

TIMES of SAN DIEGO

Shaping of Seaport San Diego Project Continues with Boosts to Open Space, Coastal Access



Talks over Seaport San Diego project continue; developers presented renderings on plan updates to the Port board Thursday. Photo credit: @portofsandiego, via Twitter

BY EDITOR

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The development team for Seaport San Diego has presented new renderings to the Port of San Diego to illustrate contemplated revisions for the Central Embarcadero project.

At a Thursday special meeting by the Board of Port Commissioners, the team discussed how the updated proposal creates a more open feel along the waterfront – dramatically increasing coastal access, recreational activities and views of San Diego Bay.

“We are keeping the best of what the waterfront currently offers while adding experiences that reflect community wants and needs and creating a more open feel along the waterfront,” said Yehudi Gaffen, CEO of 1HWY1, the winner of a 2016 competitive bidding process for the project.

In the series of new renderings, prepared by master architect CallisonRTKL Inc., project changes include adding recreational open space, widening walkways, improving circulation and opening sight lines to the water.

These improvements would be achieved by reducing proposed density, lowering building heights, increasing setbacks and moving most parking underground.

Port commissioners praised 1HWY1 for making significant concessions in response to public input. They also requested two further changes – reducing the number of proposed vessel slips and ensuring the G Street Mole area provides adequate space for commercial fishing activities.

The Port has received more than 400 letters of support for the Seaport San Diego proposal in this year.

Speakers at the July 21 meeting included downtown residents and representatives of the Downtown San Diego Partnership, San Diego County Bicycle Coalition, San Diego Airport Authority, San Diego Tourism Authority and San Diego Regional EDC, TMA BlueTech and Womxn's Work.

The proposal includes:

- Creating continuous, public open space along the water.
- Providing new, state-of-the-art commercial fishing facilities.
- Tripling the width of walkways on the Central Embarcadero from the current average of 20 feet wide to an average of 60 feet wide.
- Increasing the number of recreational experiences to include expanded and improved parks, piers, a living shoreline, an urban beach, a kids' nature play area, a "green strand" elevated walkway and much more.
- Boosting recreational open space from the current 14.8 acres to 16 acres.
- Nearly doubling the length of direct, publicly accessible views to the water along the Central Embarcadero, from the current 7,938 feet of water views to 15,515 feet of water views.

Since 2016, 1HWY1 has refined its proposed project in response to board and stakeholder feedback and input from prospective partners. The team has made more than 100 public presentations to ensure public involvement and has held 260 meetings with local commercial fishermen.

In December, Seaport San Diego submitted a draft Project Description to the Port. In March, the port commissioners discussed the proposal and heard public comment. Since then, the team has focused on responding to the feedback.

"The positive response we heard from the Board of Port Commissioners gives us confidence that we are successfully addressing their comments and direction," Gaffen said. "We are filled with optimism and excitement as we prepare to enter the next phase of this project in partnership with the Port of San Diego."

Over the next three months, next steps for 1HWY1 include revising the Project Description document to incorporate changes and submitting notice of the project's financial feasibility to the Port.

The board then is expected to consider moving the proposed project into the California Environmental Quality Act review process.