

MEASURE A TRAMPLES ON CARLSBAD'S LONG ESTABLISHED PLANNING PROCESS

The citizens of Carlsbad will vote on Measure A on February 23, 2016. The measure would approve a 585,000 sq. ft. regional shopping mall on the existing strawberry fields at the intersection of the Interstate 5 freeway and Cannon Road and immediately adjacent to the shoreline of Agua Hedionda Lagoon. The shopping mall project used the state's initiative procedure to avoid going through Carlsbad's long established planning approval process, a process that every other development project built in Carlsbad was required to go through.

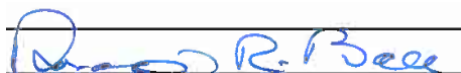
Carlsbad has always had a reputation for its rigorous project review process. Developers were required to submit detailed site, grading, architectural and engineering plans in order to submit an application so that there could be an up-front, comprehensive review and analysis of the project by staff. Detailed environmental documents had to be submitted up-front to demonstrate compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. After staff's review, a very transparent opportunity was given to the public to provide input on the project. Noticed public hearings were held at the Planning Commission and City Council to obtain additional public input and make sure the development met all of the city's stringent standards.

Developers often noted that Carlsbad's up-front planning process was the most thorough of any in San Diego County. We believe that city's long established, up-front planning process is an important part in what has made Carlsbad the quality, well-planned city that it is.

Measure A attempts to undo this. Using the initiative process, the project was able to side-step and trample on Carlsbad's long established planning procedures. Only a preliminary, conceptual site plan has been submitted. Only artist renderings and drawings have been submitted. No grading or engineering plans have been submitted. The Planning Commission has not been given an opportunity to review the project. No noticed public hearings were held. The initiative process allowed the project to be exempted from any environmental review. The initiative contained almost 400 pages and almost 1 million words and the city had no discretion to change any of it and, if Measure A passes, will have no discretion in the future if it finds changes are necessary.

Given that the project proposed by Measure A completely by-passed the city's normal development review process, it raises the question of whether the measure gives the residents of Carlsbad the opportunity to really know what we are getting with the project. We don't think so. Will Measure A become the new model for approving development projects in Carlsbad? We hope not. But, we believe the only way to ensure this and to support Carlsbad's long established, up-front planning process is to vote NO on Measure A on February 23, 2016.

Ron Ball, Retired Carlsbad City Attorney



Michael Holzmilller, Retired Carlsbad Planning Director

