

## UPDATE ON THE OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE

Petitions have been turned in to qualify the open space initiative for the June 2012 ballot. Voters now will consider whether the initiative warrants their support. There is plenty of time for arguments and counter-arguments. This is good. Often in politics there emerges the next crisis with the rush to deal with it. And when that happens, more heat than light is usually shed on what's at stake and what the options are. Not the case in this instance. As people examine what's proposed, our expectation is that most will support it. This belief is rooted in the fact that Laguna voters have consistently supported preservation as part of what defines the city's distinctive character.

The sort of open space that would qualify under the initiative includes some of what's left in Temple Hills and Mystic Hills. There have been several proposals over the years for new street extensions, so as to build out these areas. That's precisely what lies at the heart of this proposed initiative. Its purpose pure and simple is to preserve the remaining open space in Laguna. Funding would come from a temporary 20-year flat assessment on all parcels. Parcel owners would pay \$120 per year and this assessment would be collected along with county property taxes. City Council would ultimately decide which parcels are worth purchasing based on negotiations with willing sellers. We have completed the outer greenbelt. This initiative would create a temporary local funding source to round out the rest of the job, which began more than 30 years ago: to save the open space surrounding and inside the city.

Why this initiative now? Two reasons. State funds for this have dried up, so without a local funding source, there is no hope of forestalling development through acquisition. Meanwhile today's low prices offer historic opportunities. Opponents suggest that all this initiative amounts to is subsidizing the bailout of imprudent investors who find themselves stuck with unbuildable lots. Go on our website where you can read the initiative and decide for yourself. The text of the initiative makes clear that the overarching purpose is not to buy unbuildable lots but rather to work with willing sellers so that our remaining buildable open space is preserved forever, not developed. You can see from the accompanying map that the open space we're talking about is substantial, not a handful of single-family lots. These are lands that most citizens probably regard as protected already—but they are not.

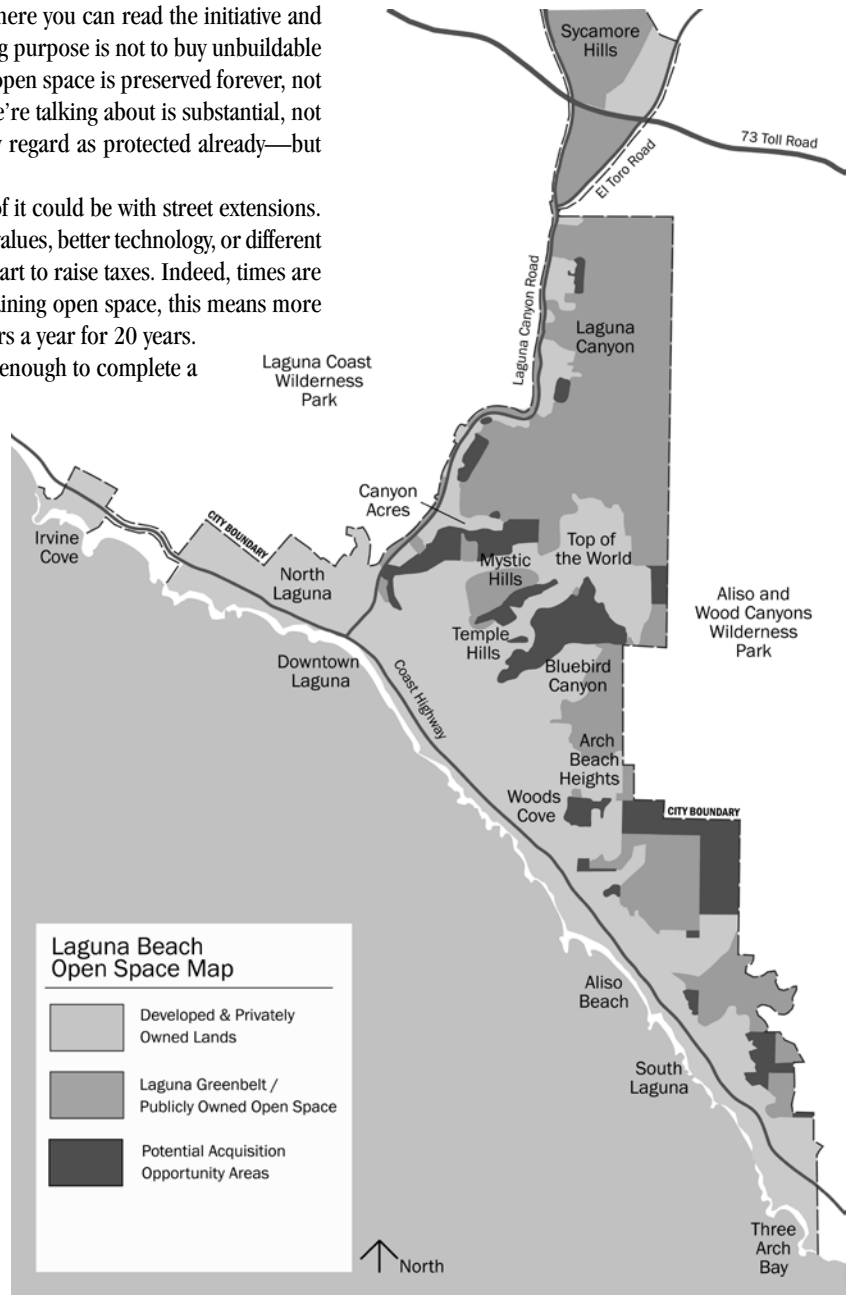
Not all of Rimrock Canyon, for example, could be built out. But much of it could be with street extensions. What seems unbuildable now may be buildable tomorrow due to higher land values, better technology, or different politics. Opponents have also suggested that in this bad economy it's not smart to raise taxes. Indeed, times are tough; markets are down. Still, if we get started now on acquiring our remaining open space, this means more value for dollar. The proposed initiative would raise roughly a million dollars a year for 20 years. It's not enough at once to give parcel owners inflated expectations; but it is enough to complete a goal that City leaders have supported for a long time.

Our City Council for decades has acquired open space parcels from willing sellers, virtually every year. Since 1990 this has been made possible largely thanks to state open space funds that no longer will be available. Essentially, then, this initiative would continue the status quo. In lieu of state funds, we will have our own temporary local funding source. This is the only practical way to complete the legacy of saving our remaining open spaces. This is an important legacy. Completing this mission will mean that one crucial aspect of what distinguishes Laguna—our open space—will be preserved forever. And

there will be environmental, aesthetic, and economic benefits. The results will mean less habitat destroyed. And less traffic on our streets. Also less grading and irrigation of our very fragile hillsides. Precious views will be preserved. And more open space means higher property values.

Please do visit our website to learn more. We hope you'll use the website to volunteer your support and involvement. We hope you'll agree that saving Laguna's remaining open space is well worth ten dollars a month for 20 years. The June 2012 ballot will provide Laguna voters with another historic opportunity. Against the backdrop of gloom and doom around the world, we can do something very positive, something we can literally see the results of, forever.

— THE OPEN SPACE STEERING COMMITTEE  
[For more information, see [Lagunaopenspace.com](http://Lagunaopenspace.com)]



### Don't Miss Out on the Fun!

We welcome all neighbors and their friends to our annual party on Saturday, December 3, 5:30 p.m. We plan a delicious dinner in the beautiful home of new neighbors Dave and Joanne Trotter at 709 Canyon View.

Each year since our founding in 1973, we have sponsored this social event as a way to bring us together, meet new neighbors, be with old friends, and share in neighborhood celebration and appreciation of this marvelous place where we reside.

Please respond to our invitation on page 1, the coupon on page 3, or your Evite so we can plan for all who wish to attend. If you cannot attend, consider sending a check to THCA, P. O. Box 4913, Laguna Beach, CA 92652 to support all the positive things we do to build our community.

We hope to see you there!

Reservations at [rhondasworld@cox.net](mailto:rhondasworld@cox.net) or 949-376-9270.

— Rhonda Kinn