

# LA JOLLA LIGHT

565 Pearl St., Suite 300  
La Jolla, CA 92037

(858) 459-4201



[lajollalight.com](http://lajollalight.com)

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#### President & General Manager

• Phyllis Pfeiffer  
[ppfeiffer@lajollalight.com](mailto:ppfeiffer@lajollalight.com)  
(858) 875-5940

#### Executive Editor

• Susan DeMaggio  
[susandemaggio@lajollalight.com](mailto:susandemaggio@lajollalight.com)  
(858) 875-5950

#### Staff Reporters

• Ashley Mackin  
[ashleyam@lajollalight.com](mailto:ashleyam@lajollalight.com)  
(858) 875-5957  
• María José Durán  
[mduran@lajollalight.com](mailto:mduran@lajollalight.com)  
(858) 875-5951

#### News Design

• Michael Bower, Lead,  
Edwin Feliu, Crystal Hoyt,  
Daniel K. Lew

#### Vice President Advertising

• Don Parks (858) 875-5954

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# Transformation Begins with Intention

## Seven steps to help La Jolla thrive

BY SHERRY NOORAVI

*"Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way."*

— Abraham Lincoln

When I first moved to La Jolla, I had no idea that my family and I would not be able to safely cross the street from where we lived (the south side of Torrey Pines Road). My excitement on our first night out to



Sherry Nooravi

dinner to The Village turned to disbelief and fear when I realized there were no complete sidewalks or pedestrian crossways in a one-mile stretch from Prospect Place to La Jolla Shores Drive. Like a game of "Frogger," we tentatively

crossed two lanes of speeding traffic, stood in the middle for what seemed like an eternity, then crossed the other two lanes. When I was faced with the challenge of standing between four lanes of cars driving 35-50 mph, I knew I had to make a decision — complain for the next 20 years or do something. As a business psychologist who helps companies create thriving workplace cultures, I asked myself, "Why can't I help my community grow through the efforts of its people?"

I consulted my neighbors, hoping they would tell me there was a plan of action to alleviate this dangerous situation. I learned a plan had been developed by the community over many years (Torrey Pines Road Corridor Project), and was subsequently approved by the City Council in late 2008. Initial budgeting for the project began in 2009, yet there had been little action to implement the plan. I was determined to create a way for residents to walk to the Village and Shores businesses by foot, which would bring safety and a healthy lifestyle, while reducing parking congestion.

My neighbors and I have a strong belief that concerned citizens can shape a thriving environment, despite obstacles, bureaucracy and all the inevitable challenges that come from creating change. Following is our journey and the change model we used, which can be applied to any type of community change.

### The journey to action

From 2009 to 2016, we collaborated with our community, our City Council member and Circulate San Diego to bring awareness for the need to create access so residents and visitors alike could safely cross the street. Our former Council member, Sherri Lightner, supported us in installing pedestrian crossing signs and V-Calms that help drivers know their speed limit

### GUEST COMMENTARY

and most importantly, she secured funding for this project.

Thankfully, our efforts paid off and new Council member Barbara Bry said she will support keeping this project fully funded. Her office has been in contact with City staff and informed that the construction of the project is expected to begin in September 2017. This will be a joyful day for many of us.

### Change process drives transformation

We were able to create momentum and push these changes by following a management model I'd like to share with all our leaders and community group members who dedicate their time, talent and treasure to make La Jolla better. Here's how I used John Kotter's 7-step change model in for my "Quest for Safety":

■ **Establish a sense of urgency.** We urged residents to attend community meetings and met with elected officials to share residents' views on the need for safer living conditions

■ **Form a powerful coalition.** As our group spread the news to other neighbors, we slowly grew in size; we communicated regularly through group e-mails

■ **Create a vision.** We created a vision for a safe, green and clean La Jolla to address the importance of safety, walking instead of driving, and beautification as part of traffic calming

■ **Communicate the vision.** We did this at community and SANDAG meetings, writing opinions in the *La Jolla Light* and the website we created ([torreypinessafety.org](http://torreypinessafety.org)), having Andy Hamilton, former president of Walk San Diego host a Talk and Tour, and we were able to communicate our vision through TV news coverage

■ **Empower others to act on the vision.** We continually communicated the message that pedestrian and bicyclist safety is a right, not a nice-to-have, and encouraged citizens to reach out to elected officials

■ **Plan for short-term wins.** Our former Council member promoted this project as her top priority for federal stimulus funds and we received \$1.2 million in funding, which we celebrated

■ **Build on changes through systems, structures, development.** As Residents for Torrey Pines Safety, we continue to spread our message that pedestrian and bicyclist safety is critical throughout San Diego and our country, and we support those who want to create safety in their areas. I was honored to be named "A Voice to Listen to in La Jolla," and "Citizen of the Year" for these efforts. I continue to share

my best practices so others may learn how to make a difference.

### Apply the change model to a thriving La Jolla

When asked how to create a thriving Village, Sheila Fortune, executive director of the La Jolla Village Merchants Association (LJVMA) responded, "If we have more attendance of business owners at our LJVMA meetings, (3 p.m. second Wednesdays at the Riford La Jolla Library) we can better collaborate a plan to support one another and our businesses, which can collectively drive more business to the Village.

"We have some great ideas and would love to form a powerful coalition to help us thrive as a community. One strategy LJVMA will begin this year, will be our Block Captain program. Our board will be visiting businesses in our BID district to help them create a social media page, if they do not have one for their business, and then help them with the messaging so that we can build synergy throughout and keep a clear, consistent message to attract business from local residents to international travelers."

### Offer customers something unique

The steps the LJVMA is taking are exciting, and I'm optimistic about the upcoming growth in the Village from the Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center (opening in 2019), to the updated Museum of Contemporary Art on the way, to all the new shops and restaurants that have arrived and are arriving. In a recent *La Jolla Light* interview, commercial realtor Mike Slattery shared retailer trends that include smaller spaces and creative leasing arrangements and predicted that we will end up with higher end tenants that better match our community. The UTC mall may seem like competition, but does it really compete with the beauty of The Village?

I'm thrilled to see both thrive and I mirror retailer Nancy Warwick's sentiment that merchants should offer something unique that you can only get here. My family has many go-to places in the Village like Warwicks, Meanley & Sons Ace Hardware, Lululemon, Elixir, Vons, Ocean Drycleaners and a host of others. We try to shop locally as much as possible and enjoy the relationships we have with those who work at these establishments.

I encourage our elected officials and community group members to use these steps of change to further stimulate growth and transformation through collaboration with our community members, merchants and larger San Diego community.

— Sherry Nooravi, Ph.D., is an organizational psychologist. She can be reached at [torreypinessafety.org](http://torreypinessafety.org) and [sherry@strategymeetsperformance.com](mailto:sherry@strategymeetsperformance.com)

## OUR READERS WRITE

### Just say 'no' to blinking crosswalk plan

We don't need more blinking crosswalks, as reported in the Feb. 16 issue, "Plan to landscape and add blinking crosswalk to Girard Avenue coming." What we need is a culture of people

who stop for pedestrians. Drivers have gotten increasingly reckless around town, and probably all over, but we can role model safe, considerate behavior and have it stick. If La Jolla earns a reputation for being a courteous place to be, visitors will come and behave appropriately. When the driver in front of you stops for pedestrians, it gives you a sense of local customs.

I've seen this work in other communities, like Gloucester, Massachusetts.

On the other hand, if we turn into a mini Las Vegas with blinking lights everywhere, people will become numb to it and we'll have to get brighter and louder to make people pay attention. It's a cultural shift we need, not more noise.

Joanie Connell