

The Pro-Development Hoax

By Glenn Lambdin

An interesting and quite entertaining homegrown social phenomenon here in Sierra Madre has been the villainization of anything and anyone that can be considered as “pro-development.” What I find fascinating is the degree of political success a certain group of citizens have achieved by attaching the “pro-development” label on various groups and individuals regardless of truth or facts. In Sierra Madre, if you want to advance a political agenda, somehow convince the public that your opponents are “pro-development” and you’re sure to succeed. It really doesn’t matter what the issue is about either. Just convince a trusting public that something is “pro-development” and it’s bound to fail. Attach a “pro-development” label on the Wisteria Vine and I guarantee it will be firewood before the sun sets. While this has become a simple but highly effective political strategy, the problem is that there are those that are willing to deceive the public with their “pro-development” rhetoric in order to advance their causes.

For example, last week in a Pasadena Star News article, Councilman Watts referred to both Councilmembers Mosca and Buchanan as being “pro-development.” Not only is such an asinine statement amusing, it is also a classic masterpiece of hypocrisy.

Ordinarily, I wouldn’t give his statement much thought considering it came from a councilman who has so little regard for the office he holds that he’ll admit that he didn’t read the City’s annual budget when it came up for a vote or that he didn’t read the Hillside Management Ordinance when that came up for a vote; and for that matter, several other items of importance that he “didn’t have time to read.” But this time, I really found myself getting quite a good laugh out of Watts, considering the fact that neither Councilmembers Mosca or Buchanan have ever been involved in a single development project while Watts, on the other hand, has been instrumental in several property developments in Sierra Madre. Councilman Watts, if you’ll recall, was involved in the development of the Kraft Estate, which at that time was the largest undeveloped stand of oak trees in the City. He was an architect of record that supported and attempted to develop the One Carter property for Maranatha High School in association with Greg Galletly, the present developer at One Carter and Stonehouse. Watts also was involved with the monster building on East Montecito (more commonly known as “Watts Towers,”) that can be seen from Montecito, Baldwin and Sierra Madre Boulevard, three of the four streets that form the block where that development is located. (In my opinion, any building in Sierra Madre that can be seen from this many streets within the same block is arguably over-developed.)

Now I have lived in Sierra Madre for most of my life and know a lot of Sierra Madreans. I know a lot of contractors, builders, tree trimmers, construction professionals, and people from just about every industry imaginable. One thing that I find common about all of us is that nobody is “pro-development” when it comes to Sierra Madre. NOBODY! Nobody I know wants to see our hillsides developed. Nobody I know wants tall buildings in the downtown. Nobody I know wants a stop light anywhere in town.

Folks, this whole “pro-development” tactic is a hoax! It’s a mean-spirited hoax that is a con-game designed to get your support and divert your attention away from the real issues of any logical and factual discussion. Those that so easily try to attach their nonsensical “pro-development” label are trying to dupe you into believing their fear tactics. I’ve heard both Councilmen Watts and Zimmerman referring to an emergency water connection as a “pro-development” project. Geez guys, what part of “emergency” can’t you comprehend. Considering our hillside fire this year, one would think you’d be all over an additional emergency water source that could be employed to save our homes if needed.

The next time you hear Watts, Zimmerman, or anyone else in this town calling someone or something “pro-development” may I suggest that you get out your winter gear because you are about to be doused with a first-class snow-job. In their case, make it a blizzard!