

# Summary of May 2021 Pepper Park Expansion Workshop

On May 6, 2021, the San Diego Unified Port District (Port of San Diego) held a virtual community workshop to solicit public input on the future expansion of Pepper Park. The workshop was held from 6-7:30pm on Zoom and was in English, with simultaneous interpretation in Spanish and Tagalog. Planning and landscape architecture firm KTUA facilitated the workshop and led participants through an informational/background presentation and interactive activity (“breakout rooms”) to solicit comments on potential park features and recreational opportunities that will help transform the existing Pepper Park and the proposed 2.5-acre future park expansion. The participation and response rate was high, with over 100 participants. In addition to soliciting comments at the workshop, comments were solicited via email for the two weeks following the workshop. This summary document includes comments received at the workshop and comments received via email.

Two weeks in advance of the workshop, an informational flier was posted to the Port’s website to provide background information and a preview of topics that would be discussed at the workshop. The informational flier is included as Attachment 1 to this workshop summary.

The following workshop summary is organized by the following five (5) topic areas discussed during the breakout room activity. The comments received at the workshop are organized by recurring themes to help understand priority topics. This important feedback will be reviewed and used by the Port of San Diego to develop appropriate recommendations for the subsequent park design phases and public outreach on that park design.



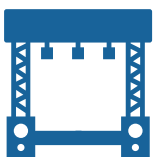
## **Well-Being Active Improvements (Things to play on or to exercise with)**

*Question: What kinds of play, exercise, and well-being features would you like to see?*



## **Passive Water Experiences (A place to experience the water)**

*Question: What kinds of waterfront features that allow you to experience the water’s edge would you like to see?*



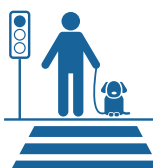
## **Event Supporting Improvements (Things to do)**

*Question: What kinds of features that support local events and social gatherings would you like to see?*



## **Educational Improvements (Learning from history and the environment)**

*Question: What kinds of educational features would you like to see?*



## **Access Improvements (The journey here)**

*Question: What kinds of access improvements would you like to see?*

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## Top Comments

All of the feedback collected from the community is important for the planning and design process for the future Pepper Park expansion. The following items are considered of great importance based on the number of times it was shared during the virtual workshop. Below are the comments most commonly heard for each of the topics.



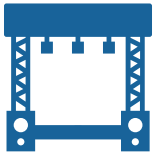
### Well-Being Active Improvements

- Splash pad
- Preserve open space where possible
- Family-friendly, inclusive play equipment
- Outdoor exercise equipment



### Passive Water Experiences

- Beach/sandy areas
- Connections to the water via boats, kayaks, ferries, etc.
- Waterfront promenade improvements (lighting, walking, access to water)



### Event Supporting Improvements

- Kioskos (styled after those found in Mexico/Latin America)
- Performance stages
- Flexible space for special events and festivals
- Concerns over Granger Hall/Event Space utilizing too much open park space



### Educational Improvements

- Recognize Kumeyaay history
- Recognize other kinds of local history (i.e. Navy, Filipino Community, etc.)
- Local art and cultural installations
- Educational signage that covers diverse topics (history, water, flora, fauna)



### Access Improvements

- Active transportation improvements (walking, biking)
- Improved connections from City to Pepper Park (east/west access over/under Interstate 5)
- Water connections throughout the bay (ferries from Coronado, San Diego, and South Bay)
- Conduct a parking demand study to determine parking supply
- Preserve boat launch parking

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## Well-Being Active Improvements

The examples that were presented under this category included: grass areas, playgrounds, splash pads, waterfront promenades, walking/jogging paths, and flex spaces for exercise. The following is a summary of input received on this topic, as organized by recurring themes.

### Park Amenities and Play Features

- General support for a splash pad for children.
- Explore including inclusive playgrounds.
- Play equipment that is more interactive (e.g., cargo net) than the passive equipment that is there now. Suggestion for an “early childhood consultant” to help with this.
- Exercise equipment preferred without instruction of exercise.
- Walking, and flex space was high on the list as well.
- Exercise equipment and bike access; a lot of rides start from here and stop over here.
- Lots of support for a splash pad. Would the splash pad be free? How would the water be cleaned or recycled. People currently go to Sweetwater Summit or the YMCA splash pads.
- Need more shaded areas.
- Dog Park would be good. The closest one is probably in Bonita and it has brought an increase in foot traffic.
- No dog park.
- Include outdoor exercise equipment in the park preferably near the playground so parents can exercise near their kids while they play?
- Osprey cam.
- Ferris wheel rather than a dog park.

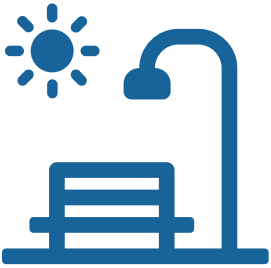
### Preserve Open Space

- Include enough open space for walking, biking, and kids play. Community has always fought for open space.
- Keeping grass area would be nice; allowing for picnics, dancing, and other activities.
- Open spaces are utilized for sports. Keeping or moving some flat open green spaces is important.

### Design for Families and the Community

- Include features that are friendly to families and young kids, especially toddlers, who are still learning about being citizens and participants in their communities.
- Community likes fountains such as musically-lit fountains.
- Parks should be designed around people.
- Picnic tables modified to allow wheelchairs to roll under.
- Age friendly activities like yoga, taichi, danzou, and other activities should be facilitated by the city or volunteers who want these services.
- Intergenerational activities.
- More covered picnic areas for family gathering for a minimal cost/by reservation.

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## Passive Water Experiences

The examples that were presented under this category included: perched beach areas, decks over water, waterfront seating, stepped seating (into the water), and unique lighting. The following is a summary of input received on this topic, as organized by recurring themes.

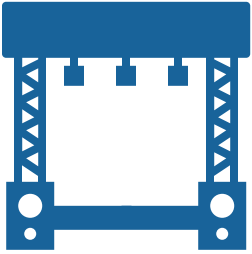
### Connectivity Between Land and Water

- Include a beach area; ability for those who don't have a boat to interact with the water.
- Having connectivity would add value to the community and make people feel they have access to the water.
- Water and boat ferries can make people feel connected to area. Boat tours.
- In South Bay there is a lack of access, so anything that can help would be good (patch of beach would be great).
- The east side of the park has calm waters. Remove one dock there and make it open for people to swim in.
- Would be nice to have better connectivity to the Sweetwater River for biking, walking, padding, and rowing.
- Concerns about direct access to the water; the water is not suitable for direct access because of pollutants from boat traffic; concerns about children accidentally accessing water.
- Raised observation area and shoreline steps.
- Pier improvements. People go to Oceanside and Imperial Beach to go fishing.
- Bring water from the bay to the park; this could be an artificial beach at the center of the park by pumping sea water / return for a saltwater experience (designed safely for toddlers and small children).
- Will there still be a sizeable pier for children and adults to fish from? Satisfying seeing children fish.
- A designated building for kayaking instructions.

### Unique Elements

- Unique lighting is good, supportive of solar lights or sustainable lights. Increases security in Pepper Park at night and helps avoid transient population.
- Introduce water elements into site.
- Issue with perched beach because of maintenance (e.g., it could become a litter box), stepped seating was high on the list. No consensus on direct access to the waterfront was mentioned.
- Dock 100 of the Pier 32 Marina can be moved up, with the rip rap removed to make a mini swim area as that water is calm. A natural laned swimming pool. Also allowing people to go east into the Sweetwater Channel with kayaks, stand up paddle boards, canoe.
- Lighting really makes it wonderful.
- Reconnecting with the 4 elements (i.e., water, air, fire, earth), especially water, may bring balance.
- Gardens by the Bay: A waterfall inside one of two climate-controlled conservatories in Singapore. This is a big idea but perhaps the design can be adjusted for National City.
- Underwater camera viewing station, helping our kids see the wonders hidden just off our shore.

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## Event Supporting Improvements

The examples that were presented under this category included: multi-purpose kiosks, multi-purpose stages, food/drink buildings, outdoor plaza spaces, festival spaces, and group picnic areas. The following is a summary of input received on this topic, as organized by recurring themes.

### Kioskos and Outdoor Gathering Spaces

- Kioskos are very popular for the Latino population because its architecture resembles that of kioskos in parks in Mexico and other Latin American countries.
- More space for picnic areas. Grills can be dangerous.
- Special events are important to the community. Festival space and even the smaller multi-purpose stage is good for smaller events.
- The kiosko idea would bring a lot of life to the park.
- Having a performance area would be good for the community.
- The kiosko idea would allow for bands and performances.
- Adding or expanding event space could be linked to neighborhood history or sustainability.
- Appreciate the idea of allowing structures for small business (cafes, pop up restaurants, arts, etc.).
- Spaces available for food trucks with permits issued by lottery to ensure diversity of cuisines, thus allowing for commerce and sustenance.

### Community Center / Granger Hall

- Concerned about a community center or moving in Granger Hall into the park, because it would take way from open space. If they develop both of these options, how much open space is left over?
- There aren't many parks in the west side of National City, so this is the only opportunity for open space.
- Several concerns regarding a proposed events center. Who will it benefit? Who will it be rented to? Concerns of excluding the community due to touristy events.
- Are the options only between the Community Center or Granger Hall? Is it one or the other? Or both? Would take up a lot of space. Would like a lot of open space.
- Granger Hall would take up a lot of space and would cost a lot of \$\$ to move to the park.
- If there is a structure, can it be an open space for different vendors to use or rent out, ensuring everyone has a chance to use it for whatever means.
- Will there be permits for events? What would it cost?
- How about the Granger Music Hall, is that going to be incorporated into the new park?

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## Educational Improvements

The examples that were presented under this category included: educational signage, indigenous peoples signage, historic structures, raised viewing platforms, pavement educational art, and unique educational signage. The following is a summary of input received on this topic, as organized by recurring themes.

### Recognizing Indigenous Peoples

- Cultural art that recognizes Kumeyaay history.
- Native-indigenous planting.
- Incorporate more Kumeyaay education; name park after a Kumeyaay name to help share culture and have multicultural events.
- Highlight Kumeyaay in area and relationship to water, want recognition of indigenous communities.
- Possible re-branding of park with new name that honors local and indigenous cultures.
- Open air museum; good tools to educate and promote history on the Kumeyaay and other multicultural groups.
- Signage related to native ethnobotany.

### Local History

- Supportive of educational improvements, especially along walking routes. Sometimes visitors aren't educated on region or Pepper Park, etc.
- Create a place to share cultures so people can get to know each other.
- Cesar Chavez Park and nearby Tuna Cannery Worker memorial recognizes the wonderful history there. Would be great if Pepper Park did the same, from time of the Kumeyaay to present day.
- Would like to see the history of Filipinos migrating to the U.S. by way of the Navy, tuna canneries and agriculture.
- Scheduled guided park experiences would be great, connecting visitors with the past, present, and future of our waterfront.

### Art and Other Sensory Spaces

- Include community in art installations, gives a sense of community/ownership/responsibility. Examples of placing decorative stones on art installations.
- Displaying artwork around the park would be very cool (with positive messages!). Art relating to mental health issues.
- Cultural art or educational displays could be linked to water play/recreation.
- Plant or animal info could be linked to city programs. A lot of other parks have one feature or another but don't tie together.

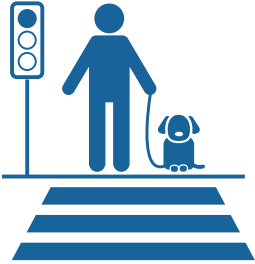


## Educational Improvements (continued)

### Art and Other Sensory Spaces (continued)

- Support for the community garden idea; good from educational perspective, but also to improve greening and air quality benefits.
- Community garden would be great.
- Connecting kids about what is in the water: kelp beds and more, our ocean ecosystem.
- Active participation is important as well as the signage for hands on learning.
- Would the Port be interested in adding or supporting locations for the “free little library” program? South Bay and National City are lacking in locations. It would be an easy enrichment program to make Pepper Park or other locations unique.
- Have area for permanent artwork and a section for an outdoor art gallery that changes, using art from Sweetwater High School (welding) and ARTs?
- Have temporary murals, allowing new murals to be installed from time to time, and older ones archived and presented elsewhere.
- Learning experiences for the future: blue tech, new ways of fishing, aquaculture, regenerative kelp farming.
- Important to create mindfulness on the visitors that we are sharing wetland space and should be honored and protected with cleanup events and care campaigns
- Given the proximity across from the wildlife preserve, native plants should be used in the landscaping and that natural habitat will be integrated into buffer areas between the various design elements.
- Wildlife observation decks and interpretive signage would be great ways to allow people to appreciate and learn about nature in this area.

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## Access Improvements

The examples that were presented under this category included: parking lot improvements, fencing, active transportation improvements, local connections (east/west of Interstate 5), and regional connections. The following is a summary of input received on this topic, as organized by recurring themes.

## Active Transportation

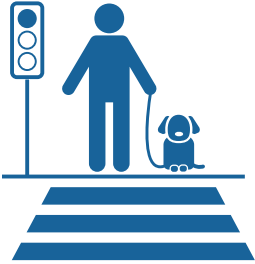
- Supportive of bicycling spaces/storage improvements for the park. There are a lot of new improved bicycle lanes in National City but not enough of bike spaces.
- Community has been fighting for access for all modes of transportation and has seen improvements. This should support current proposals for access.
- More connections to existing bike path.
- Add charging stations for vehicles/bikes/transportation- only seem to be able to get there by car.
- Make it more walkable.
- Sweetwater Channel and the bike lane are not usable during high-tide. Is it possible to incorporate part of the channel into the area considered for redevelopment? Could this area be used for launching kayaks when water is at high-tide (double-use)?
- Anything that increases active transportation opportunities for children is wonderful.
- Install a “bike station” at Pier 32 Marina to support the community. A pump, some tools, a work rack to hold the bike. If we are able to complete our development, we will be able to provide affordable, good, healthy food choices adjacent to the park.

## Connecting to Pepper Park

- Pepper Park feels very isolated and landlocked; need to think big: direct ped/bike bridge from Bayshore Bikeway (maybe to jetty) would create an experience for people to roll directly into the park.
- Sweetwater was just a marsh before, seems like there is wasted real estate, and there could be amazing connectivity between Pepper Park as a destination and areas to the east by better connecting under the freeway.
- Capable of world-class rowing and unlimited paddle boarding; seems underutilized since there are opportunities within that water corridor.
- Accessibility for disabled should be recognized.
- Floated the idea of a pedestrian bridge from the 24th Street Trolley station over I-5. Some expressed concern over cost but several indicated they would use it.
- Park is very small, challenge with fitting all ideas into limited space.



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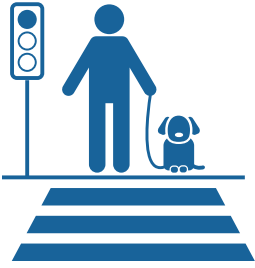
## Access Improvements (continued)

### Connecting to Pepper Park (continued)

- How to shift from car culture? Need to encourage use of rideshare and be inclusive of all types of transportation (encourage biking or rideshare from nearby locations), while being business friendly to allow loading/offloading for vendors for events or even as food trucks. Must be convenient and accessible, even with limitations.
- Create walkways or platforms in marsh areas that don't create impacts but allow access.
- Why reduce the existing public streets that presently provide the access to the park and boat ramp?
- Vacating public streets should be based on input of National City residents.
- Does the Port of San Diego still need public streets for their tenant's semi-truck transporters? Won't this street vacation put a strain on those transporters? I know it will affect boaters and park users as well.
- Advocate for all the improvements to be linked to make the space truly unique.
- Is there a potential to have a ferry boat shuttle service from Pepper Park to Coronado?
- Can you connect with the Living Coast Discovery Center? Could have boat shuttle to enter their facility from Pepper Park? For free or small fee? Glass bottom boat would be cool.
- Install locks at the mouth of the channel and close it during high tide to contain water in the channel for kayaks. Release the water twice morning and evening creating a dam for water sports such as standup paddle boards, canoes, and kayaks.
- Would like to add signage from freeway to draw more attention to Pepper Park. If there was an electronic marquee, Port/City could promote special events and activities there.
- Can the Port of San Diego work with the Federal NWR which borders Pepper Park, to increase public access to allow for more environmentally friendly recreational and educational opportunities?

### Parking

- Parking has been a concern since 1987. Often people will encroach into trailers and can cause safety concerns. Hard to combine boater and park visitor parking.
- Parking is an issue, especially during special events.
- National City is charging expensive prices for parking during events. Know that fees are necessary, but they need to be manageable, would like to be part of the discussion at least. It's part of the access conversation as well because that deters access for lower-income people. Parking should be public because it's a park.
- Less car parking; don't go overboard on parking supply



## Access Improvements (continued)

- Promote parking that already exists on 32nd Street and try to reclaim more area. Need to recognize South Bay has been excluded.
- Parking areas should allow for people to congregate and be free (like Chicano Park); not paid access like elsewhere in the Port; would allow for families to visit.
- Why not more land for the park and additional parking? Instead of allocating so much land to be available to private investors (hoteliers) under the redevelopment plans.
- Yes, expanded passenger vehicle parking will be crucial.
- Solar powered charging stations.
- There is currently a project to install charging stations in Pepper Park. Will they remain after they are installed? Are they in the right location with the redevelopment of the park?

### Boat Launch Elements

- Has there been a survey conducted about volume of boats launched from facility? Is there is excess parking? Need to balance users.
- Need more parking for the park as many times park visitors encroach into boater's stalls that are longer due to the boat trailers. Difficult for boaters to park elsewhere.
- Limited space to maneuver parking and boats.
- Does Department of Boating & Waterways designate the number of parking spaces required since they funded the launch ramp?

# Summary of May 2021 Pepper Park Expansion Workshop



## Other Questions and Comments

The following general questions and comments were collected during the workshop.

### General Comments

- Must make sure emergency lane/access is kept open and is addressed in any redesign.
- Accessibility for wheel chairs or mobility limited to playground(s) needs to be considered; currently it can not be accessed without assistance.
- More restrooms/outdoor showers.
- Why only 2.5 Acres to Pepper Park?
- Make it feel like home.
- Healthy foods; no more fast food.
- Vending machines are often empty; a place to buy snacks would be nice.
- Resident's input is important; opinions should be taken into consideration.
- Sustainability should include whether new features are able to be maintained over the long term.
- Encourage having an educational campaign to have the sense of ownership, care and maintenance.
- Lumbercycle, a nonprofit located in National City and Ramona, create lumber from trees taken down throughout the city that would have gone to the landfill. Maybe incorporate reclaimed wood for projects?
- If more DC chargers, can there also be more electrical outlets for both electrical outlets and USB posts for free public use?
- Include free Wi-Fi
- Is there a way to get the gates closed at 8pm to decrease the nightly drag races?
- Crime goes down when people have more access to things they need to survive. Public parks should provide plenty of green space, accessible restrooms, drinking water, charging outlets, etc.
- Reusable water bottle filling stations, alternatives to disposable.
- Don't gentrify. Be mindful of sensitive issue of displacement or potential impacts.
- Where did the name of the park come from? Allow the community to re-name it?
- Filipino community would like to rename park to 'Larry Itliong Park'.
- Is the park open to public or just nearby residents?
- Could we extend our park eastwards towards the marsh and further up Sweetwater Channel?
- How about a nice hotel to accommodate the guests from the boat landing; we can always use more facilities to offer to the visiting public.

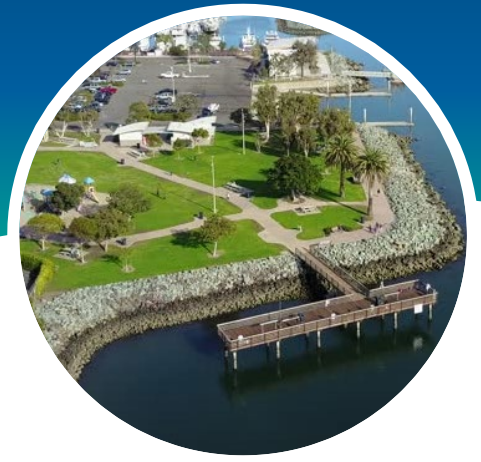
### Timeline

- How will we make this happen?

### Costs

- Typically, if a business is close to the water, prices are expensive. Worries new businesses will be too expensive for lower income community. Used example of the redeveloped Seaport Village.

# Please Join Us for a Virtual Workshop!



## Future Expansion of Pepper Park in National City

The Port of San Diego is seeking public input for the future expansion of Pepper Park on the National City Bayfront. This outreach is the Port's latest design effort aimed at establishing a grand vision for Pepper Park. The virtual Community Workshop will be held via Zoom **Thursday, May 6 at 6 p.m.** and will explore design elements for both the existing park and the 2.5-acre future expansion. The team will explore park features and recreation opportunities that will help transform Pepper Park into a resource that both visitors and residents will cherish for years to come. The virtual workshop will be your opportunity to share feedback on potential park features you'd like to see and will include an interactive activity to discuss exciting park ideas.

[May 6 Community Workshop – Click Here to Register](#)

The following information provides a foundation for the workshop and is intended to help you start to think about the features and opportunities you would like to see in the future Pepper Park. Please note, the workshop will also include a summary of the following information, so if you do not have time to review this information, you can still be an active participant!

## Background

In January 2016, the Port and City of National City held public design charrettes to discuss a rebalance of land uses that resulted in a “win-win-win” scenario for the maritime, commercial, and public uses near Pepper Park and the Pier 32 Marina – the resulting land use reconfiguration is referred to as the “Balanced Plan.” The Balanced Plan contemplates a reconfiguration of maritime, commercial, and park uses, including an approximately 2.5-acre expansion to (and possible reconfiguration of) the existing 5.2-acre Pepper Park, for a future total of approximately 7.7 acres.

The park expansion (and potential reconfiguration) has not been designed, but the environmental review is underway for the proposed land use changes and the expansion of Pepper Park, based on preliminary park concepts that were shown at the 2016 design charrettes. These preliminary park concepts include:

- Reconfiguration of the existing park layout, which may include a mixture of hardscape (e.g., paved plazas, shade structures) and new landscaping (e.g., landscaped berms, open lawn).
- A small amphitheater (e.g., gazebo, kiosk).
- An interactive fountain/splashground.
- Possible relocation of Granger Hall to Pepper Park to be used for special event space.
- No revisions to the boat launch ramp facility are proposed.



# Virtual Workshop

Future Expansion of Pepper Park in National City

## Workshop Discussion – Potential Park Features and Recreation Opportunities

During the workshop, we will explore potential park features and recreation opportunities by framing our discussions on the following topics: well-being active improvements (“Things to play on or to exercise with at the park”); passive water experiences (“A place to experience the water”); event supporting improvements (“Things to do at the park”); educational improvements (“Learning from history and the environment”); and access improvements (“The journey to and from the park”).

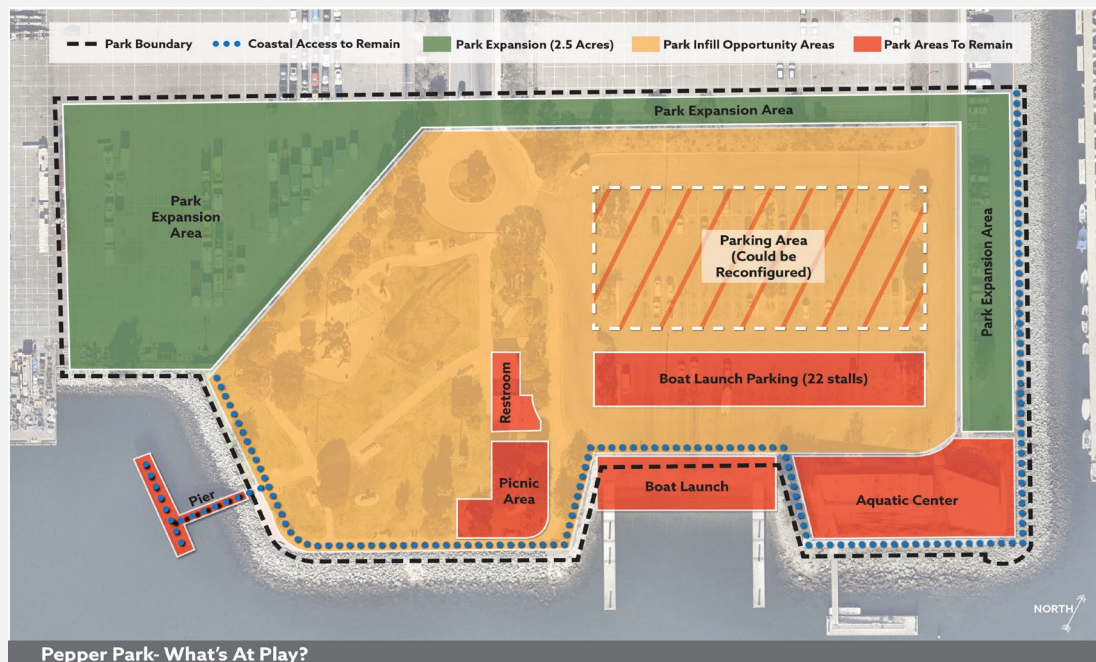
### Things to Consider for the Future Pepper Park

#### Public Trust Doctrine

Pepper Park is located on Port of San Diego land. Uses on Port of San Diego land and water areas are required to be consistent with the [Public Trust Doctrine](#). Under the Public Trust Doctrine, any park use must have a relationship to the water and serve a statewide or regional benefit. As you prepare for the workshop, please keep in mind that any future park features and recreation opportunities would need to be consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine.

#### Areas for Consideration

The following graphic shows which areas of the park are being considered for new features and opportunities. In addition, there are areas that are proposed to remain, including the aquatic center, the restrooms, the boat launch ramp, and a picnic area with fully-grown trees.



We look forward to your participation in the May 6 workshop!

For more information, please contact Anna Buzaitis, Planning Department program manager at 619.686.7263 or [abuzaiti@portofsandiego.org](mailto:abuzaiti@portofsandiego.org).

