

Esteemed Commissioners,

2020 is a year most everyone would like to forget. But, lost amid all the chaos was a milestone here in Ladera Ranch, our 20th birthday. Twenty years is a long time!

I am sure you would agree: a lot has changed in the last 20 years. Regional challenges have grown. The complexity of managing a municipality has also grown and demands greater attention and diligence.

Ladera Ranch deserves to have a consistent seat at the table with the political authority to represent her residents and to pursue the community's best interests.

We are familiar with the last "LAFCO Visioning Process" and its findings. The fiscal summary showed a revenue surplus of approximately \$800k for Ladera Ranch with the VLF included, a challenge we recognize. Other options include the formation of a MAC or CSD. Annexation by an adjacent city like Mission Viejo also is a possibility.

We do not know which option is the most viable for Ladera Ranch but we are certain taking a fresh look at the topic of local governance could help to illuminate the path forward. 2020 was a Census year and that data will be helpful in updating metrics for our area when it is made public. What has changed and what could benefit us?

- Home pricing has appreciated significantly and we would expect revenues from property taxes to be higher
- Revenue from the VLF is an issue that will deserve scrutiny but there has been some legislative movement since the 2015 study
- Unlike most other unincorporated areas, we have a retail engine in our four commercial centers (over 1 million square feet) that generate sales tax revenue
- On the cost side, we would expect to see significant savings from the continual maintenance operations of our master association, LARMAC

We have gotten off track in south Orange County as we continue to develop new communities that have remained under County management, seemingly into perpetuity, untethered to an equally important, timeline for those communities to self-govern.

So here is our ask of LAFCO through the OC LAFCO Unincorporated Areas Program:

- Provide leadership for a new, streamlined "2021 Visioning Process for Ladera Ranch" that focuses only on the unincorporated area of Ladera Ranch. RMV deserves study too but at a future date consistent with further development
- Update the financials to reflect current data
- Engage *all* influential stakeholders and other interested parties
- Utilize "Zoom" in current climate for outreach
- Recommend and quantify an actionable plan forward

Twenty years is a long time; long enough. We need local leaders with the vision and community connections to help Ladera develop its own **identity** among South Orange County cities – and we have them! It is time to give us the opportunity to participate more consistently and intimately in the operation of our community. We are ready to take the first step forward!

Thank you for your consideration and attention in 2021.

-Ladera Rancho Chamber of Commerce
C. Todd Stearns, President