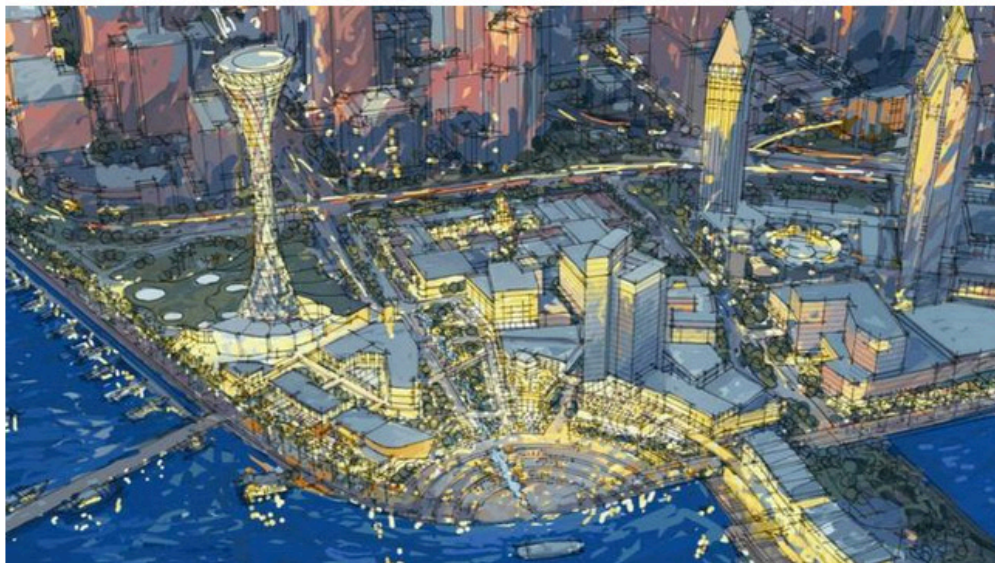




# Port of San Diego officials mostly approve of new Seaport Village plans



An earthquake fault line under Seaport Village led to a change in plans for its redesign, such as moving an aquarium. (Gafcon)



By **Phillip Molnar** - Contact Reporter

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**T**he government agency that oversees the redevelopment of Seaport Village in downtown San Diego mostly voiced approval Tuesday of changes made after an earthquake fault line was discovered on the site.

Unified Port of San Diego officials won't vote on changes until September, but this was the first chance for them to give their opinion on plans from Protea Waterfront Development after major alterations.

Commissioners said that they expected whatever firm won the contract in 2016 to have changes after given more time to study the site.

"I'm still in the camp that this is a very worthy, very beautiful project," said commissioner Dan Malcolm, "and it is a world-class project. I felt that way when I approved it. I feel that way today."

The big changes were moving the site of a hotel, turning the fault line into a long pedestrian mall surrounded by trees and moving an aquarium next to a 480-foot observation tower.

Concern from the Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, a port tenant, that their view would be blocked by the new designs may be the biggest stumbling block for developers.

Matthew Adams, area vice president at the Grand Hyatt, submitted a letter to the board saying the new design would block views of the San Diego Bay from the hotel, create traffic problems and hurt its business.



“The density of the project is extreme and disproportionate to the amount of land adjacent to the hotel,” he wrote.

The Hyatt is the third-biggest [moneymaker for the port](#), bringing in \$11.4 million in fiscal year 2015. Commissioners said they were concerned about pitting one tenant against another.

“Anyway we can accommodate our existing tenant, that would be an ideal situation,” said Commissioner Robert Valderrama.

Yehudi “Gaf” Gaffen, CEO of Protea, said they had a meeting planned with the Hyatt later this week.

Commissioner Michael Zucchet said he was excited about the design, particularly the role of Scripps Institution of Oceanography in working with developers on an aquarium and learning center on the site, but hoped Protea could come to some sort of understanding with Hyatt.

“I agree with what has been said about the importance of Hyatt as a tenant,” Zucchet said, praising Protea’s efforts to meet with them. “With that said I think the Hyatt doesn’t expect that this is going to be the future. Nor is the Hyatt, or anybody downtown, entitled to their views forever.”

Commissioners also said a plan from Protea to build eight villas on the site, presumably for very affluent visitors, would probably invite scrutiny from the California Coastal Commission.

Public comments on the new design were mixed with most business organizations supporting the design and individuals leaning negative.

Business consultant Wayne Rafflesberger said the project was jammed up with too many things and encouraged the commissioners to go back to the drawing board.

“I can safely say this is one of the worst projects I have ever seen,” he said. “Why do we need a tower element that looks like a mushroom on steroids?”

Daniel Reeves, a senior vice president for Downtown San Diego Partnership, said his organization supported the new designs.

“The changes presented today are not only beautiful, but also artfully address site constraints,” he said, “while continuing to raise the bar for the type of world-class projects our city deserves and should expect.”