

Participants offer ideas for change in La Jolla

By **BRAD GRAVES**

Light Staff Writer

Pretend for the moment that you are in charge of La Jolla. You have absolute authority over the place. Take a walk downtown and think. What would you like to keep? What would you change?

More than 100 local residents had a chance to answer those questions Saturday in the public participation segment of La Jolla's community design conference.

In their minds and on paper, La Jollans refurbished dilapidated structures and demolished new buildings while a team of guest architects looked on. The architects were gathering ideas for that afternoon, when they would be doing the same thing (see accompanying article).

The day's first order of business was a self-guided walking tour through the core of La Jolla, a trip that took in both

thoroughfares (Girard, Prospect) and byways (an overgrown path through the Green Dragon Colony and a few alleys). The guidebook for the trip asked participants how they felt about what they saw and invited them to write comments and sketch.

Back at the walk's starting point (the La Jolla Recreation Center), participants clustered around tables covered with butcher paper and large blueprints of the La Jolla street system. With Magic Markers they reshaped the community.

One of the more uninhibited suggestions was to have Torrey Pines Road crash through Saks Fifth Avenue, connect into the one-block-long stretch of Silver Street, bore through the The Bishop's School and connect into La Jolla Boulevard.

The same plan included a mass-transit monorail going into the village paralleling La Jolla Boulevard and returning along the bike path.

Another person wanted to tear down the buildings at the ocean end of Girard to provide a view to the coast. Many people suggested toppling the 939 Coast Boulevard high-rise.

There was also a suggestion for a floating parking barge.

More concrete suggestions included a walking path on the coast stretching from Del Mar to Pacific Beach and rooftop cafes that could take advantage of ocean views. There was also a call to replace chain-link fences on the coastline and develop multi-story parking garages on the sites of present parking lots.

City Hall gadfly Rose Lynne attended the conference and pushed for flower boxes in all downtown windows.

There were plenty of calls to save the Green Dragon Colony and the twin Red Rest and Red Roost cottages. One suggestion was to turn the latter into teahouses.

The self-guided tour booklets, written by the conference organizers, set a direction for the discussion and did some subtle prodding for specific suggestions.

"Where would you sit on a hot day," the booklets asked walkers when they came to Girard. Walkers looked up to find no shade trees.

At two points the booklet asked whether the lower part of Girard, known as the Dip, was really needed to take cars down to the cove.

The booklet hinted of how little a person sees the ocean from Prospect, and pointed out the limited access from central Prospect to the coast.

It also pondered banning parking on Girard during the weekends to give an unobstructed view down the street, closing off part of Wall Street to develop a small park in front of the Athenaeum and locating service businesses in La Jolla's downtown alleys.

During the meeting, La Jollans also called for an architectural and landscaping review board.

Architects gather for 'charrette' to revitalize local image

By BRAD GRAVES

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The community design conference last weekend at the La Jolla Recreation Center was a multi-media, hands-on experience for a group of visiting architects and the public.

At one moment La Jolla's coastal sections were being compared to seaside towns on the Mediterranean: Amalfi, Cannes, Nice. A few minutes later slides of La Jolla's homelier spots, in all their phone-poled, blank-walled glory, went up on screen.

Conference participants took in both aspects of the community and set to work. When it was over they had created a mini-museum of what La Jolla could be.

"This is the beginning of a long process," said Town Council President Robertson Whittemore, adding that beautification projects dreamed up at the conference could keep La Jolla busy for decades.

The event was produced by the Village and Street Improvement Association committee of the La Jolla Town Council and Peter Brand of the California Coastal Conservancy.

That group selected a panel of seven architects (mostly out-of-towners) to come to La Jolla for a "charrette," or architectural brainstorming session.

After preliminary tours and a consultation with the public (see accompanying article), the architects worked from Saturday afternoon until Sunday morning to come up with plans to revitalize La Jolla.

A few Town Council trustees said that the conference brought up a lot of old ideas, but did so in

a refreshing manner.

One of the most radical suggestions came from UC Berkeley professor Chris Alexander.

"At the moment the town lacks a center," Alexander said. Girard and Prospect is considered to be the center of La Jolla, but at that point "there is sort of a vacuum floating around."

So, with drawings and a small architectural model, Alexander ripped out the street from Girard to Scripps Park — the area known as the Dip — and turned the land into a grassy group of terraces stepping up the hill.

Similar ideas have been presented in the past. Local architect Tony Ciani, who also helped organize the conference, once even arranged for closure of that portion of the street for a few days to see if it would affect traffic flow.

San Francisco architect Bruce Judd spoke mostly about the growth of buildings in La Jolla from small cottages and stores to "blockbusters."

There are a number of ways to make La Jolla's large new buildings fit in with buildings of smaller scale, he said: adding trellises, doing away with dark brick and dark glass, adding vertical elements to break up the large walls and restore the rhythm of 25- and 50-foot wide storefronts.

"We're working on invis-o-paint," Judd said.

San Diego landscape architect Andrew Spurlock spoke of finding the memorable aspects of the community and building onto those. That may not happen, he said. "I'm worried that the first

project will be to put colored concrete down Girard."

San Francisco architect John Lund Kriken called for more walkways down from Prospect to the coast, saying that in San Francisco such walks are maintained by private landowners.

One conference attendee asked the architects how a community can work with the city to achieve such change.

The main item on any city's mind, Brand said, is money. For many of the proposals, he said, government funding would have to be combined with private funds.

Another panelist said that the recently passed park bond act could provide money for some of the projects mentioned.

Spurlock added that he has worked with four San Diego communities. The one that was most effective in working with the city, he said, was the one with the most unified community voice: Ocean Beach.

Whittemore said that the Town Council will sponsor another design conference on La Jolla in October "dealing with more refined things" like benches.

While many of the conference proposals may seem like pipe dreams, Town Council Trustee Ruth Potter saw some use in that.

"You have to get a bunch of people to dream before you know what you want to do," she said.