

Candidate joins District 1 race

By **José A. López**

After spending nearly a decade as an activist in La Jolla and serving in a dozen community agencies, Sherri Lightner says she's ready for what's next.

And if she has her way, that means becoming the next person to represent District 1 in the San Diego City Council.

The large district stretches from La Jolla to the northeast corner of Rancho Penasquitos.

Lightner is one of three candidates who have launched campaigns for the seat, which will be left vacant by Council President Scott Peters, who will be termed out at the end of his current term. This is her first political campaign.

Lightner's opponents are business owners Marshall Merrifield and Phil Thalheimer.

"This is a natural progression," Lightner said in a phone interview last week.

She said her involvement in groups such as the La Jolla Community Planning Association, the La Jolla Town Council and the La Jolla Shores Association have given her a glimpse into how the city works.

She said that includes experience with land development, coastal regulations, traffic and environmental concerns.

A San Diego resident since 1959, Lightner earned a Master's of Science degree from UCSD and is licensed in California as a mechanical engineer.

She retired after 23 years of working in R&D and aerospace industries and now owns an engineering consulting firm with her husband.

Lightner said her engineering background means she's used to looking at the finer details of things while keeping an eye toward the broader picture.



SHERRI LIGHTNER

In the case of San Diego, Lightner said, the picture isn't pretty.

"Quite frankly, the city is broken and we need to fix it," Lightner said. "People don't trust City Hall anymore and I'd like to rebuild that trust."

Lightner said she wants to encourage citizen participation in their city government.

"A lot of the things that happened, and the problems that we're still dealing with now,

were because ... decisions were made behind closed doors," she said. "The city really needs to operate as an entity that is citizen-based and open to public scrutiny."

Lightner said that if elected, her goals would include getting the city a good credit rating, allowing it to put out bonds for infrastructure improvements.

She said the region's water situation, brush management and making improvements that have been put off are also high on her list of priorities.

Lightner has made an appearance at several meetings of the Rancho Penasquitos Planning Board and said she plans to start walking precincts in the area soon.

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