

MARTINEZ

CONCISE HISTORY OF MARTINEZ REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY WARS

1950s to 2009



Our Story

- This history is courtesy of some TALL citizens who fought the battle--- Nino Billecci/ Joe Billecci /Leo Russo /John Billecci / Mel Carone and the Downtown Homeowners Association. Many others were involved, but these few were always at the forefront.
- Started over 50 years ago.
- Mid-1950
 - City Council for Redevelopment Agency.
 - Came to Nino and said “just give us 1 block”
 - Group snooped and then found a plan already drawn up to condemn all the area from Brown Street. to the water, and build 4-6 story apartments.
 - They shot it down.



Our Story

- Late 60's-early 70's
- Fight among the power brokers over our waterfront.
- 3 factions: put a trailer park, use for recreation, or build townhouses and apartments
- Housing group said 1200 units financed by a Redevelopment Agency.
- Through several events, Waterfront Committee, and City's first General Plan got Recreation as primary use and no Redevelopment Agency.



Our Story

- 1974
- Council formed Redevelopment Agency. Included Waterfront and Sea Land Terminal out Marina Vista east of 680.
- Group qualified a Referendum
- Vote shot Redevelopment Agency down---67% said NO.



Our Story

- 80s to mid 90's
- Various attempts and City Council showdowns. Menesini involved.
- 3 studies paid for by City to bolster Redevelopment Agency.
- Boston Study most famous.
 - Hired big Boston consulting firm. Long study.
 - They finally said Martinez a unique quaint and historic town not fit for a Redevelopment Agency.
 - Consultant never invited to do further work for the City, to best of our knowledge.



Our Story

- 80s to mid 90's continued
- Open Space Initiative qualified by the group for public vote. Only took about 5 days to get the signatures.
- Prohibited ability for land assemblage---a key Redevelopment Agency purpose.
- City sued because too many issues on the initiative and City won.
- Initiative never got to ballot---so no public vote.



Our Story

- Late 90's
- Fight now revolved around flood control in the Downtown.
- Tom Powers, former County Supervisor and power broker, hired to head City efforts.
- Schroeder and Turnbaugh pushed for a Redevelopment Agency to finance
- Important City Council meeting to discuss.
 - Chambers packed. Doors to the plaza wide open to cool off.
 - On steps outside our Nino Billecci and Redevelopment Agency supporter Al Turnbaugh met by accident.
 - Big argument started between Nino and Al outside the doors of the Chamber. Voices got louder and louder. Slowly the Chambers went quiet as everyone inside the Chambers stopped and listened to the battle on the steps outside.
- City Council finally voted to fund the flood control project through assessment district. No Redevelopment Agency.



Our Story

- 2000-01
- Menesini and Schroder get City to fund a Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan.
 - Public committee packed with big development members.
 - Up to 3000 new housing units proposed, triple the existing number of homes in the Downtown.
 - Redevelopment Agency a probable part of the financing
- Big public meeting led Bill Wainwright and Tim Platt where plan problems exposed. Also at major City meeting.
- Council “accepted” the Plan and shelved it immediately. \$330K on the shelf.
- Bill and Tim run for City Council. Redevelopment Agency a hot topic.
- Bill is elected. Tim comes in third. (Two seats open.)



Our Story

- 2002
- Council appointed Janet Kennedy, spouse of County Redevelopment Agency Manager, to vacant seat.
Major controversy over why Platt not appointed.
- Pro-Redevelopment Agency Councilmembers now hold a 4-1 majority
- Economic Development person hired. Spend time on Redevelopment Agency & banners.



Our Story

- 2003
- Redevelopment Agency Feasibility study pushed hard by Delaney, then backs off when Council decides to hold public advisory vote
- 2004
- Measure M advisory vote

Very biased “education” piece published by City with public funds (10K).

We outspent 4 to 1 and still the vote almost failed.

Results: 6,336 / **51.9% Yes** 5,877 / **48.1% No**

“Yes” by 459 votes, out of 12213. 230 souls to change the outcome.



Our Story

- 2004 continued
- City Council passes Redevelopment Agency Ordinance
- We stop with Referendum
- 1/17/ 2007
- Ordinance rescinded by Council
Never put to public vote
Lots of talk about new ordinance



Our Story

- Early 2008
 - Council discusses either new Redevelopment Agency ordinance or putting another advisory vote on November ballot
 - Park/Library/Pool Bond getting attention
 - We start promoting truce for Bond drive to keep it from getting caught in Redevelopment Agency crossfire
- Summer 2008
 - Got our truce
 - Worked together to pass the Bond



Our Story

- 11/4/2008
- Passed Bond by 405 votes out of 17,763.
Showed power of us working together.
Narrow margin of victory showed need to work together to succeed.
- Wrote and spoke before City Council to continue truce.
All quiet...but no response
- 3/18/2009
- City Council notices special planning meeting for 3/21 at special location. Short notice and site has no TV or voice recording ability, unlike Council Chambers.



Our Story

- 3/21/2009
- Results of Special City Council meeting:

One of their top plans is 'to be shovel ready' to set up a Redevelopment Agency as soon as the economy turns.

Council has told City Manager he has 40K to "educate" the public on pros and cons.

Neither Council nor City Manager could think of any "cons" when asked by public.



50 Years and counting

- 50 YEARS—7 TRIES AT AN RDA, none succeeded!
- Question
 - Hasn't Martinez wasted enough time, energy and money on this failed idea?
- Answer from our City Council
 - NO! We won't stop until we wear down the community and get our RDA kingdom!

