

Remember the Protections that the City Promised?

Just two months ago Mayor Sue Kempf and Mayor Pro-tem Whalen announced that city Ordinance 1675 had been passed. This covers height, parking, mass, and bulk or large buildings. This ordinance was to address a few of the issues that are covered in Measure Q in hopes it would show that the city was making defensive progress toward the threat that overdevelopment of Laguna Beach could bring.

Ordinance 1675's height and parking provisions only reiterated the height and parking ordinances that were already on the books. The mass and bulk provisions required variegation of color, façades, and roof forms every 125'. It still allowed buildings of unlimited size, so its protection added very little to what was already on the books.

Still, the development-lead interests were upset enough about the modest protections offered by 1675 that they poured huge sums of money into a "recall" for ordinance 1675 which is known as a "referendum."

But What Happened?

Last week the County notified Laguna Beach that the referendum process was successful. Now the city has two choices. They can either bow to the developer interests and withdraw all of the protections that ordinance 1675 offered, or they can put 1675 to a public vote. Either way, 1675 is completely off the books for now. Developers get to ask for whatever they want.

Why is this important?

Not only did the developers spend *tens of thousands of dollars* on a referendum for 1675, but they are also spending *over a quarter million dollars* on trying to defeat Measure Q and an astounding \$1.175 Million dollars to defeat Measure R and S which regulates hotels in Laguna Beach, including the size of new hotels. The Million Dollar Question is what huge plans do developers have for Laguna Beach?

In the City Council race, these interests have amassed over \$200,000 to oppose candidates in favor of development limits, as well as supporting the two incumbents who endorse more development in town. This is being spent on a town of fewer than 19,000 voters. Truly unprecedented.

What about small businesses?

This is not just about big hotels. It is the developer's overzealous drive for higher rents and profits that have closed dozens of businesses here. These include many of the stores that used to be on North Coast Highway, the four businesses that used to be on the first floor of Hotel Laguna, several galleries on Coast Highway and downtown, Areo on Ocean Ave, and many others.

There is also tremendous turnover of restaurants in town as developers keep pushing for unrealistic rents. The current Sueños on Ocean is the fourth business in that location over the past decade, as well as the former Harley's on Glenneyre when it finally gets a new owner. Taco Bell, Johnny Rockets, The Cottage, and Tommy Bahamas (Formerly the Jolly Roger) are other local favorites that the landlords pushed out in search of even higher rents.

Obviously, none of this turnover is due to Measure Q. It is the environment where landlords and developers feel confident that Laguna Beach is ripe for a higher, denser, more profitable configuration. Measure Q will serve to take this extreme financial pressure off of the current businesses and let the town find a new equilibrium with what is already here.

Now What?

Add it all up; \$1.8 million is an outrageous sum of money. This massive sum is being spent to:

- 1) Nullify even the limited protection that city council passed as Ordinance 1675.
- 2) Try and persuade residents not to enable ballot-imitative-level protections (Measure Q) for our town.
- 3) Elect a developer-friendly city council.

Way too much outside influence on a town our size. This existential threat from developer interests requires action.

Support *successful, balanced, accessible* business districts in Laguna Beach. Vote YES on Measure Q, and Candidates Ruben Flores and Jerome Pudwill