General Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

For at least 20 years the city staff has been direct towards and away from projects in the harbor area including:

Heart of the City
Measure DD
Measure G
Measure A
Measure B
And Measure C

Many of these are diametrically opposed to each other. As a tideland and harbor, Redondo is influenced by the Army Corp of Engineers, Los Angeles County, SEQ, AQMD, Coastal Commission, and a host of other public and private interests. For a city of 68,000 and the harbor being one project of many, staff responsibilities seem almost herculean and deserve much credit for the work to date.

Substantial efforts have been made to improve the harbor community but many areas remain under utilized. Beginning in 2008 LA County Beach traffic quickly went from 25 million visitors to 50 million visitors. As a bedroom community, some 80% of working residents commute outside of Redondo to the office with over 80% of these commuters driving alone (DATA USA). More telling economically, residents of Redondo spend roughly 1/3 the amount of sales tax in Redondo as adjacent city residents spends in their respective cities.

The clear conclusion to be drawn is that many residents travel outside the city for entertainment and shopping, and come back Redondo to enjoy the extraordinary natural resources and quite comfort we all live here for.

Everyone also seems to agree that protecting our natural resources is paramount while needing to improve the infrastructure and economic viability is critical. So how. High density residential developments require more from police, fire, and schools than they throw off in property tax and Redondo residents are currently spending the majority of discretionary income in other cities. Growing the sales tax base with businesses in commuter environments creates extra complexities for business owners and ultimately budgetary shortfalls.

Over the days and weeks ahead, a majority of the property owners from the area defined as (Diamond to Emerald and Catalina to Broadway) who own the legal nonconforming residential (R3), and operate businesses with very limiting conditional uses will be deciding how to best utilize their properties.
All of the structures identified above have been extraordinarily well preserved and earthquake retrofitted, where required, at substantial cost to the owners in order maintain the fidelity and history of the block, while also supporting those business minimal nonconforming uses. These nonconforming commercial uses have been able to produce rents in accordance with an acceptable market capitalization allowing them to compete with the residential development needs of this community. The coastal housing market has now broken the equilibrium.

The age, condition and fidelity of many of these buildings provide the owners with a unique opportunity to pursue conforming retail uses and a residential component with lower densities than the current R3 zoning while promoting retail correctly aligned with the community and maintaining only intact section of the original downtown Redondo Beach and harbor.

Many know the railway through Manhattan and Hermosa as the greenbelt but don’t know it continued behind Catalina Coffee through the block that still maintains the original Ice house (1905?), The carriage house and blacksmith shop, the railroad depot, and the original Redondo Beach Post Office 1905 all of which exist completely in tact.

Many areas have chosen to adaptively reuse similar areas specifically on railway depots very successfully including Bergamot Station, Helms District, San Juan Capistrano and most recently the harbor area Santa Barbara revitalization which seamlessly mix old with new and include both community serving retail and residential components.

At this point there is no developer or agency interests involved and efforts are being entirely owner directed agreeing this should be the right project at the right time. Cyclists should have a safe place to ride and stop; residents deserve a unique attraction and services walking distance to their homes and property owners should have the rights to do projects that meet their personal and civic goals.

Adaptive reuse, live/walk, new urbanism should definitively be a part of Redondo Beach’s General plan.