

MAYOR SAM ALLEVATO
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The progress of our City

Baseball coaches have always advised their players to “keep their eye on the ball!” In local government, the same can be said when it comes to doing the work that our residents elected us to do. Your City Council members continue to “keep their eyes on the ball” and concentrate on what is really important to the progress of our City. What has been accomplished over the last few months is truly remarkable, and I wanted to take this opportunity to briefly elaborate on some of these milestones.

The long-awaited Draft Historic Town Center Master Plan has been reviewed and commented on by the City Council. The Master Plan seeks to revitalize the Town Center through several methods including adding about 200,000 gross square feet of new commercial development while preserving the numerous historic sites and structures in the Historic Town Center. The plan also calls for the redevelopment of areas on the south and east edge of the downtown, which would allow redevelopment with mixed-use commercial and residential projects. The Environmental Impact Report will be released in late October starting the 45-day public review and comment period. Our staff anticipates the City Council beginning formal public hearings on the proposed Master Plan in January of next year.

The City Council recently approved contracts for the design of the dog park and a site access license agreement for the Open Space Foundation to pursue development. Potential dog park amenities include ADA parking and path of travel, entry walkway and vestibule, perimeter fencing, seating areas with benches and shade structures, picnic area, information kiosk/signage, drinking fountains (including dog fountains), trash/recycling receptacle, and mulch and native soil park surface. This is of top priority to the City Council and we are pushing hard to get this opened as soon as possible!

The Continuing Life Communities (CLC) has elected to pursue development of their retirement community on the 150 acres of land on the former Crystal Cathedral Ministries property (Rancho Capistrano.) The project would include 35 acres of development for senior retirement living with 95 acres dedicated to open space and 20 acres retained by Saddleback Church as a retreat center. The City Council unanimously voted to retain the open space option agreement on the property until the developer receives the necessary approvals from all applicable agencies and property owners.

I am sure that you all have visited the new, improved Costco store! The new fuel dispensing station is now open and operating and the current construction will

add another 25,000 square feet that will provide outside dining areas and inside interior improvements as well. The approved car wash will not be pursued at this time but may be considered at a later date. And of course, the new, nearby Marriott Residence Suites will be opening soon, providing lodging for the many visitors and tourists to our area, while adding much-needed hotel occupancy tax to our city coffers.

While our City was recently ranked within the top 15 safest cities in Orange County, we can and will always strive to do better. Recently recommended by our Chief of Police Services and approved by the City Council, our Police Services will undergo a significant change in approach to crime prevention. A full-time crime prevention officer will be hired to coordinate a “Community Oriented Policing” strategy for our City. This will include not only the traditional Neighborhood Watch programs but will also entail the application of a strategic Problem Oriented Policing model that will identify key causes of crime in designated areas then apply an array of resources to deal with the root causes of crime. This may entail the application of patrol services, crime prevention, code enforcement, homeowners associations, business groups, community groups, etc., that will be organized to deal with the problems in these areas until they are solved and/or crimes are reduced. This is a new approach for our Police Services and I will be writing more on this in the near future.

The long-awaited Historic Los Rios Street Circulation plan recently received input and approval from the City Council and will now move to the planning stages, including the identification of funding for the improvements. Included in this strategy is the installation of enhanced signage, a two-way circulation plan, improved pedestrian access along Los Rios Street, and beautification of the existing railway corridor that is adjacent to this historic area, which is the oldest continually occupied residential area in the state!

Saddleback Valley Christian School has reached another milestone in the ongoing construction of the school's campus. Saddleback Valley Christian has recently repaired the multi-purpose trail adjacent to their campus, triggering the ability for them to now develop phase 2 of construction, which includes the addition of new classrooms totaling 21,050 square feet and two stories in height. The school asked for and received a time extension to complete phase two and three of the private school master plan, which also includes the development of a 14,000-square-foot permanent gymnasium and removal of remaining temporary structures. Additionally, their student cap was raised by the City Council from 500 to 850 students, pending confirmation of conformance to their parking capacity and traffic studies.

In addition to these exciting developments, two others are on the near horizon. The old Pedro Taco building is slotted to be improved to a new restaurant called the Mission Grill and the old Vaquero West building across from the Regency Movie theater will be removed and the new Paseo de Verdugo project will rise in

its place, offering more retail and office space to new businesses. As these projects progress, I will report back to you with an update.

As you can see, the City of San Juan Capistrano is comprised of many moving parts. By keeping our "eye on the ball" and concentrating our staffs' efforts on the betterment of the community as a whole, our community will continue to offer the best environment to raise our families, have a business, or enjoy your retirement years. Your City Council is dedicated to providing quality municipal services and improving the quality of life of our residents while implementing thoughtful planning for a vibrant and growing economy. I think we can all agree that that would truly be a "Grand Slam" for the home team!