

SPON

Still Protecting Our Newport

Inspiring The Next
Generation

Community Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2016



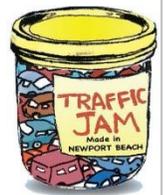
We've been busy on many fronts since our last not-quite-quarterly newsletter. Despite the crushing defeat of Measure Y (almost 70% voted NO), attempts to add more density and traffic and change the character of Newport Beach have continued in different forms. But as always we're on our toes and watching out for residents' interests.

Here's what we've accomplished:

May 21: A big thanks to everyone who wrote to the Planning Commissioners to stop them from adding 300,000 sf of development capacity to Newport Coast after The Irvine Company said it had noticed a "scrivener's error" in the voter-approved portion of the 2006 General Plan...nine years after the fact!

September 1: We met with Dave Kiff, Ed Selich, Diane Dixon and Community Development Director Kim Brandt to discuss the **spot zoning and tweaks to the General Plan** we're seeing all around our town. We reiterated that it's probably time for a **comprehensive review of the City's General Plan**.

October 7: The Coastal Commission delayed a decision on Banning Ranch after the developer pitched a plan to build 1,175 homes, a 75-room hotel and 20-bed hostel along with 75,000 sf of retail space on a 401-acre site rich in environmentally sensitive habitat and Native American archaeological sites. The next hearing will be May 11, 12 or 13 in Long Beach [exact date and venue TBD]. We are supporting all efforts to preserve this entire site as open space and stop a project that would mean big money for developers but only give residents ten years of noise, contaminated dust and traffic jams during construction and then an ongoing drain on our roads, water, public safety and other resources. Not to mention gridlock.



October 8: We had an attorney write a letter on **SPON's** behalf about a plan to tear down the **Beacon Bay Car Wash** in Newport Center and build a seven-story building with 49 luxury condos. The project, as submitted, requires

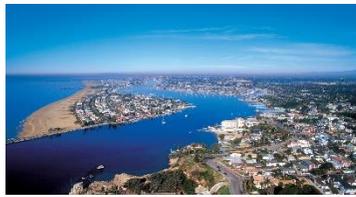
- a *General Plan amendment, a Zoning Code amendment, and*
- a *waiver of the 10-acre minimum for a "Planned Community", and*
- *an increase in the height limit for the site from 35 to 87 feet!*

Our letter was received before the project could breeze by the Planning Commission and go on for approval by the City Council with no Environmental Impact Report (EIR). An EIR is being conducted now – stay tuned.

In the meantime, a competing project being put forward aims to redevelop the OC Museum of Art site, on the other side of Fashion Island, with a 26-story, 100-unit apartment building. Yes, you read that right...

These are just a few highlights of the actions **SPON** took in 2015. Many of our battles are of the longer-term variety and will stretch out into 2016 and beyond...

Keeping our coastline beautiful...and true to Newport Beach



Nearly half of Newport Beach is in the coastal zone, and today projects in that zone need permits both from the City and the California

Coastal Commission. If the Coastal Commission signs off on it, the **Local Coastal Program Implementation Plan**, approved by the Planning Commission in October and by the City Council in November, would transfer a good deal of control over development projects to City government.

Which is fine with us as long as the City's actions are guided by its own coastal policies and the Coastal Act. Case in point: The City approved the Back Bay Landing Project in its original form, which included building a new bulkhead, multi-story water-edge homes and a 65-foot viewing tower. The Coastal Commission deferred a final decision on the bulkhead and homes in December **BUT denied the tower**, saying it would be **"inconsistent with the character of the area** and result in adverse visual impacts to public views of the bay and the cliffs of Upper Newport Bay". Don't you wonder why our City Council didn't make that statement?

Such considerations will be all-important now that a good portion of **Mariner's Mile** has changed hands and will be the subject of a number of "revitalization" proposals.

We want to make sure that stretch of PCH doesn't wind up with oversized lots and super-sized buildings on either side, making it feel like a concrete canyon. In particular, current height restrictions will have to be respected and enforced.



Asking for transparency

We're still working to get the City to use the state-of-the-art technology in the Civic Center to live stream and archive Planning Commission meetings, during which City Council-appointed commissioners discuss and vote on development projects with the potential to impact and even transform our community. Thanks to everyone who wrote letters about this last year. We may have gotten through to officials: approval of this service may be on a Council agenda by the time you read this!

Reaching out

We've been trying a new community outreach model: A few of our members have graciously opened their homes for monthly informational luncheons so people can visit with like-minded residents, keep up with the City's development pipeline (no simple task!) and find out what they can do to help.

Expanding our network of people who care

SPON is run entirely by volunteers and funded exclusively with members' tax-deductible donations. Every bit helps. But to carry out our mission, we need people just as much as we need money. If you care about our residential and environmental qualities and have time or special skills you'd like to contribute, we'll be thrilled to hear from you. We all love Newport Beach and we need to show it!

August 2015 saw the launch of

Line in the Sand

a Newport Beach Political Action Committee that monitors new projects and speaks up when it looks like developers are getting special treatment for their projects in the form of amendments to the General Plan or Zoning Code, special waivers, EIR exemptions, etc. **SPON** wholeheartedly supports the actions of this PAC, which was formed by No on Measure Y campaign leaders.

Save the Dates:

May 11, 12, 13: Coastal Commission hearing on Banning Ranch in Long Beach. Exact date and venue TBD.

May 21: **SPON** Annual Meeting at the Environmental Nature Center. Please see our website for details.

November 8: Election Day! Remember, we need a City Council that cares about residents, so don't forget to ask questions and research candidates before you vote.

Contact SPON

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Stop Polluting Our Newport (SPON) is a 501.c.3 non-profit public education organization working to protect and preserve the residential and environmental qualities of Newport Beach. Donations are tax deductible.