

Dear Editor,

Over the last few weeks, I have watched with astonishment as hefty structures have been erected along 15th Street - concrete and brick barriers (so-called "sidewalk cafes") that will forever block some of the beautiful public views in the center of Del Mar.

What I have since learned is that the City Council allowed these businesses to construct these massive extensions to their properties - on public land - without any design review process whatsoever. Why in the world would the Council have approved such a major change to our town based only on concept drawings? No public input was truly possible based on concept drawings only - clearly, not even the Councilmembers could know what these things would look like until they were built, since no architectural drawings were ever presented to them or to the public.

As a former chair of the Design Review Board, I am well aware that there is no private development of any magnitude in Del Mar that can be approved with only concept drawings, and yet the City went ahead with this project based solely on the pressure put on them by the business community to have these things built in time for the summer rush of tourists.

"Sidewalk cafés" in most cities are a pretty simple affair. When the weather is nice, tables and chairs come out and people sit outdoors to eat. You see it everywhere around the world - from Rome to New York City to La Jolla and San Diego. Because 15th Street has a slope, I can understand the need to have a level surface. But why weren't the restaurants required to have simple (and more see-through) railings to differentiate between the street and the raised platform? Why allow these massive brick and concrete walls, turrets, and structures?

We are quickly losing the charm and grace of our town, led by a Council that has taken its collective eyes off the ball when it comes to controlling development. Is it 1980s déjà vu all over again?

Anne Farrell
1415 Via Alta
Del Mar