

## Ballot Initiative Summary for the Beautiful Laguna Overlay Zoning District

**Overview:** This ballot initiative uses provisions in the California state zoning laws to establish an overlay zoning district in Laguna's most visible and most used areas of our city. This new zone would consist of the areas within 750 ft. of State Route 133 (Laguna Canyon) or State Route 1 (Coast Highway).

The provisions described below will be established by a direct vote of the residents, and thus could only be amended by a direct vote of the residents. Ballot Initiatives, such as this, are enabled by the California State constitution. It allows residents to reserve for their review any aspect of local legislative decisions, including establishing a limited zoning district. Voters in several other Southern California cities have already established similar provisions.

**Purpose:** This ballot initiative is being circulated by Laguna Residents First (LRF), a grassroots political action committee promoting policies and programs that protect the unique value of Laguna Beach. LRF is for preserving the local environment here including the heritage and charm of Laguna. LRF believes that as the city evolves and changes with the times, major development projects should:

- Be unique, not part of large, monolithic developments.
- Be responsible, so that each project mitigates the impact it has on its neighbors, Laguna residents, and visitors. This includes areas such as traffic, parking, safety, scale, public safety, and aesthetic impacts.
- Be innovative in finding ways to honor the celebrated value of Laguna's look and feel.
- Renew and Reuse. There is already an abundance of retail and hospitality space in Laguna. Renew and reuse the existing commercial buildings rather than tearing down and building new.

**Priority:** It is important to understand that the criteria specified below ***do not take the place of, or loosen any of the current zoning regulations in place in Laguna.*** All of that remains as it is today and can still be changed from time to time by City Council.

The overlay zone only adds a layer of protection against truly large-scale development by requiring voter approval for those impactful projects. It follows that involving voters in a meaningful way in large-scale development projects improves the quality of project proposals.

**As importantly, it is designed to give developers a clear picture of the development opportunities here and take a more holistic approach to development proposals that will account for the unique setting that characterizes Laguna Beach.**

### Triggers Requiring Public Vote:

Only new, ***Large Scale Development*** in the most visible and congested parts of town that exceeds the following thresholds will need to be brought to a vote of the residents:

- Worsens traffic by causing 200 or more additional daily trips.
- On-site parking that essentially does not meet the on-site parking requirements that have been in place for the last decade. Parking exemptions that are in place now continue to be in effect. Note that In-lieu fees (that are then used to build public parking) may also be used to meet this requirement.

- A project that is over 22,000 sq. ft. of floor space.
- Combines two or more lots to exceed 7,500 sq. ft. of lot area (6000 sq. ft. in downtown where lots are smaller). Combining a lot smaller than 1,200 is exempted. (Many lots in downtown Laguna are around 2,000 to 2,500 sq. ft. This is designed to allow many combinations of two to three average-size lots, but not entire-block lot combinations.)
- Increasing height over what is permitted today, including the overall height limit in Laguna Beach of 36', and the other height restrictions that have been in effect here for years.
- Creates a cumulative effect if, within the past eight years and within a half-mile radius, there are already several other new, large redevelopment projects. (This is the "Enough is Enough" provision that restricts several large-scale commercial developments in close proximity and in the same timeframe.)

**Exemptions:** *Any project* that meets *any of the criteria* below is *completely exempt* from the initiative.

(1) Single-family residential projects are exempt.

(2) Exclusively residential projects of nine or fewer units are exempt.

(3) Projects consisting exclusively of residential units affordable to Low Income, Very Low Income, or Extremely Low-Income households are exempt.

(4) Projects consisting solely of the development of a public or private K-12 school, hospital, museum, or house of worship are exempt.

(5) The repair or replacement of an existing building that has been damaged by fire, flood, wind, earthquake, or other disasters, up to the original size, placement, and density is exempt.

(6) Minor modifications to existing buildings are exempt.

**Process:** Building new, large developments in town is of interest to the residents who will be living with it. The process is as simple as possible, given that voter input is necessary:

- (1) The developer follows the same process that they do now. They develop detailed plans and submit them to the city for approval.
- (2) If approved, then before a building permit is issued for a large development project, the plans can be reviewed and commented on by the public.
- (3) The developer makes a public case for the project and puts it on the next general election ballot. It is decided by a simple yes-no vote. The voters have the opportunity to welcome really worthwhile projects and reject those that are not in alignment with their overall view on the city's direction for the future.

This is the same process that some of the most sought-after places in California have adopted. Why not add that same check-and-balance to Laguna Beach? ***This is a unique town in a unique location. As Laguna evolves we all need to ensure that it will do so in a way that preserves its unique distinction and value.***

*Full terms, definitions, criteria, processes, and exemptions are explained definitively in the actual Ballot Initiative document at [lagunaresidentsfirst.org](http://lagunaresidentsfirst.org)*