

San Diego Convention Center Project

Third Phase Expansion Public Information Forums

Summary Report

July 14 and 17, 2010



Summary Report

Introduction

To facilitate ongoing public involvement during the proposed third phase expansion of the San Diego Convention Center, the San Diego Convention Center Corporation hosted two public information forums to regarding the planning and approval process. Two meetings were held on different dates and at different times of the day to increase public participation.

The purpose of the meetings was twofold: 1) To inform the public about the details of the planning and approval process including the history of the proposed expansion, summary of the Mayor's Task Force findings, roles of the public agencies involved, upcoming planning and approval phases, milestone events, and future regulatory decisions; and 2) To solicit public input on urban design and planning principles surrounding the proposed Convention Center expansion in order to inform the design team selection process.

The first of the two forums was held on Wednesday, July 14, 2010 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Embarcadero Planning Center downtown. More than 70 people attended the first forum including individuals, representatives of regional civic organizations, adjacent Port tenants, and design professionals.

The second forum took place on Saturday, July 17, 2010 from 10 a.m. to noon. An optional behind-the-scenes tour of the San Diego Convention Center and proposed expansion area was offered to members of the public at 9 a.m. that morning. More than 28 people attended the informational forum, representing a range of stakeholders. Sixteen people participated in the optional tour of the facility.

In both forums, the presentations and facilitated discussion were identical. Only the responses and questions from members of the public varied. All participants were also given an optional written worksheet for recording specific ideas and comments. Some of those worksheets were submitted to the staff at the conclusion of the meeting and those remarks are reflected in the following pages. The meeting agendas, PowerPoint presentation and additional written comments received from the public are available online.

The following is a summary of the public's input on urban planning issues related to the proposed third phase expansion of the Convention Center. Also included are questions received from members of the public and their corresponding responses from San Diego Convention Center Corporation and/or Port of San Diego representatives.

Public Comment

*(Note: The * symbol represents comments that were repeated by more than one person.)*

Resource Conservation Discussion

Additional Sustainability Measures to Consider:

Energy

- Achieving a “net zero” building
- Wind power generation **
- Solar power
- Lease rooftop area for photovoltaic power systems
- Sending photo-voltaic energy generated to the grid
- Energy-efficient (LED) lighting
- Energy co-generation
- Passive energy systems

Water

- Water-efficient landscaping
- Dual pipe system [water reclamation]
- Waterless urinals
- Using reclaimed water for [toilets] and landscaping

Recycling/Reuse

- Biomass waste management
- “Green” measures to mitigate transportation impacts
- Set target of 100% recycling
- Use reusable modules for convention display systems to reduce waste in construction materials

- Reduction of virgin materials used

Transportation

- Put finances toward public transportation
- Work actively with downtown hotels to provide pedestrian maps to promote walking
- Increase the use of water transportation to lessen demand for public and private ground transportation

Other

- Provide public open space
- Consider a global outlook [toward sustainability]
- Net positive for resources – generate excess energy, send recycled water and biomass resources to the Marina District [downtown]

Most Valued Environmental Sustainability Measures:

*(Note: Participants who turned in optional written comments were asked to prioritize three of the following six environmental sustainability measures. The * symbol indicates responses. Some participants noted that they felt all measures were important.)*

- Reduce energy demand *****
- Recue water demand *****
- On-site water treatment ****
- Recycling programs ***
- Use recycled building materials **
- Purchase green products

Important Environmental Impacts to Mitigate:

Transportation

- Vehicular traffic
- Minimize traffic congestion with a downtown circulator
- Potential traffic caused by the opening of Park Blvd. at Harbor Dr.

Public Access

- Maintain intuitive access to the waterside
- Design easily penetrated development [by pedestrians]
- Maintain easy lateral circulation along the waterfront
- Blocking access to Embarcadero Marina Park South

Water

- Storm water run-off
- Water use and re-use
- Water conservation/consumption **

Energy

- Power impacts
- [Energy] with photovoltaic, wind power

Other

- [Mitigate environmental impacts by] no further expansion
- Mitigate for the loss of any existing park space
- Minimize bird strikes [on windows]
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Resource consumption
- Pedestrian congestion
- Blockage of water views
- Landfill impacts

Environmental Sustainability - Other Comments:

- Convention attendees want to be “green” and will appreciate “green” ways to access the Center.
- We need to pursue being green in every way possible, from green rooftops to transportation.
- Looks like [the Convention Center] is doing well [with regard to environmental sustainability].

Public Access Discussion

Measures to Support Pedestrian and Vehicular Wayfinding and Access:

Wayfinding and Vehicular Access

- Create wayfinding systems (signage) and entrances that are appealing and draw people to the waterfront
- Support vehicular wayfinding with signage, lighting and narrow streets
- Collaborate with CCDC’s new wayfinding program (Tara Lake)
- Install high-tech real-time parking availability displays outside the Center and at major parking garages to minimize drivers searching for parking
- Digital electrical signage; electronic wayfinding**
- Promote available Convention Center parking to the public when not in use
- Branded signage
- Move public access to the park to the west side of the Convention Center
- Considering undergrounding Harbor Drive in front of the entire Convention Center
- Transit and shuttles
- Eighth Avenue [Park Boulevard] going through
- Roadways to the South Embarcadero should be wide, visible, open and tree-lined

Pedestrian Access

- Pathways to the Convention Center and through the facilities are not intuitive make them more accessible for the public and Convention Center users
- Any impacts to public access must be mitigated including pedestrian areas, park space adjacent to the Hilton Hotel and Plaza Park
- Make public access to the waterfront clear, intuitive and easy, especially for pedestrians
- Use Universal Design principles to make pathways to and through the Convention Center easy to navigate
- Follow through on the proposed Fourth Avenue pedestrian bridge over Harbor Drive to improve public access to the bay between Convention Center first and second phase buildings
- Build a pedestrian bridge across the railroad [tracks]
- Find ways to create new east-west public access and view corridors through the existing convention center complex as part of this project
- Make it safe and easy for pedestrians to navigate across Convention Center Way, across the truck and automobile traffic
- Provide access for special needs populations
- Improve pedestrian access from Fifth Avenue (Gaslamp Quarter) to the Convention Center
- Provide a clear path for pedestrians – not like the access by the Marriott
- Widen and enhance the existing pathway between the Convention Center and the Marriott
- Provide multiple access points
- Create more functional public access along the west side of the expansion by the bay
- Activate the bayside pedestrian path

Other

- Make the waterfront a destination, make it a public event

- Create large building setbacks from the water's edge
- Enhance water transportation; provide public "water buses"
- Consider an innovative pedestrian bridge over Harbor Drive [connecting to the Gaslamp Quarter], perhaps with retail or multi-purpose spaces, something like the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy
- Support a Sea Bus transportation system, as in other cities
- Public art
- Smart Phone applications

Potential Measures to Enhance Public Safety or the Perception of Safety

- Enhance public safety, or the perception of safety with very little grade change for public access, street trees, landscaping, enhanced paving and high quality materials, and by activating the space 24/7
- Design for pedestrians and bicycles
- Public art
- Traffic calming
- Activation of space
- Lighting**
- Pedestrian bridge over Harbor Drive
- Parking
- Stronger connection between downtown and the Convention Center

Public Access - Other Comments:

- Restore public access to the bay that was lost in the first expansion of the Center.
- During the Republican National Convention here [in 1996], the streets were closed and the pedestrian was "king;" it was great and felt very European.
- I came by bus to the meeting today and very few people could tell me the way here.

Waterfront Enhancement Discussion

Successful Activities at South Embarcadero Marina Park:

- Summer Pops
- Concerts**
- Food festivals
- Wine festival
- Art shows**
- Convention receptions
- Jogging and walking
- Comic-Con, Padres games, Auto Show

Potential Activities to Activate the South Embarcadero Waterfront:

- Tourist events
- Retail expansion
- Need big magnets to draw community to park land, waterside
- Trails
- Pedestrian promenade
- Promenade with waterfront retail
- Plazas
- Dog park
- Community garden with demonstration/interpretive elements
- Widen and enhance the path along the bay
- Increase opportunities to be at the waterfront elevation
- Utilize the water

- Restore a piece of natural shoreline to demonstrate the natural conditions that existed in the past
- Provide one free, accessible public meeting room for groups to bring the public to the Convention Center and the South Embarcadero
- Create active programming of the public space (e.g. dog parks, special events)
- Facilitate public safety, recreation and preservation of scenic views
- Create a band shell in the park for performances, evening events, art programs
- Look at Northerly Island in the Chicago area as a programming model
- Create an outdoor area for public gatherings/forums
- Provide educational or interpretive spaces for the public (school children)**
- Connect the northern and southern Embarcadero parks with an aerial bridge
- Put the cruise ship terminal on the Tenth Avenue Marine Terminal and connect to create synergy with the Convention Center
- Carefully define the retail space (restaurants, shops, etc.)
- Look at the City of Pittsburgh's two-week festival with temporary art installations – it's creative and innovative
- Create restaurants that activate the ground floor parks and waterfront, have water views
- Chargers games

Potential Public Amenities to Serve Residents or Visitors:

- Better access to Gaslamp historic center
- Outdoor movies
- Music
- Connect citizens to the Convention Center by hosting public events on your black-out days (e.g. the holidays)
- Provide a variety of restaurant choices (range of food, prices)
- Provide benches and shady spots for pedestrians to stop and enjoy the waterfront

- Create more permanent activation of the [South Embarcadero Marina Park]
- Exercise course (perhaps with artistic/Dr. Seuss-themed sculptural equipment/stations unique to San Diego)
- A beach for downtown residents
- Launch ramp for residents to launch small boats, kayaks, etc.****
- Public art
- Free, local-serving transit
- Tourists will enjoy a vibrant public/working waterfront that supports downtown and regional needs

How is Plaza Park Used Today?

- Site for sculpture, public access, open space, [element of] Port Master Plan
- Pedestrian thoroughfare, not well utilized, should be gardens with shade
- Not used by the public very much
- Passive view park; too architectural; not programmed
- Not used – Niki [de Saint Phalle] sculpture is good but other (arches, etc.) are not really usable
- Existing parks are not well used – the plan should improve this

Should Park Space along the So. Embarcadero be Active, Passive or Both?

- Both*****
- Active***
- Not an “open space” – the Bay is open space enough
- No ball fields
- Passive but with pick-up activities such as half-court basketball, Frisbee golf, soccer
- Encourage walking, running, bicycling and dog walking

Important Views to Protect or Enhance:

- Bay views***
- All that exist today**
- Views of the city
- Coronado Bridge
- There aren't many significant view corridors remaining
- Find ways to create new east-west public access and view corridors through the existing convention center complex as part of this project
- Park Boulevard; top of the stairs at Phase II; every other view that remains of the water from Harbor Drive
- Preserve the water views from inside the Phase II building
- West, northwest and southwest

Waterfront Enhancement - Other Comments:

- Need to determine which public amenities, including the existing one acre park on the former Fifth Avenue Landing parcel and Plaza Park were mitigation for the first Convention Center expansion.
- Don't want the hotel to block views to the water.
- Bring artists on to the team early on to ensure that public art supports wayfinding, functional design and sustainability measures – public art doesn't have to be just “art for art's sake.”
- Don't overbuild the retail, creating too much supply or competition.
- [Embarcadero Marina Park South] is not very well used; Convention Center layout makes it unattractive as a park.

General Public Comments

- I hope the selection of the design team by the Advisory Committee is a good one.
- Why do we keep spending millions of dollars studying traffic when we can see what's obvious? We need alternatives to ground transportation.
- I'm very concerned about the height, size and location of the hotel. The current location is a horrible idea.
- How can you design the building when you don't know how you'll fund it? How it's funded will determine how it's designed/built.
- Don't "undershoot" – by the time each phase of the Convention Center was built, it was already outgrown; demand will continue to be high because of the waterfront location and views; no other sites offer these views.
- The Port benefits directly from parking space utilization in both the Center and in the new parking facility south of the Center. Given this, the Port should contribute its income from parking to support the proposed future financing of the Center's expansion.
- Put the Summer Pops [with a] permanent band shell on Navy Pier.

Questions & Answers

The following are questions raised by the members of the public on July 14 and 17 and summarized responses given by Convention Center and Port officials. The questions and responses have been paraphrased to enhance clarity for the reader.

Parks and Open Space

Q. Can the land currently used as park/open space immediately north of the Hilton Hotel ever be built upon?

- A. That land is currently designated for park use in the Port Master Plan. Any development use will be subject to approval of a Port Master Plan Amendment permitting such use.

Q. There is currently one acre of the Fifth Avenue Landing leasehold that has been landscaped as parks/open space. If the third phase of the Convention Center is built on that land, how will you compensate for the loss of that park space?

- A. As we move forward with the design of the third phase expansion, there will be opportunities to mitigate any loss of park space.

Public Access

Q. Is the pedestrian bridge that appears in the conceptual site plan renderings still under consideration?

- A. The bridge was a conceptual addition during the site planning process. The concept will be further evaluated for feasibility during the formal design phase.

Q. Is Convention Way a dedicated right-of-way and can it be removed or changed? Does the expansion plan propose removing the roadway?

- A. No. The ultimate location of Convention Way will depend on the design of the expansion. Convention Way will be sited in a way to provide continued access to Embarcadero Marina Park.

Q. How are the 18-wheel trucks that serve the Convention Center staged and routed? What about private buses?

- A. The San Diego Convention Center Corporation has a marshalling yard on Airport grounds where trucks are staged for routing to the Convention Center. Private

buses do not have a marshalling yard and their frequency and routes depend on the hotels that are hosting attendees and the schedule tied to the event. Truck routing in and out of the expansion facilities will be determined as part of the design process.

Transportation

Q. Will the Water Transportation Center on the Fifth Avenue Landing parcel be connected to the Convention Center?

A. Yes. It is envisioned that the docks will remain in their present location and the ticketing/administration functions will be incorporated into the Phase III building in close proximity.

Q. How is the expansion of the Convention Center being coordinated with the airport to be sure that the airport can accommodate the increase in visitors?

A. The staff of the San Diego Convention Center Corporation collaborates closely with that of the San Diego International Airport Authority regarding planning and transportation issues. The Airport Authority has plans for additional gates to accommodate increased air travel in the future.

Q. Does the Convention Center work with downtown hotels to promote walking to the facility instead of taking cabs or driving?

A. Yes.

Q. How much new parking will be needed for the expansion?

A. There is no additional parking planned to accommodate the expansion of the convention center. Additional parking will be required as part of the hotel development. The exact amount will be identified as part of the Environmental Impact Report process over the next 24 months.

Facility Design and Planning

Q. Will the third phase expansion include underground parking like the first phase, requiring a dewatering system?

A. No. There will be no underground parking in the third phase.

Q. Are there any earthquake faults under the phase three expansion site? Have studies been done.

A. No, there are no known faults beneath the phase three site. Seismic studies were conducted as part of the Environmental Impact Report for the phase two expansion (southern building).

Q. Could the Tenth Avenue Marine Terminal be used for Convention Center purposes?

A. The Tenth Avenue Marine Terminal is not being considered and it is not viewed as a viable site for a convention center expansion.

Q. What environmental guidelines have already been determined so far?

A. Only those specified in the lease between the Port of San Diego and the San Diego Convention Center Corporation:

"Minimize adverse impacts resulting from bulk, massing and scale of the Expansion; Facilitate lateral movement of the public and activate the waterfront; Create and maintain market viability of the Project's retail along the waterfront; Maximize opportunities to co-locate pedestrian and vehicular access to Embarcadero Marina Park South and maintain the quality of that access; Create and maintain viable public access to the Expansion Hotel site; and Maximize the market viability of the Expansion Hotel as an independent component of the Project."

Q. Does the San Diego Convention Center Corporation have a [long-range plan] for future growth over 10, 20 or 30 years? Where will future phase go after this expansion?

A. There are no plans beyond the current process for expanding the Convention Center.

Design Team Selection Process

Q. Will any of the [architecture] firms involved in the Mayor's Task Force process be excluded from responding to the design team selection Request for Qualifications?

A. No.

Q. Who will select the design team for the Convention Center expansion?

A. A Selection Committee comprised of individuals representing the Port, City of San Diego and San Diego Convention Center Corporation, will oversee the entire process, and at the conclusion, will make a recommendation to the SDCCC Board of Directors

to vote on approval of the final contract. The selection process involves several steps beginning with a review and recommendation by a team including regional facility design, development and planning professionals. A list of individuals serving on the review committee can be found here:

<http://www.sdccc.org/pressroom/details.cfm/newsid/181>

Q. How will the City pay for the design team selection and design process?

- A. The San Diego Convention Center Corporation has budgeted for administrative costs associated with the planning and design of the proposed Phase III expansion.

South Embarcadero Hotel

Q. What is the future of the previously approved hotel in the current Port Master Plan?

- A. The hotel is an existing and approved land use in the current Port Master Plan. The proposed Port master Plan Amendment will retain plans for a hotel, now referred to for planning purposes as the Expansion Hotel, which would range in size from 250 to 500 rooms.

Q. Will environmental impacts to or from the planned hotel be measured in the Environmental Impact Report for the Phase III expansion?

- A. Yes.

Q. What was the main reason for including the hotel in the San Diego Convention Center's expansion plans?

- A. Inclusion of the Expansion Hotel in the proposed Port Master Plan Amendment for the Convention Center expansion is required under the San Diego Convention Center Corporation's lease with the San Diego Unified Port District.

Q. Who will own the hotel and how large will it be? Will it block views?

- A. The hotel would range in size from 250 to 500 rooms. Any proposed project design is subject to approval through the Port Master Plan, the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") and the California Coastal Act. The selected firm may be requested to develop alternatives for the Project (Expansion & Hotel) as required under CEQA for the Environmental Impact Report. According to the negotiated lease between the Port and the San Diego Convention Center Corporation, the hotel development rights will revert to the Port following the successful approval of

authorization from the various agencies. Any changes to the design approved in the existing Port Master Plan will strive to minimize any potential view impacts.

- A. Port tidelands are public lands, managed by the Port for the citizens of California. The businesses that operate on those lands are leaseholders. According to the negotiated lease between the Port and the San Diego Convention Center Corporation, the hotel development rights will revert to the Port following the environmental review and approval process of local land state agencies. A private hotel operator would then manage the hotel. The hotel is anticipated to range in size from 250 to 500 rooms and would be designed to minimize potential view impacts.

Q. Where will the hotel go and how will this be determined?

- A. The exact location of the hotel is not yet known and will be determined through the expansion design process in the coming year.

Public Financing

Q. Was the Transit Occupancy Tax (hotel room tax) referenced in the presentation comparing the forecast vs. actual performance calculated in current dollars?

- A. Yes. We did so to ensure we were comparing apples to apples.

Q. Is the revenue from the hotel needed for the third phase expansion of the Convention Center to pencil out?

- A. No.

Q. How will the proposed Phase III expansion be financed by the City? What process will the Mayor's office use?

- A. The specific funding mechanisms have not yet been determined by the Mayor. A variety of mechanisms are described in the Mayor's Citizen Task Force Report which are available online at www.conventioncentertaskforce.org.

General/Other

Q. What's a realistic timeframe for the completion of Phase III?

- A. Mid-2015.

Q. *Who owns the land on which the expansion will be built?*

- A. The land is public tidelands held by the citizens of California and administered on behalf of the State by the Port of San Diego. Businesses including the San Diego Convention Center are tenants on the property and Port serves as their landlord.