



Letter to the Editor re: NCC

The Neighborhood Congregational Church project that was approved by the planning commission on June 3 is a tribute to how addressing the diverse interests of neighbors, congregants, historic preservation advocates, Montessori scholars, and other concerned community members can result in a promising affordable housing project. All this was done within a complex regulatory framework, skillfully managed by the developer (Related Companies of California, LLC) and our city staff.

Village Laguna was concerned early—when 71 units and a large new church complex was proposed. This proposal would have meant demolition of the historic Bridge Hall by Aubrey St. Clair, and the Sanctuary by William Blurock and all the negative impacts on views, community character, traffic, and parking that would have come with such a dense project. Village Laguna joined with others in raising our objections—and together we proposed better options and presented a report documenting the historic significance of the church buildings. We were among many who met with church representatives and the developer urging reconsideration.

Now there are 29 instead of 71 units, the Montessori school remains, and the historic buildings will be preserved. It's not perfect—there are concessions on parking, neighbors will still be affected by construction and larger buildings next to them. We will see a change. But we hope opportunities for at least some desperate housing seekers will be fulfilled and the church campus will be revitalized. Perhaps again Laguna will be a model for a better way forward.

Merrill Anderson
President Village Laguna