

Jacob Leon ([00:00](#)):

I think we're ready to start. First again, you've been hearing me talk this whole time, but again, my name is Jacob Leon, I'm working on behalf of the Port of San Diego on this Pepper Park expansion. I want to echo what the Commissioner Naranjo said at the very beginning. I want to apologize, I know there was a capacity issue that we had at the very beginning, and I truly apologize for that, and we'll make sure that it doesn't happen in the future, but I am very grateful that you all are here with us tonight, on time and ready to share your feedback. In my room I have Anna Buzaitis who is the Port of San Diego, and she's helping manage this project and she'll be helping me take notes for today's conversation. Commissioner Dukie. Thank you for being here. I see, you're in my room as well.

Jacob Leon ([00:45](#)):

So I want to kick off the conversation. I want to go in order, first I want to just open the floor for any general questions. If there aren't any general questions, we'll start with the wellbeing active improvements, so like the fun park stuff. It's okay if we jump around, that's not an issue, but we'll just try to go in order so we can have our notes be concise and appropriate. Any general question that's not related to park amenities, I can answer real quick. Yes, Danny.

Danny ([01:17](#)):

Yeah, I understand the limitation with the Zoom this evening wasn't anticipated, but I think it should be addressed, somehow. And I don't know if we know what those options might be right now. However, I think that it does need to be addressed and if there's a way to make a comment like that, that would be great this evening.

Jacob Leon ([01:42](#)):

Great. Thank you. I appreciate that. [crosstalk 00:01:45] Yes, Janice.

Janice ([01:49](#)):

Just a comment on that as well. Thank you, greetings everyone. Can it still be considered a public workshop if all the public was not able to attend?

Jacob Leon ([02:01](#)):

This is still considered a public workshop. It was just an oversight on the capacity issues with Zoom, and so we will be discussing with the Port of San Diego, how we can mitigate and address this issue. But thank you, Janice.

Janice ([02:16](#)):

And another comment is, what a good problem to have all of these people showed up? So great job. Thank you.

Jacob Leon ([02:19](#)):

Thank you, Janice. Yes, I am. I'm very grateful that it is a full house because sometimes you get a registration list that is large and then 10% of people show up. So I'm very grateful and thankful that we are at a hundred people tonight. Any other quick general questions? Commissioner Dukie?

Dukie ([02:43](#)):

Yeah. Going to Danny's comments and Janice's comment, I guess you guys have prior registration, what was the number that you guys were anticipating or that had potentially signed up? Because that would probably give you an indication, if you have more than a hundred sign up and your capacity was a hundred, then we fell short on meeting the needs of what the community wanted. So just my comments.

Jacob Leon ([03:09](#)):

Thank you for that commissioner. Yeah, we were hoping to hit about a hundred people today and that was the goal. Great. Thank you everybody. So let's go ahead and start with, would you like me to re-share the images again for inspiration or is somebody ready to share their ideas on the kinds of play and exercise and other type of park features that they would like to see here in Pepper Park?

Ricardo ([03:39](#)):

Do you mind putting up the map itself again? And that would kind of help get a visual?

Jacob Leon ([03:46](#)):

Sure. Just the map of Pepper Park itself?

Ricardo ([03:49](#)):

Yeah. And with the new area.

Jacob Leon ([03:53](#)):

Sure. One moment.

Anna Buzaitis ([03:55](#)):

The "What's At Play" graphic.

Jacob Leon ([04:20](#)):

So the "What's At Play" graphic, the park itself, the big bold dash outline that you see right here. That's the whole park expansion itself. What we have in green, that is part of the expansion that has been allocated as part of the Balanced Plan, the majority of the park itself, there's opportunities to look at it and reconfigure. What you see in red, such as the pier, the restroom building and the boat launch parking, the boat launch itself and the Aquatic Center. Those are items that will remain. We've identified the picnic area, that's just south of the restroom building, has a nice little corner in the park that probably we could keep if needed. Let me put into gallery mode. Did this answer your question? Just seeing the map again.

Ricardo ([05:14](#)):

Yeah, that's very helpful. Thank you.

Jacob Leon ([05:16](#)):

No problem, Ricardo. So did you want to kick off the conversation regarding the type of wellbeing activities that you would like to see? Ricardo?

Ricardo ([05:32](#)):

I know our mayor said, go ahead and go lobster, but being mindful of everybody's budget, in a sense, what are some of the structures there? I know you just pointed out the picnic areas, since it has the restrooms and all that. It seems like a good idea to keep. I myself ride, cycle through there. One thing I've done when I've been training for those long, long rides, and I run out of water or I run out of sugar and those vending machines are empty. That's kind of something that came to the top of my head has some type of, I mean, honestly, there's not really a way or a place to buy stuff for the cyclist that runs out of et cetera, snacks, just kind of wanting to throw that out there.

Jacob Leon ([06:14](#)):

Okay. No.

Danielle ([06:16](#)):

You just talk or you need to raise the hand? Sorry.

Jacob Leon ([06:21](#)):

That's okay Danielle. Yeah. Feel free to raise your hand, that way we can just make sure that everybody, and I'll be monitoring the cameras right here, and so we had Danny raise his hand right before you, so we'll go to Danny and then Danielle we'll come back to you momentarily.

Danny ([06:38](#)):

Great. Thanks, Jacob. I'd like to kind of raise the question as to, What is the purpose?, if the Port's plan is to release the Draft EIR in the next couple of months, I think probably what's helpful from Port staff's perspective, is to understand what kind of uses, how to build out the project description that fits in with the NOP, that would lead into the EIR. And so some of the conversations that I've heard locally with stakeholders from National City is that they would really like to see an expansion of the open space. I think a lot of the other features that we're showing tonight, I think they've expressed interest in that too. Like the water features and the playgrounds, but I think years ago there was a commitment from the Port to expand the park.

Danny ([07:35](#)):

And I think the concept was to expand it in an open space area. I think also last year in 2020, When the City of National City released a vision for Pepper Park, it was a little bit different and it had a recreational center as well as Granger Hall. So it had a much more built environment versus open grass areas, open play areas. And so, one of the things that you showed on the map this evening, showed, I think if you bring it up again, the yellow area, showing that the parking, more of the parking area could be utilized for things other than parking, which I think is great, because that just means that there's extra space for things like recreation, which is, I think a top priority for many of the stakeholders that live in Old Town [National City]. And unfortunately many of them couldn't attend tonight because they couldn't get in. But I think, you know, on behalf, I'm expressing some of the feedback that they provided to me.

Jacob Leon ([08:41](#)):

Thank you, Danny. Those are really great comments. Danielle, we'll go to you and then I will call on, as I'm seeing in order, we'll go to Charles Railey after Danielle.

Danielle ([08:55](#)):

Thank you so much. My background is, I have a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture. So I've been working on quite a few water front development projects Internationally, in Sydney, Australia, and the Macau Marine Park and there's Tivoli Landing in Singapore. And also just, you know, by traveling internationally, I think I had a lot of different ideas. I really like the direction, those with this particular park, first of all, I think in terms of yellow zone, versus, I rather you cannot touch, but the expansion yellow should really be considered as homogeneous development instead of just [inaudible 00:09:39]. So I liked the previous, comment in terms of even functional, I spiked off because this is what I realized, why I go to Australia, nobody carries water bottles, right? What about this really California theme, but it's so environmental unfriendly.

Danielle ([09:56](#)):

So all the public park space or half the port for safe drinking water in the public space in Sydney, Australia, even they have like two different sizes. So one for the dogs, for puppies and one for the people. So some little things that will come play later on, for the physical site design programs, but in terms of just look at the whole thing, the big idea. Now we're talking about play. I think the most important is the interactive elements. So how you can utilize the water as a feature have people from not only visual aesthetic, part of be able to take advantage of a waterfront. Also, the water need to be in my mind to be introduced on site, with some water features for instance, typically landscape architecture, you could have an area, like a fountain, interactive, have kids, just imagine, right?

Danielle ([10:59](#)):

The kids could jump around, with whatever, a music fountain. So, there's a design, I meant can contribute to it, but I just say in terms of, an amphitheater, all that, and also just as a previous made a comment, it will be great to have that multi purpose use of a different area. For instance, really look at hard how much parking space there is cause I designed theme park. I know the first thing we do is parking, to accommodate visitors, but now we're talking about connectivity, active transportation, have people more bike and walk, can we really have the parking lot to be reduced to functional but not wasteful? And now of course, talking about dual purpose, the parking lot can be also for the market and for the different things. So, but I love a lot of ideas. I mean, so I want to give time for other people to address different sections. So this is my main park part is like interactive play. I think for our age group, it's important. I need to use the water, inviting water into the settings, that just look out.

Jacob Leon ([12:15](#)):

Great.

Danielle ([12:16](#)):

Thank you.

Jacob Leon ([12:18](#)):

Really great ideas. Thank you, Danielle. I appreciate it. Charles, and then we'll go to Rosina right after Charles.

Charles ([12:25](#)):

Yes. Thank you. Hope some of this ties in a little bit with, Danielle's talking about interactive stuff. I don't live in National City. I don't have a business there, but I've been a volunteer there and I do serve on the National City Public Art Committee and the Port Public Art Committee, and so retain an interest in what goes on in the city. I think I'm right in saying demographically, it's the youngest city in San Diego county, and I know it's very family oriented, so it's sort of a general comment, but it could be a pervasive one. I would like to encourage thinking on the part of the planners that would really make the park as friendly as possible to families and young kids. And I'm talking about thinking specifically about toddlers and that age, because they not only play in the park at that age, but in a real sense, they learn what a park is all about and why a park in a city is great and they begin to become citizens and participants in their community in that way.

Charles ([13:36](#)):

And so the more and younger, I think folks, you can get to the park, the better it is not only for them, but for the entire community. I second what was said about lighting and the slide that you showed about the under bench lighting was just a great example, because it's lighting. We think about lighting in a park. We think about safety lighting on overhead arcs, but that slide of the under bench lighting, it's something you might not actually notice in your passing through the park, but it has this great mood value. And there are other ways of using lighting that do add to mood as well and encourage people at all hours, or at least at all waking hours. Third thing, and I hope I'm not going over too much. I was in Pasadena over the weekend and happened to be near, near the Rose Bowl.

Charles ([14:43](#)):

If anybody knows Pasadena, they know the area where the Rose Bowl is really not terribly convenient to the city. It's sort of out of the flow of things, And yet it was astounding to me how many people were there using it in many ways, mostly walking or jogging, but there's also soccer going on, and I guess a little bit of horseback riding and things like that. And so I started thinking about why, and I think it's because it really has a sense of place and it really feels like a part of that community, and if we can do for Pepper Park, somehow create that ambiance so that it feels like home. And I think Dukie was talking a little bit about that. That would be terrific.

Charles ([15:38](#)):

I will leave it. Oh, Danielle talked about the parking and so on. Gosh, I don't know if it's possible. There's talk about a water shuttle. It almost appears maybe we ought to be thinking about a way to shuttle people in and out, because we don't want to clutter up the park with cars, And we think about shuttles as sort of conventional things. Maybe they could be exciting, little kinds of things for kids. So that, that becomes part of the interactive experiences they show up there. And the play equipment that I remember there is kind of passive. I mean, it's sort of anchored in place. And if you can get particularly young kids moving on stuff that's interactive, it's far better, or right by the side of the water. If you've ever seen kids play on a cargo net, it's wonderfully interactive. It's safe. And kids not only get to interact with the thing, they get to interact with other kids interacting with it. So, that's the extent of my comment. It might be worth having an early childhood consultant to decide to take that approach.

Jacob Leon ([16:56](#)):

Great commentary, Charles, I love that you acknowledged the multi-generational aspect and the importance of multi-generation, for our park being family oriented and for kids. So I think that's something that I think resonates really well. Cause every time I go to Pepper Park, lots of families and

kids are there. [crosstalk 00:17:15] Thank you. So I'm going to go to Rosina, and then Janice, and then I'll go to Bradley, after Janice. Rosina, Go ahead, please.

Rosina ([17:23](#)):

Thank you, everyone. I've listed several topics that I've been recording, since the last three years, and I've been engaged in a community organizing, but Pepper Park is one of the destinations that all the National City, our iconic destination is. So I'm pretty aware and mindful about what their environmental care is, but the decibel type is compensated. The timeline for the project, we as our community residents, we need to know how long it's going to take for you or for the City or for the Port of San Diego, for any other agents that is involved in this project to do that. So it's important to know that how we're going to make this today happen in the future, how much it's going to cost us too. So in order for us to know that I'll be having an open conversation, or you can aware the population or the residents is how much it's going to take, because project X, probably 10, 15 years on the past, maybe 30 years, like in City Heights, that it took forever to get up finally, Midline City connection for the trolley.

Rosina ([18:29](#)):

So we need to know how long it's going to take. Second of all, the park. It should be a recreation space for all the residents. So we need to get the ability to provide opportunities. Not only for mobile people or that are mobile for accessing to that, but people who have not physical disabilities, but emotional disabilities too. I have a person like that at home. And I know a lot of families that they have the same issues going to have sensory spaces for children or for adults that they have this type of disability that is not invisible, but it's emotional, so we should be able to provide that type of amenities to those kids.

Rosina ([19:11](#)):

Next one will be accessibility, creating a sense of safety on the community. Not only visually, but physically that we can access to those amenities on the part of who doesn't like to go to the beach and have a little time out for one hour after this roughly year, that we all present and we are finally out of it and we need to be able to be outdoors, but we need to be able to create that sense of safety when we walk to those amenities.

Rosina ([19:39](#)):

And my question is how the other agencies like Caltrans is flexible and collaborating with you guys to those times, because we know that we have a freeway passing by, and that's another agency that has come, that it has to be involved in how the flexibility with them to let us do. For example, art in their own, create a mural under the bridge or the City of how they're going to re infrastructure the accessibility, not only on 24th street, but on McKinley Avenue, which is a very under used street that is very accessible to that, and goes directly to the park. So those are my topics for now to share and consider and hopefully you can get a good turnout with this park. I can't wait to see when it's going to be officially open in the future. Thank you.

Jacob Leon ([20:22](#)):

Thank you so much. I am grabbing one more of your comments, right here. Thank you. Let's go to Janice. [crosstalk 00:20:38]

Janice ([20:38](#)):

Gracias, thank you. Yes, I'm seeing that there's a lot of like-minded comments here to decolonize, to use native landscaping. We have an opportunity here to set the standard for what can also take place in the rest of the City. So this is an exciting opportunity, not just for Pepper Park, but when we're looking at our environmental justice communities and the changes that we have pioneered. So, the importance of having native plants, not just visually pleasing, but it adds two native pollinators, you create the native flora. You bring back the native fauna or the live, the pollinators, right? So that's super important, And the other thing about plants that have been planted in recent opportunities with City projects, or even perhaps Port projects, is that when you plant non-native species or trees such as the new eucalyptus, it removes the water from our natural aquifers and it depletes it from the surrounding plants that might be native.

Janice ([21:37](#)):

So we want to make sure that we have an opportunity to put this in place, and then you're setting a standard for the rest of our environmentally justice impacted community. Also, I'm seeing an opportunity for restaurants. We work in public health and food systems and really looking at the importance of what to do, but not what to do. So we don't meet any more fast food outlets. You know, let this be an opportunity for community members to bring their own food or to have perhaps a space where there might be some regulation, where only healthy food can be served, just like there is near the schools on the vendor cart regulations. So keeping that in mind, we want to keep our community healthy, it's priority. Especially in these times, maybe a water dispenser, as there is in some of the library buildings throughout the county, might be behind some bars to make sure it's protected, but those water purifiers, it might work in this park, especially if it's beautiful and frequented by the community.

Janice ([22:41](#)):

What we're seeing and creating these green spaces throughout National City, is that when you have a space that is welcoming, the community takes care of it. So when there is fear that someone is going to take the food? The plants that are growing? Or they're going to destroy this well, when you create a space for us with us, then we're the ones who take care of it. And so if there ever is issues, you know, it usually pushes unwanted behaviors away. So that's really important for us to have that territoriality, that presence and to have these amenities instead of like that, fear-based 'no, they're going to mess it up.' 'They're going to destroy,' give it a chance. We'll take care of our own community. If we're honored, we're going to honor that space as well. And yes, the cultural art of recognizing Kumeyaay history and all the history of the peoples that have contributed to the Port, to National City.

Janice ([23:32](#)):

I think that's super important. We need to see reflection of ourselves in these images. We have black indigenous, people of color that are not always featured. And we need to see that in our leadership. We need to see that, especially now that we have an opportunity to re-engage with our Kumeyaay relatives and others that have not always had the opportunity to shine. I saw the comment about the recycling/repurposing. We have an opportunity to be environmentally conscious and to contribute to that process and putting us in not just active in the play spaces, which is a wonderful, all of your ideas are great, but like trash recycle, And now at the level of composting, right, we're now hitting a new stage with the state and with the County on a bill that we're required, or the County is going to be required, to compost, And so let's do it voluntarily now that we have the opportunity and have those receptacles ready. Thank you.

Jacob Leon ([24:35](#)):

Thank you so much, Janice. I appreciate all that commentary, and thank you for acknowledging that there's some really great ideas in the chat as well, And we have about two minutes before we're going to be all put back into the main room. So I'm going to let Bradley and Art, if you can go ahead and share your commentary, starting with Bradley.

Bradley ([24:54](#)):

Yeah. I just want to agree with the comment about it. I think the open space is a real important primary thing that we try to keep as much of an open space as possible and limit, don't go overboard on the parking. I mean, I think we obviously need parking and on regular days, there's more than enough parking there as it is right now, and that can be used in different ways. When you have an event there, also I thought the issues about "How much more built space do you want to have?" And regarding that question, you have to make a decision whether or not you're going to have a performance area or not. And that the drift I'm getting is this, people want a performance area there and you need to choose which one is the right way, and one question that I didn't see answered was if you move Granger Music Hall there, does it have to be moved onto that site? And if you are going to do that, that's going to take up a lot of space. And there's a lot of expense moving that over and renovating that building.

Bradley ([26:03](#)):

I don't know if that's worth the expense, especially if you're going to lose so much open space, Pepper Park with it. So maybe it's better where it is. Anyway, so I'm sort of curious about the two options for a performance space that they were recommending and which one would be a better fit for that space.

Jacob Leon ([26:28](#)):

Yeah. Great commentary, we've acknowledged your commentary on Granger Hall. I think that's a part we'll be exploring, performance spaces and all that as we move into the design process. So thank you so much Bradley. And Art, [crosstalk 00:26:42] I'll let you have the closing remarks for us before we go back into our main room,

Art ([26:45](#)):

I'll try to make it quick. I'm a Northwest Chula Vista resident, but lifelong visitor of National City. My three points are, we need, the park needs a more open space up the northwest corner, like expanding towards where the ships are. At least that way, You know, there's a view to the pier. People are fishing and the view across the channel there, I think it's going to be nice, And then at the Northeast corner, Granger Hall or this kiosko idea, it could become like an attraction so that people go to the northeast corner of the park. Also, you know, somehow there needs to be more connection to the bike path, there's an awesome, you know, Sweetwater bike path, except, it kind of ends abruptly at this sidewalk, and there's a "Sharrow," and it's not clear that, Hey, by the way, there's a Pepper Park down the road, so signage, or a real bike lane or something, but anyway, I'm excited for this project. I have complete confidence in KTU+A, and I think it's going to be great and I love National City, even though I don't live there.

Jacob Leon ([27:58](#)):

Thank you Art. We love seeing people who love a city that they don't live in. I think that that speaks for itself with just your connection with National City. And I do appreciate your acknowledgement of the



Bayshore Bikeway, that being such an important facility, And we will be definitely looking at transportation accessibility and how we can make sure people who are on Bayshore Bikeway, make that for, to go into Pepper Park, rather than turn right around Pier 32 Marina. So thank you everybody so much.