

MIG Proposed Amendments

Downtown Specific Plan

Section I

Released: November 30, 2016

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The ocean and foothills, which provide Laguna Beach with so much of its natural beauty, have contributed to keeping the city relatively isolated from the explosive development that has occurred during the last several decades in southern Orange County. The efforts of citizens to restrict high-rise development along the coastline and to create a greenbelt that surrounds the city have provided further buffering. Consequently, the downtown area and many of the neighborhoods of Laguna Beach have retained their historic identity thus enhancing the community's sense of character and providing residents with a firm grounding in that identity. Preservation of local landmarks, historic development patterns, diversity of design and pedestrian scale has engendered a shared, civic ideal described locally as preserving the "village atmosphere."



Figure 1- The Lumberyard Mall is an example of "village atmosphere" in the downtown area.

For many years, there has been considerable concern about the changing character of the downtown and the need to protect its eclectic mix of architectural styles, small-scale buildings, pedestrian orientation, rich variety of shops and services and sense of community that have traditionally characterized the downtown.

Although residents take different approaches as to the best way of retaining the qualities that are unique to Laguna, they agree that these qualities should be preserved. As a result, the downtown village area of Laguna Beach remains, against almost overwhelming odds, unique. It also remains an area where residents can stroll, shop, worship, do business and interact. In short, it is a place that fosters a community conversation. This document, and the process that created it, is intended to ensure that the conversation continues.

The City formally recognized the need for a specific plan for the downtown in 1983 with adoption of the Land Use Element of the General Plan. In 1989, the Downtown Specific Plan was first approved, and subsequently, amendments were made to the Plan in 1990, 1992, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2007, and 2008. The Downtown Specific Plan was given a comprehensive review and update in 1999. This document reflects the most current update of the Downtown Specific Plan, adopted in ____.

Intent and Purpose of a Specific Plan

Specific plans are among the most powerful planning tools authorized by the California Government Code. The real value of a specific plan is its adaptability to unique problems and issues. Specific plans allow a local agency to tailor the plan to the particular needs of the study area. Moreover, specific plans establish a comprehensive approach to planning and development issues by integrating community goals and policies, development standards, and implementation measures, including capital improvement programs, under one document.

Description of the Planning Area

The physical boundaries of the Downtown Specific Plan are delineated in Exhibit A. The Plan covers the Downtown basin of Laguna Beach and is generally framed by the Laguna Canyon Frontage Road, the Pacific Ocean, Legion Street and Cliff Drive. The Plan also encompasses the area called the "Central Bluffs" situated on the south side of South Coast Highway between Laguna Avenue and Sleepy Hollow Lane. Additionally, the Plan includes the entrance to the village from Laguna Canyon Road, an area known as the Civic Art District that includes many of the civic and art institutions in town.

Relationship to the General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan

The General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan recognizes that the Downtown represents the commercial, economic and social center of the community. The physical separation of the Central Business District from other regions of the City enhances the importance of the identity of this area and its function as a community focal point. Consistent design standards and overall development plan for the Downtown are necessary to preserve its unique identity.

Citizen Participation

Citizen involvement played an instrumental role in the early development of the Downtown Specific Plan, and in later reviews of the Plan. Initially, the City Council formed a Citizen's Advisory Committee composed of representatives from various community groups – Architect's Association, Arts Commission, Board of Realtors, Chamber of Commerce, Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, Design Review Board, Downtown Merchants Association, Laguna Art Festival Board, Laguna Beach Taxpayers Association, League of Women Voters, Planning Commission and Village Laguna. The Committee was responsible for identification of significant planning issues and developing the policy base for the Plan. Subsequent review of the Plan also involved extensive workshops with interested citizens and representatives from the business community, including representatives from the Civic Art District Association. The most recent update process included multiple

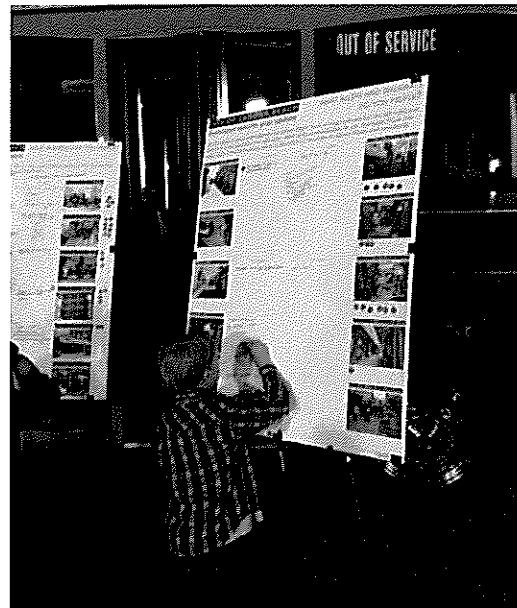
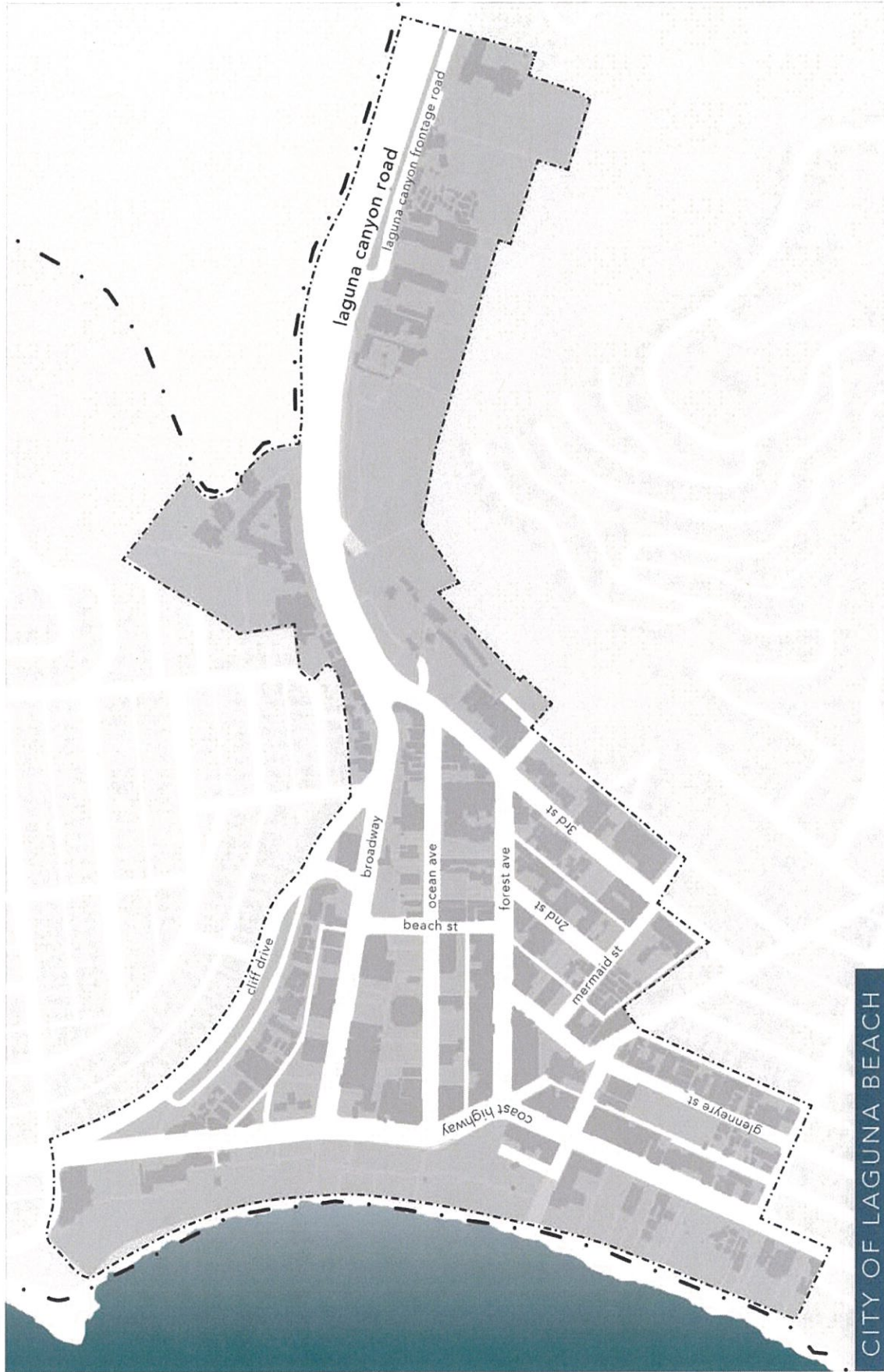


Figure 2 - A young community member provides input at a 2014 Pop-up workshop event.

community workshops, including a Pop-Up Downtown Workshop, in which a portion of Ocean Avenue was temporarily closed for community members and pedestrians to engage in interactive demonstration projects and participate in visual preference surveys.



Figure 3 - Citizens were given opportunities to provide input on the direction and content of the Specific Plan, and their input has guided the formation of this Plan.



CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH

exhibit a
downtown specific plan area map

legend
 ●●●● city border
 - - - - - specific plan area

Draft Strikethrough/Underline Version (11-30-16)

Downtown Specific Plan

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Insert Exhibit A – DSP Area Map (8½” x 11”)
Insert an updated version of DSP Area Map