

Encinitas City Council Meeting - 11/10/10 - Oral Communication

Good evening councilors. I'm Keith Shillington, and I nominally reside on Leucadia Scenic Court.

I would like to share some thoughts with you as to why the property at the northwest corner of Third and F streets should remain zoned as Public/Semi-Public; and some thoughts for potential uses for this property.

I want to stress my desire for this body to make intelligent choices that reflect long term planning. Understanding that the future portends higher density in this region along the transit corridor; the future portends a shift from single occupant transportation to mass transit and walkable communities. The future high density housing will bring a resurgence in the youth population demographics; and ultimately, some kind of primary school to serve the Residential Districts (East and West) of the Downtown Encinitas Specific Region will be required.

Preserving this space for the public trust by retaining it zoned Public/Semi-Public, and taking advantage of the existing structures to the extent that they can be recycled into a Public serving purpose is simply prudent civic planning.

The Encinitas Master Plan dates back to the incorporation of the city; which in perspective of human history is very recent. This land was donated to public use in 1883; notably the first donation of it's kind and thereby of some historic value for this fact alone. Much of historic downtown Encinitas has some form of "Grandfather" aspect to it. This is no different.

One of the stipulations from the World Commission on Environment and Development in Copenhagen in 1987 reads:

Development and protection of the coast should be governed by the principles of sustainability. Simply stated, this means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

The Encinitas downtown specific plan page 13 states:

The Pacific View Elementary School site, located at the northwest corner of Third and F Streets, provides an opportunity to develop a future joint school and neighborhood park facility which would serve the Residential West Subdistrict as discussed in Section 3.1. The existing historic school house, which is located on the property, should be used as a publicly-accessible cultural amenity for the park.

Ida Lou Coley addressed this body on this topic with these admonitions:

When downtown Encinitas founder John Pitcher donated downtown land for a school house in 1883, he selected the finest location his land holdings had to offer, a site at the top of a hill overlooking the small village of Encinitas. It was a site from which there was a broad view of surrounding areas. It was a site where children could "feel" and "smell" the ocean breeze, one from which they could explore the nearby beach, which, in the 1880s, they did regularly at Friday school picnics there. It is a "jewel" site that should be the pride of the School Board, our teachers, and all Encinitas citizens. The site is a peaceful place, with wide vistas, within a safe neighborhood. It is spacious enough so children have room to stretch and run and exercise their voices. It is a site whose surrounding districts are interesting to explore...beach, downtown, parks, civic institutions, a neighborhood of historic homes, even an historic creek, and also a commercial district of historic buildings. The downtown setting chronicles a "living" history, from the 1880s to the present day. The school offers an extraordinary school experience, like no other.

Any decision made by the School Board to close Pacific View as a "school" site today should be

a temporary measure only, with the understanding that such a closure is not to be a permanent one, but rather one necessitated by financial restraints, at this place in time.

At an appropriate period in the future, Encinitas school children should then once again be able to resume their studies at the Pacific View site, a special site bequeathed to them at least in spirit, by town founder John Pitcher. This was the “flexible” policy during the Great Depression of the 1930s when the school at the site was closed for several years. During the school closure, the grounds were still used for a purpose benefiting local children and adolescents. The school building and grounds were used for a recreation center supported by President Franklin Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration, commonly called the “WPA.”

To conclude. The city-block square public space within historic downtown Encinitas is unique and irreplaceable. There are a lot of negative things that can be said about and around plans to commercialize or residentialize this space; and each has varying amounts of truth and emotion attached. I prefer to speak on the positive side of preservation of Encinitas' unique coastal character; and wish to direct your thinking to prudent long term civic planning. Retaining the space in the public realm allows for future city councils to develop facilities that serve the public of their day.

A final point. The Encinitas Master Plan – is it best as a cohesive plan with deeply considered occasional modification, or is it to be a patchwork of amendments and waivers to accommodate an ongoing request du jour?

Thank you for your time and listening.