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Changes made to Seaport Village redevelopment plan



Rendering courtesy of 1HWY1

A rendering of the revised plan to redevelop Seaport Village.

By Thor Kamban Biberman

As a result of a fault line, market factors and other conditions, the revised Seaport San Diego plan looks very different than the one proposed last year.

The Seaport San Diego team presented revised plans for the redevelopment of Seaport Village and the Central Embarcadero to the Port of San Diego Board of Commissioners last week.

"Anytime you're dealing with a project of this size and scope it's going to evolve over time as we learn more about the site and best uses," said Yehudi Gaffen, the project's managing partner and CEO of Gafcon, Inc.

Not every new element of the plan was altered because of the fault line. For example, the decision to reduce the overall retail square footage from 388,625 to 277,172 was more due to tough market conditions.

Some of the properties on the site have seen their square footage expanded.

The size of the aquarium will be increased from 178,490 square feet to 192,050 square feet. A butterfly exhibit has been included with the new square footage.

The aquarium, which will be jointly operated by OdySea and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, also has been relocated from the southeastern corner of the site to an area near Tuna Harbor and Ruocco Park.

Plans for the 480-foot Spire, which is hoped will become an iconic symbol for San Diego, have been significantly changed as well.

The attraction has been moved to a location closer to the aquarium, and the scope of the facility has been increased from an 18,000-square-foot lobby and tower space to 88,331 square feet in a complex that will contain a restaurant, lounge, and an observation level.

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As a result of the fault line, the developers of Seaport San Diego have had to move a planned five-star luxury hotel and sharply reduce its capacity from 500 rooms in 405,805 square feet to 231 rooms in 367,964 square feet.

The number of rooms in an additional micro hotel will remain the same at 350, but the new plan will have 130,937 square feet versus 117,450 square feet.

A third lodging property, which will be a hostel, has seen its size increase from 225 rooms to 237 with the number of beds climbing from 475 to 490. The presence of a hostel should please the staff of the California Coastal Commission, which demands low-cost lodging options prior to recommending approval of major hotel developments and components.

The property's proposed charter school and a learning school has been expanded from 64,150 square feet to 84,600 square feet, which will include a marine-related school to be administered by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

The Seaport San Diego plan has also seen a substantial increase in its office component.

Although a small marine-related office would be part of a building containing a food hall and a microbrewery, Seaport San Diego recognized the need for additional office space. As a result of the perceived need for additional "blue tech" space, the office component has climbed from 19,130 square feet to more than 140,000 square feet.

Parking, which had originally been proposed for two garages, is now being planned for three separate structures as a result of the fault. The space count is projected to drop from 2,410 to 2,323 spaces.

The size of the events center, which will serve as an adjunct to the hotel, is unchanged at 20,000 square feet. It will feature banquet and meeting spaces.

While the amount of public space remains essentially the same, a park and a water feature are being planned along the fault line that winds its way through the middle of the project. The revised plan includes roughly 30 acres of water and 40 acres of land, including 14 acres of parks with a man-made public beach.

"While the fault has presented us with some constraints, it also has created new opportunities to improve the public realm and waterside," the Seaport San Diego team released in a statement. "We now have accessibility via a gateway into the project on Pacific Highway, and a new park with water amenities."

The Port will not vote on any changes until later this year, but last week was the first opportunity for commissioners to review the proposed changes to the redevelopment plan for the 70-acre Seaport Village site.

Team members in the project include Gaffen; Jeff Jacobs and Jeff Essakow of Protea Waterfront Development; OdySea Aquarium; ThrillCorp, Inc.; RCI Marine Group; AVR P Skyport; Perkins Eastman; Gensler; Moffat & Nichol; and Ninyo and Moore.

thor_biberman@sdtranscript.com