

It's a Sign – For La Mesa

NONPROFITS: Downtown Gateway Sign Almost Paid For

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

For years, La Mesa businesses and community members have working hard for something new in the city's quaint downtown Village – and it's a good sign.

A downtown district gateway sign that will say "LA MESA" at Palm Avenue and La Mesa Boulevard just a few blocks from the city's Civic Center has been in the plans since 2018, with the push for fundraising championed by the La Mesa Village Association.



Pam Rader
Treasurer and
Secretary
La Mesa Village
Association

The \$400,000 sign is nearly paid for, with LMVA officials saying it needs about \$66,000 to reach the finish line, with a goal of breaking ground in 2023 and construction to begin soon after.

The LMVA is a 501c-6 nonprofit made up of business owners and residents committed to the success of the downtown La Mesa community. The group provides a variety of free events throughout the year and also markets the city to visitors.

Similar to signs in other parts of the county, including



Fundraising partners for a planned La Mesa gateway sign say they are working to get the last needed \$66,000 together for the \$400,000 sign that will welcome visitors at La Mesa Blvd. and Palm Ave. Photo courtesy La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation

neighbor El Cajon, as well as North Park, Encinitas, Barrio Logan, University Heights and Carlsbad, the La Mesa sign will also include two columns of brass plaques and more than 1,500 ceramic tiles that will be hand painted by locals adorning the base of the sign.



Misty Thompson
Executive Director
La Mesa Park and
Recreation Foundation

The LMVA is reaching out to the greater San Diego County community to be part of the sign, offering



Greg Humora
City Manager
La Mesa

opportunities to purchase the personalized tiles and plaques to residents and businesses to fund the project, calling it the "Leave a Legacy Tile & Plaque Fundraiser."

The sign provides "an opportunity for the community to come together and put a mark on the city," said Pam Rader, treasurer and secretary for the LMVA.

"The community artwork creates a 'Community Quilt,'" she added. "The artwork for the sign is the key

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La Mesa Village Association

FOUNDED: 2016
CHAIR: Theresa Favro
HEADQUARTERS: La Mesa
BUSINESS: 501c-6 nonprofit
REVENUE: \$92,000
MEMBERS: 98 (66 businesses, 32 "friends")
WEBSITE: lamesavillageassociation.org
CONTACT: 619-343-2460
SOCIAL IMPACT: LMVA provides a variety of free, community events throughout the year and also allocates resources to create and maintain a positive brand image to the public to drive business to downtown La Mesa.
NOTABLE: LMVA is partnering with La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation for a downtown district sign, seeking to build a new focal point in downtown La Mesa.

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to the design as it's a personalized reflection of the greater La Mesa community."

Rader said the LMVA expects the sign will be a landmark for the entire city of La Mesa, not just the downtown area.

"The sign will display our pride and identity in our historic downtown community and welcome visitors for decades to come," she said

Nearly one year ago, the La Mesa City Council approved a partnership between the LMVA, which has the type of nonprofit status that prohibits it from accepting tax-deductible donations, and the 501c-3 nonprofit

La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation, which is able to collect donations.

'Perfect Fit'

"The La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation's mission is to fundraise and facilitate diverse projects and programs to strengthen community and family bonds to improve the quality of life in La Mesa and its parks," said Misty Thompson, executive director of the foundation.

"Partnering with the LMVA seemed like a perfect fit for the Foundation and a great project for the city overall. The sign not only incorporates the love of the community through hand-painted tiles that can be visited by family members for years to come, but also has a historic feel with

the design."

According to Rader, the project is currently 84 percent funded, with more than \$330,000 raised since July 2022.

"We are truly overwhelmed by the support we have received thus far," Rader said. "This has been a labor of love on the part of so many to get to this point. We are looking forward to moving on to the next phase where the community will be able to attend painting parties to decorate their purchased tiles that will adorn the base of the district sign."

La Mesa Park and Rec Foundation board member Greg Humora, who is also the La Mesa's city manager, said he was thrilled at the response from the La Mesa community thus far. "Raising the amount

of funds we did so quickly is amazing," Humora said. "This is a great project that everyone can get behind. La Mesa is a special place."

The cost for a 4-inch by 4-inch ceramic tile is \$125 for the public or \$200 for businesses. Thompson said there will be several community painting parties coming for people to paint their purchased tiles.

The personalized brass plaques, which can promote a business or honor family and friends, Thompson said, and range from \$10,000 (6-inch by 12-inch) to \$30,000 (6-inch by 36-inch) plaque.

Interested partners can purchase a tile or brass plaque by filling out the form on the LMVA website at lamesavillageassociation ■