Membership and Community Meeting

Art and Activism

Preserve a Coastal Landscape

Monday, March 31, 7 p.m.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Rivian South Coast Theater

162 S. Coast Hwy.

Council Meetings

Tuesday, March 11 & 25, 5 p.m.

Planning Commission

Wednesday, March 19, 6 p.m.

Council Chambers

Town Hall Meeting

Alert, Warning & Evacuations

Thursday, March 20, 5 p.m.

Council Chambers

Village Laguna Board Meeting

Saturday, April 5, 9 a.m.

Zoom

South Laguna Fire Station

The design of the new fire station #4 in South Laguna at 5th Avenue and Coast Highway is scheduled for the Planning Commission on March 19. Despite numerous requests by community members only one community meeting was held, in September 2024, a year after Council was told there would be a community meeting to begin the design process.

Meantime architect Morris Skenderian found a fire station design example that many thought would be a good prototype. Staff even showed that example in their presentation. However, the resulting fire station design bears no resemblance to that example. Instead it has a generic design that would fit better hidden away in an industrial park--not at a prominent Coast Highway spot adjacent to village cottages and historical buildings. Residents were concerned about view blockage and recommended the tall parts of the building be set in the inland side of the lot—not projecting up from the Coast Highway frontage. They also asked that the public restrooms not be built on the most highly visible corner of Coast Highway. Landscape buffers were requested there and along Coast Highway. Now 6 months later, without responding to community input there

is a Planning Commission submittal that includes none of the requested changes.

This new station represents a huge and important investment, one that is to serve the community for decades, yet public input is being disregarded. We can have both public safety and fitting design. But the argument will be that we can't delay, we need the fire station now. Remember the community wanted to participate in September 2023, but the delay was on the part of staff. Now is time to get it right. Please support a better design at the meeting of March 19.



*Community-submitted fire station
design prototype*



City-proposed fire station

A Special Membership and Community Meeting

Rivian South Coast Theater

March 31, 7 p.m.

Doors open at 6:30

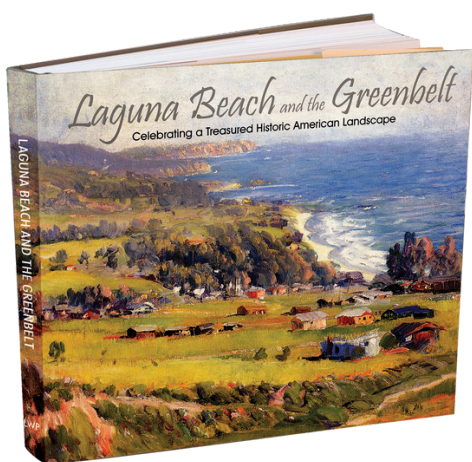
Free program. Reservations required at:

<https://artandactivismpreserveacoastal.splashthat.com>

Art and Activism Preserve a Coastal Landscape

Laguna Beach is the only entire city in the United States to have been recognized as a Historic American Landscape. Key to that honor is the preservation of the 22,000-acre Greenbelt that surrounds it. The dramatic and beautiful landscape inspired early artists who foresaw Laguna Beach's future as a cultural beacon. The artistic tradition inspired the creativity and activism that resulted in the village atmosphere and preserved our natural hillside and coastal landscapes.

Laguna Beach and the Greenbelt was accepted for the Historic American Landscapes program by the National Park Service in 2017 and that documentation is now held in the Library of Congress. That submittal serves as the basis for the book "Laguna Beach and the Greenbelt Celebrating a Treasured Historic American Landscape" telling Laguna's story. The 2025 edition of the book will be released that evening.



Last fall four of the authors of that book shared our Laguna story with the California Garden and Landscape History Society which held its statewide conference here. Now we'll hear from them-- Tom Lamb (Historic American Landscapes Program), Ann Christoph (landscape and history), Eric Jessen (art and early artists), Bob Borthwick (preservation of Aliso Creek and the Greenbelt) to hear why our community has been found to be noteworthy--both statewide and nationally.

We will recognize the many community organizations that supported the preservation of our landscape and city, and honor the group that produced the documentation and published the book, the Committee for Preservation of the Laguna Legacy, especially its founder, Ron Chilcote, who is celebrating his 90th birthday!



Ron Chilcote

50th Laguna Charm House Tour this year

The tour is the Sunday after Mother's Day, May 18. Please contact Charm House Tour Chair, Anne Caenn (714) 501-1816 and House Docent Chair, Amy Jackson, (949) 292-1854. Many volunteer positions available! Four wonderful homeowners have already volunteered their beautiful village homes for the tour.



LAGUNA CHARM HOUSE TOUR

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025
\$70 Presale
\$80 Day of Tour

Enjoy an afternoon in Laguna. Experience a taste of the heritage of Laguna Beach as you tour houses in neighborhoods dating from homestead days in the 1800s. Visit cottages and bungalows, working artists' homes and studios. Experience the rustic canyon environments and see how creative residents have crafted their home settings to reflect their own unique talents and interests.

STARTING POINT:
In front of the Festival of the Arts grounds,
650 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach.

Buses will leave continuously from 12:00 noon.
Last bus departs at 3:00 pm. All day parking is available for \$4 at the lot directly across Laguna Canyon Road from the Tour Bus pick up at the Festival of Arts Grounds.


For more information about the tour call (949) 472-7503 or go to www.villagelaguna.org/charm-house-tour

Tickets may be purchased:

- by sending a request and check to
Village Laguna Charm House Tour
Post Office Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652, or
- from any of the outlets listed here, or
- online at www.villagelaguna.org

Tickets available at:

- Cottage Furnishings
802 S. Coast Hwy. 497-3121
- Fawn Memories
384 Forest Ave. 494-2071
- Laguna Nursery
481 N. Coast Hwy. 494-5200



Forest Avenue Promenade Update

Forest Ave has been the commercial heart of Laguna, serving as our "Main Street" for over 100 years. A permanent Promenade will convert this historic traditional street to a new pedestrian and dining plaza. Many residents and retailers feel that the Promenade needs more planning options that may not require complete street closure. A recent INDY Reader's Poll showed over 90% voted that the Promenade planning is going in the wrong direction. The effort to consider broader planning issues and alternatives has been thwarted by a highly controlled design process.

The previous design consultants, RRM, facilitated workshops in Sept. 2022 and May 2023 that limited public input to comments on cosmetic design details. No discussion on broader planning issues was allowed, with a tumultuous and frustrating response from the public. RRM was terminated in early 2024 due to lack of support for their designs. Council began a new design approach with stakeholder groups working with the new consultant, SWA Group, and council members Sue Kempf and Mark Orgill. These groups were likewise not allowed to consider options other than complete street closure.

On Feb. 26 the Planning Commission held a Promenade study session, led by SWA. Again, the public was asked to confine its comments to details (style of benches, color of bricks, etc.).

Permanent complete closure has potential negative impacts to legacy non-restaurant businesses which could cause them to close. Numerous retail businesses have said they cannot survive without curbside parking that existed prior to the street closure.

Factors such as flooding, traffic flow, costs, construction impacts on businesses are other very important considerations.

Whether you prefer the current SWA design for a complete street closure, a "hybrid" design combining dining and parking, or returning the street to its original layout and regaining all lost parking ["No Project" alternative], please get informed and let your voice be

heard. This outcome is hugely consequential to the future of our downtown village.

The Planning Commission hearing on March 19 is a good time for you to speak out.

Neighborhood Congregational Church

Village Laguna has joined with others concerned about the demolition of the existing historical church buildings and the impacts of the proposed affordable housing project. The group includes neighbors, members of the congregation, and historical preservation advocates. This collaborative has produced a new schematic design that provides 36 affordable units--studios, one, two and three bedrooms while still preserving the existing church buildings. Let the church know how important it is to save Bridge Hall and the Sanctuary complex. A reasonable housing project is still feasible, and arguably less costly than demolishing the existing buildings and rebuilding.

2025 Officers

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Anne Caenn, past-president
Joy Berry, vice-president
Armando Baez, recording secretary
Johanna Felder, corresponding secretary
Merrill Anderson, interim treasurer
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Caren Liuzzi
Mike Morris

Phone: (949) 472-7503
Website: www.villagelaguna.org



PO Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Support Village Laguna—2025

Your participation and dedication are so important in keeping Laguna Beach the city we love. Please join, donate funds, and get involved.

If your address label says 2026, it means you have paid membership until Jan. 2026. Thank you. If the label says 2025 or earlier, please renew--by check mailed in the enclosed envelope or at VillageLaguna.org



Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ **Email** _____

(please send me my newsletter by regular mail____ by e-mail____)

I have enclosed my check for the following membership. I understand the amount is not tax-deductible.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer \$250/family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic \$40/individual, \$60 family | <input type="checkbox"/> Preservationist \$500/family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter \$150/family | <input type="checkbox"/> Villager Extraordinaire (\$1,000+) |

To satisfy campaign reporting regulations for contributions of \$100 or more, I am supplying the name of my employer (or specifying that I am retired): _____

Mail to: Village Laguna PO BOX 1309 Laguna Beach, CA 92652