



# CEQA and COASTAL DETERMINATIONS and NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Project: South Embarcadero Mole Pier Renovation by Hilton Bayfront  
Location: 1 Park Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92101  
Parcel No.: 019-044, 019-047  
Project No.: 2024-061  
Applicant: Justin Parsons, Director - Project Manager, Hilton San Diego Bayfront, 1 Park Boulevard, San Diego, CA, 92101, (949) 382-3056  
Date Approved: 11/18/2025

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project would involve the renovation of the existing South Embarcadero mole pier by Hilton Bayfront (Tenant)(Hotel) in the city of San Diego, California. The purpose of this proposed project is to enhance the existing South Embarcadero pier to increase public access to the currently unutilized pier and improve the existing pier space for exterior events for the Hotel. The pier would be open and accessible to the public when not being temporarily utilized for Hotel events. Work to specifically complete the proposed project is outlined as follows:

- Install a guardrail around the pier to match the existing railing along the Embarcadero.
- Install stairs and an ADA ramp to connect the walkway to the mole pier which is currently at a lower elevation than the walkway.
- Install embedded anchors in the mole pier to allow for easier temporary tent setup and removal for events (permanent tents are not permitted as part of this project. Installation of temporary tents in the future requires separate approval).
- Install moveable benches on the mole pier for public use. The moveable benches would remain on the pier to be utilized as public seating unless otherwise temporarily removed for a special event.
- Install new power at the mole pier by providing power from the Hotel.
- Perform exploration of subsurface utilities prior to the start of boring activities to locate and ensure no disturbance to existing utilities.

The purpose of the exploration phase is to examine and locate existing subsurface utilities prior to boring conduit. To complete this, a vac truck would take approximately 1 day to drill three 8" diameter holes adjacent to Area 2 to locate the existing utilities. The holes would remain open for approximately 5 days until the boring is completed, and they would then be filled in to match the existing concrete. The vac truck would be fenced off during the drilling and the open holes would be covered with delineators fastened to the top during the boring, therefore there are no anticipated impacts to public access during this exploration phase.

There are three (3) work areas for this project which are outlined in Figure 1 below.

### Area 1

Area 1 consists of the existing mole pier and would be the construction staging area for the duration of the proposed project. Temporary fencing would be installed at the mouth of the pier that would extend no further than 8 feet into the promenade, maintaining access to the walkway for the duration of construction. The temporary tent anchors would be installed around the perimeter of the pier, and when not in use, would have a cap covering the anchors, therefore not posing any tripping hazards to the public.

### Area 2

To provide power to the pier from the Hotel's underground utilities, existing pavers would be removed, and temporary fencing would be installed at Area 2, adjacent to the intersection of the South Embarcadero Promenade and the Park to Bay Link trail. A boring rig would be placed inside the fenced off area to bore approximately 4-inch diameter conduits to the pier. Public access on the promenade

would not be restricted during this time as all boring activities would occur underground and this method of boring does not require closure of the promenade. This phase of the project would take approximately 2 weeks to complete. Upon completion of boring the conduits, the removed pavers, as well as disturbed landscaping, would be replaced in kind. Fencing of Area 2 would not block access to the adjacent walkway and public access would be maintained.

### Area 3

Area 3 is located in front of a staff entry door on the northern wall of the Hotel. To access power from the electrical room located directly on the inside of the building in Area 3, and using the same boring method, conduits would be bored from Area 2 to Area 3. The impacted doorway in Area 3 is for staff entry only and would not impact public access to the Hotel or to the adjacent pathway. Temporary fencing for boring activities would be in place in Area 3 for approximately 2 weeks. ADA compliance would be maintained with a side entry point and additional nearby entry options.

Figure 1



The pier shall be open to the general public during park hours for at least 85% of the year. The pier may be utilized for Hotel events for up to 15% of the year which shall be distributed throughout the year and not occur only in the summer months (Port Master Plan Water and Land Use Policy 4.2.6). When not in temporary use for hotel-permitted events, the pier would remain open and accessible to the public at all times.

During construction, proper public access signage would be implemented as well as notification of any restricted areas. Construction of the proposed project is anticipated to occur in early 2026 and take approximately 3 months to complete.

The Tenant would be responsible for complying with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding construction demolition debris, hazards and hazardous materials, and stormwater.

The following categorical determinations are based on the project submittal and all project information known to the District as of the date of this determination.

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## **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

### ***CATEGORICAL DETERMINATION***

Categorical Exemptions: CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1)/District Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA Section 3.a: Existing Facilities; and CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 (Class 2)/District Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA Section 3.b: Replacement or Reconstruction

3.a. Existing Facilities: Includes operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing, including but not limited to:

- (1) Repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing mooring facilities, floats, piers, piles, wharves, bulkhead, revetment, buoys, or similar structures; marine terminal facilities; and commercial industrial, or recreational facilities.

AND/OR

3.b. Replacement or Reconstruction: Includes replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure being replaced.

The proposed project is determined to be Categorically Exempt pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines and the Section(s) of the District's *Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA* as identified above. These are appropriate because enhancing the existing mole pier would involve no expansion of use beyond that previously existing, would not result in a significant cumulative impact due to the continuation of the existing use, would be located on the same site, and would have substantially the same purpose and capacity. The District has determined none of the six exceptions to the use of a categorical exemption apply to this project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2).

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15062, a 35-day statute of limitations for this CEQA exemption shall apply from the date a Notice of Exemption is posted with the San Diego County Clerk, or a 180-day statute of limitations for this CEQA exemption shall apply if no Notice of Exemption is filed.

## **CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT**

### ***PORT MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY***

Planning District: 3 - Centre City Embarcadero (Precise Plan Figure 11)

Land Use Designation: Park/Plaza and Promenade

The proposed project conforms to the certified Port Master Plan because it would involve enhancing the existing Hilton Bayfront mole pier consistent with the existing certified Land Use designation(s). The proposed project would not change the use of the site, nor would it interrupt or expand the existing conforming uses of the site. Furthermore, the pier shall remain open to the general public during park hours for at least 85% of the year, consistent with the Specific Plan language for the Convention Way

Basin Planning Subarea within Planning District 3: Centre City Embarcadero of the Port Master Plan.

### **CATEGORICAL DETERMINATION**

Categorical Exclusions: Section 8.a: Existing Facilities and Section 8.b: Replacement or Reconstruction

8.a. Existing Facilities: The operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing, including but not limited to:

- (10) Repair, maintenance, or minor alterations of existing mooring facilities, floats, piers, bulkhead, revetment, buoys, or similar structures.

AND/OR

8.b. Replacement or Reconstruction: Replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located essentially on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced.

The proposed project is determined to be Categorically Excluded pursuant to the Section(s) of the District's *Coastal Development Permit Regulations* as identified above because enhancing the existing mole pier would involve negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing, would be located on the same site, and would have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the existing structure.

Pursuant to California Coastal Act Section 30717, there is a 10-working-day period to appeal this "Coastal Act Categorical Determination of Exclusion" to the California Coastal Commission.

### **CALIFORNIA PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE**

The proposed project complies with Section 87.(a)(5) of the Port Act, which allows for the construction, reconstruction, repair, maintenance, and operation of public buildings, public assembly and meeting places, convention centers, parks, playgrounds, bathhouses and bathing facilities, recreation and fishing piers, public recreation facilities, including, but not limited to, public golf courses, and for all works, buildings, facilities, utilities, structures, and appliances incidental, necessary, or convenient for the promotion and accommodation of any of those uses. The Port Act was enacted by the California Legislature and is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine. Consequently, the proposed project is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine.

SCOTT CHADWICK  
President/CEO

Determination by:  
Kelly Cunningham  
Planner I  
Development Services

Signature: Kelly Cunningham  
Date: 11/18/2025

Assistant/Deputy General Counsel

Signature: Shiraz Tangri  
Date: 11/18/2025