

Morning Report: Coastal Loophole Allows Houses to Balloon in Size

Community planning group votes are thrown out, candidate calls for a congressional curfew, Casual Encounters is down for the count, an animal news roundup, burrito wars and the last days of a toy store chain.

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New homes in Bird Rock are often much bigger than their neighbors, with the help of a development loophole. / Photo by Adriana Heldiz

City law tries to protect the character of neighborhoods along the coast by requiring developers to go through extra hoops in order to greatly expand existing homes. But there's a loophole that allows houses to become bigger as long as 50 percent of the existing home is retained, and critics say it's wreaking havoc.

“The law as written is intended to make it easy to remodel a home, but developers have learned they can usually figure out how to keep enough walls to build a new home from scratch and qualify as a remodel,” our Andrew Keatts [reports in a new VOSD story](#).

Developers are especially taking advantage of the loophole in the La Jolla neighborhood of Bird Rock, where “old, small beach bungalows there have provided a ready-made supply of chances to buy, demolish and rebuild them into big, modern homes.”

As with most development fights, younger people just moving into the neighborhood see things differently: “There’s still height and (square footage) restrictions,” said one new neighbor who bought one of the larger, remodeled homes. “I don’t see what’s wrong with letting people build what they want, within the constraints of zoning. People just don’t want change.”

Residents in Bird Rock are blitzing local community planning groups seeking support for a new set of rules.

Keatts takes a closer look at how developers have used the loophole, including one who built an ungainly closet next to a house and then tore it down while retaining the walls in order to create the design he wanted.

- CALMatters [examines Senate Bill 827](#), which it calls “California’s most controversial housing bill in decades” and

“tries to force cities to build more dense housing around public transit hubs.”

Politics Report: Barrio Logan Planning Votes Get Nixed

This week’s [VOSD Politics Report](#) begins with news out of Barrio Logan about a routine election for leaders in the local community planning group that turned out to not be so routine at all.

Barrio Logan is a hot spot for environmental concerns since it has such an unusual mix of homes and industry, and the city has run into big bumps on the road to try to fix things. Activists from the Environmental Health Coalition allegedly handed out campaign fliers too close to voters, so the election results were thrown out and a new one will be held — maybe. The coalition can’t figure out where the rule in question comes from, and it’s asking for a review.

Also in the [Politics Report](#): inside the bid to raise taxes on hotel guests to fund an expansion of the Convention Center plus boost homeless services and city infrastructure needs. Also: A closer look at the VOSD Podcast with guest District Attorney Summer Stephan, development fights in the 2018 election in North County and details on a big charter school conference that will be held here this week.

- Chula Vista Police Chief Roxana Kennedy [tells NBC 7](#) that the police department in the county’s second-largest city is understaffed. Response times reportedly haven’t been this bad