

The Future of
PALOS VERDES ESTATES

My Fellow Citizens,

The moment to determine the future of Palos Verdes Estates has come. Measure PF has failed, and we are once again without a plan. No doubt our council will soon propose new taxes to fill the gap. Before they do, I ask you to consider *what they will never propose*, and to remember what this city was always meant to be.

We live on the American Riviera, the most beautiful stretch of coast in the world. Yet we have built almost nothing worthy of it. This is not the fault of the land; it is the fault of how we have governed it, and so the grievances must be named plainly:

- That we cannot feed ourselves in our own city. To find a simple meal, we must drive a frustrating distance to the same few restaurants, several times a day, because we have permitted nothing closer.
- That our few gathering places give more ground to the parking of cars than any semblance of community life.
- That we have no square worthy of our name. Malaga Cove stands as a crumbling car park, a poor relative of the Bologna square we modeled ourselves after, all while practically every building sits vacant or surrendered to real estate offices.
- That there is no hotel, no café, not one gracious room where one might take a coffee and watch the sea. The fear of building anything new has left the rest to rot.
- That again and again we are driven off our own hill to meet the ordinary needs of life, exiled from the very beauty we call home.

Our founders imagined none of this. They drew from Bologna, from the French Riviera, from the cliffs of Amalfi, believing a place this rare deserved beauty equal to its setting. Until Palos Verdes is again walkable, adorned in mosaics, statues, and marble to match our greenery, with streets where something actually happens, we have failed to build a city of sufficiency.

The remedy is already in our hands. Imagine California's finest hotel on our coast: small in footprint, serving perhaps a hundred guests, offering an experience unmatched in the state. We should invite restaurants, cafés and businesses worthy of the American Riviera, each on leased ground, each paying the city rather than the city taxing its people. Whatever we build must be the best of its class; nothing less is suitable. We can keep the land in perpetuity while solving our deficit and keeping every benefit of our police force. A council whose only idea is to bill its residents has stopped governing and started invoicing.

I know the fear of building runs deep, and much of that caution has been wise. No one wants cheap buildings that only complement the decrepit car parks around them. But there is a difference between protecting a city and letting it crumble. One is preserved; the other is abandoned.

We live at the edge of the map – the literal shore of the manifest destiny the founding fathers of America set in motion. What remains is to make this last and finest ground worthy of all that was crossed to reach it.

So I call on our council to put the question before the people, and I call on my neighbors to demand it. Measure PF was a citizens' initiative in name only. Should no action of sufficiency be proposed, I shall personally lead a second, citizen-led initiative to remove this city council in its entirety and place a new charter before us, with a governance structure that represents the needs of this city and the future of its citizens.

No one is coming to save Palos Verdes. We will save it ourselves.

With faith in our city,

Casey J.P. Russ