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To: kelsey.hawkins@weareharris.com; mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: (I-5) East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project (formerly East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project and Port Master Plan Amendment)
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 9:20:16 AM

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Hi Kelsey,

Caltrans is currently reviewing the EIR document for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project.

Does the project document include any synchro files as part of the Appendix_O1_VMT Assessment? If so, please provide a copy for review.

[East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project \(formerly East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project and Port Master Plan Amendment\)](#)

Thank you,

[Rogelio Sanchez](#)

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Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project DEIR Comment Letter
Date: Friday, August 21, 2026 4:26:55 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[2023110463_EastHarbor.pdf](#)

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Good afternoon,

Please see the attached California Department of Fish and Wildlife comment letter for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Project Draft Environmental Impact Report.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Emily



Emily Gray (she/her)
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STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
MEGHAN HERTEL, Director

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August 21, 2026

Megan Hamilton
Senior Planner
San Diego Unified Port District
3165 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101
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**Subject: DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT for the for East Harbor Island
Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project, SCH No. 2023110463, SAN
DIEGO COUNTY, CA**

Dear Megan Hamilton:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) San Diego Unified Port District (District) for East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project (Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines¹.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife.

CDFW ROLE

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Fish & G. Code, § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: Topgolf USA SDP, LLC

Objective: The objective of the Project is to redevelop approximately 22.4 of a 38-acre site on East Harbor Island within the San Diego Unified Port District's jurisdiction in the City of San Diego to construct a Topgolf facility and waterfront park and promenade. Project activities include the demolition of three rental car facilities and temporary staging offices, realignment of Liberator Way, redevelopment of 9.8 acres for the Topgolf visitor-serving attraction, and the development of a new 10.1-acre waterfront park and promenade. The proposed Topgolf attraction would feature a three-story, 46-foot-tall building totaling 67,030 square feet. A 4.5-acre turf outfield would be surrounded by netting supported by poles between 90 and 170 feet tall. The Project would also remove, repair, and/or replace the existing concrete revetment with shoreline protective devices such as riprap and, where feasible, nature-based solutions.

Location: The Project site is located on the eastern section of Harbor Island in San Diego Bay. The site is bounded to the north by North Harbor Drive and the San Diego International Airport, to the west by Harbor Island Drive, to the south by Liberator Way and the East Basin of San Diego Bay, and to the east by the Convair Lagoon portion of San Diego Bay. Liberator Way runs east-west along the southern portion of the Project area.

Timeframe: Construction is expected to begin in early 2027 and last up to 28 months. Project operation is expected to begin in 2028.

Biological Setting: The San Diego Bay shoreline is located within the Pacific Flyway. Although the terrestrial portion of the Project area is largely developed, the shoreline and ornamental

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vegetation provide important stopover habitat for migratory species and shorebirds. San Diego Bay waters support many resident and migratory fish and sensitive wildlife, such as California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*), western snowy plover (*Anarhynchus nivosus nivosus*), and green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). Important marine plants such as eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) support those fish and wildlife species and are present within the Project's construction area. Eelgrass is important as fish nursery habitat and supports juvenile and adult fish. San Diego Bay waters also support Northern anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*), an important forage fish for California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*).

Per the Biological Resources Technical Report (BRTR; Harris & Associates, July 2026), biological surveys including vegetation and land cover mapping, avian surveys, and general biological reconnaissance surveys were conducted January – October 2024.

Based on CDFW's review of the BRTR and the California Natural Diversity Database² (CNDDDB; CDFW 2026), the following sensitive species³ were detected or have the potential to occur within or near the Project site:

Reptiles:

- Green sea turtle (ESA Threatened)

Birds:

- California least tern (least tern; CESA Endangered, CDFW FP)
- Western snowy plover (ESA Threatened)
- California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*)
- Double-crested cormorant (*Nannopterum auritum*; CDFW WL)
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*; WL)
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actis*; WL)

² <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS>

³ Nomenclature and species status follows the CNDDDB Special Animals List (CDFW, January 2026) and Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List (CDFW, January 2026). ESA = Federal Endangered Species Act, CESA = California Endangered Species Act, FP = state Fully Protected Species, SSC = state Species of Special Concern, WL = state Watch List, CRPR = California Rare Plant Rank

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Project History: In December 2023, CDFW provided a comment letter on the Notice of Preparation for the Project (SCH No. 2023110463). Our letter recommended further analysis on the netting poles and their potential to be raptor perches that could possibly impact the nearby tern colony; further analysis on the potential for bird entanglement in the golf netting; an artificial light study that would analyze impacts to bird and bat behavior and lastly, CDFW's Marine Region recommended that any planned in-water work for the Project be fully described in the DEIR.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist the District in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Additional comments or other suggestions are also included to improve the document.

COMMENT # 1: Barrier Netting System Impacts to Avian Species

Issue: The DEIR does not provide sufficient site-specific analysis or evidence to support its conclusion that impacts to birds from the proposed barrier netting system would be reduced to less than significant through implementation of Mitigation Measure (MM) BIO-4.

Specific impact: The Project proposes to install poles up to 170 feet tall with golf netting surrounding the 4.5-acre outfield. With the proposed barrier netting system, TopGolf's proposed facility would be substantially taller than existing surrounding development and creates a substantial risk of bird entanglement and collision. The DEIR acknowledges the Project occurs along the Pacific Flyway, a major bird migratory route, and that the barrier netting and associated lighting could result in bird strikes and entanglements. To reduce potentially significant effects, MM BIO-4 requires several bird-friendly design specifications for the barrier netting system, routine net inspections, and a three-year post-construction monitoring and adaptive management program. However, the DEIR does not provide sufficient evidence demonstrating that these measures would reduce collision and entanglement mortality to a less than significant level.

Why impact would occur: Tall net structures can obstruct avian flight paths, particularly during low-light periods such as dawn and dusk, when birds are more likely to misjudge or fail to detect these barriers. Several sensitive bird species are known to occur on or near, or migrate through, the Project site. CDFW acknowledges that the DEIR relies in part on

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monitoring at the Topgolf Burlingame facility, where birds were observed detecting marked black netting and altering their flight paths to avoid it, to substantiate the efficacy of the proposed measures. However, the BRTR appropriately recognizes that those results are limited to one Topgolf location and do not negate documented entanglements at other Topgolf facilities or the potential for future incidents. Collision and entanglement risk varies with site-specific variables like season, species, flight behavior, weather and visibility, and nighttime illumination. The Burlingame observations do not independently establish the magnitude of collision or entanglement risk at the Project site. While increasing structure visibility through markers or other design features may reduce collision rates, the DEIR does not identify scientific evidence evaluating the effectiveness of those measures.

Additionally, MM BIO-4 does not establish clear biological performance criteria or contingency measures for implementation of the post-construction monitoring and adaptive management program to ensure impacts from the barrier netting system remain at a level below significant. If the barrier netting system does not perform as anticipated, sensitive and/or migratory bird species may collide or become entangled in the netting, resulting in injury or mortality.

Evidence impact may be significant: Several special status and migratory species occur or migrate through the Project site. Take of migratory birds is prohibited under the California Migratory Bird Treaty Act (Fish & G. Code, § 3513). Take of any endangered, threatened, candidate species that results from the Project is prohibited, except as authorized by State law under CESA (Fish & G. Code, §§ 86, 2062, 2067, 2068, 2080, 2085; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 786.9). Impacts to CESA listed species and their habitats may result in a mandatory finding of significance because the Project has the potential to substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species (CEQA Guidelines § 15065). CEQA also provides protection not for SSC which meet the CEQA definition of rare, threatened, or endangered species (CEQA Guidelines, § 15380). Inadequate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for impacts to sensitive or special status species will result in the Project continuing to have a substantial adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative effect on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species by CDFW.

CEQA Guidelines § 15064(b) requires a significance determination to be based, to the extent possible, on scientific and factual data and expressly recognizes that the significance of an activity may vary with its environmental setting. CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) further requires an EIR's impact analysis to consider the relevant specifics of an affected area, resources

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involved, physical changes, and alterations to ecological systems. As such, evidence that mitigation techniques have performed successfully elsewhere (i.e., Topgolf Burlingame) may inform the analysis, but the DEIR should establish why those results are applicable to the biological conditions and migratory use of the Project site.

An EIR must provide sufficient information regarding a biological impact to permit meaningful evaluation of both its significance and the adequacy of the proposed mitigation (*Lotus v. Department of Transportation* (2014) 223 Cal.App.4th 645, 654-658). The DEIR identifies potentially significant risks of injury, mortality, entanglement, and interference with bird movement but does not characterize the magnitude of those effects or otherwise explain what level of residual impact would support a less than significant conclusion.

While MM BIO-4 incorporates a three-year post-construction monitoring and adaptive management program, important components of that program are undefined. The future monitoring plan will establish the survey frequency and methods, bird-net interaction monitoring methodology, and procedures for documenting collisions. MM BIO-4 does not identify an objective biological performance standard or threshold that triggers corrective action; instead, future adaptive management measures are to be developed and implemented “if needed”. CEQA permits details of mitigation to be developed later only where the agency commits to mitigation and establishes sufficiently specific performance standards to guide future implementation (CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.4(a)(1)(B); *San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center v. County of Merced* (2007) 149 Cal.App.4th 645, 669-671). Because the DEIR relies on MM BIO-4 to reduce an acknowledged potentially significant impact below significance, MM BIO-4 should establish measurable performance standards and adaptive management triggers prior to Project approval.

Under CEQA Guidelines section 15130, a DEIR must evaluate cumulative impacts, including situations where individual minor incidents may become significant when considered over time. Although isolated bird entanglements from tall golf-net structures may appear infrequent, these incidents represent incremental effects that could become cumulatively considerable as defined in CEQA Guidelines sections 15130(a) and 15355. As additional bird collisions or entanglements occur, the combined, long-term effect could rise to a level of significance under CEQA and therefore must be fully disclosed and analyzed within the DEIR's cumulative impact section.

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Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

CDFW requests the following recommendations and mitigation measures are incorporated into the final CEQA document:

Recommendation # 1: Barrier Netting System Impact Analysis. The DEIR should include a thorough impact analysis that clearly discloses and quantifies all possible and cumulative impacts to sensitive avian species, including California least terns, from the proposed barrier netting system. This analysis should at a minimum include site specific avian movement patterns, roosting, foraging, and migratory behaviors at different times of the year and how the installation of these structures would impact these patterns.

Mitigation Measure # 1: Post-Construction Avian Monitoring Program. Prior to Project approval, the Project applicant shall prepare a post-construction Avian Collision and Entanglement Monitoring Plan in consultation with CDFW and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for review and approval by the District. The Plan shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and shall establish standardized methods sufficient to evaluate the effectiveness of the barrier netting system and associated avoidance and minimization measures.

Monitoring shall occur for an initial 3-year period following commencement of Project operations, which may be extended if performance standards of the adaptive management plan are not met. The monitoring plan shall include, at minimum: standardized searches for injured and dead birds and observations of bird-net interactions, including avoidance, collision, and entanglement; a biologically appropriate monitoring frequency, including increased monitoring during bird migration seasons and representative nighttime monitoring sufficient to characterize nocturnal bird-net interactions; and a standardized reporting system shared with the District, CDFW, and USFWS.

Mitigation Measure # 2: Avian Collision and Entanglement Performance Standards and Adaptive Management. Prior to Project approval, the Project proponent, in consultation with CDFW and USFWS, shall establish objective and measurable performance standards for avian collision, injury, mortality, and entanglement with the barrier netting system. The performance standards shall identify thresholds that require implementation of corrective measures. Any collision, injury, mortality, or entanglement involving a state- or federally listed or Fully Protected species shall be reported to CDFW and USFWS within 24 hours of discovery.

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Adaptive management triggers shall include, at minimum, repeated collision or entanglement events associated with the same project feature or location and exceedance of the established collision or mortality performance standards. When a performance standard is exceeded, the Project Proponent shall implement appropriate corrective measures. Corrective measures may include, but are not limited to, modification of flight-diverter density, type, placement, or contrast; modification of net visibility, tension, or configuration; modification or replacement of perch deterrents; modification of lighting intensity, shielding, orientation, or operating schedule; and other measures demonstrated to reduce the identified impact.

Following implementation of corrective measures, focused effectiveness monitoring shall be conducted to determine whether the applicable performance standard has been achieved or if additional measures are necessary. Monitoring shall extend beyond the initial three-year period where a performance standard is exceeded or corrective measures are implemented and shall continue until effectiveness of the corrective measures has been demonstrated.

COMMENT # 2: Artificial Light at Night

Issue: The DEIR does not include a quantitative lighting analysis that assesses the impacts of artificial light at night (ALAN) on wildlife species nor mitigation measures to sufficiently demonstrate impacts would have a less than significant effect.

Specific impact: The Project would introduce new and increased long-term nighttime sports lighting to San Diego Bay around the proposed outfield. Sports lighting would be mounted 27 feet and 42 feet above grade to illuminate golf balls, illuminating the area as late as 1am or 2am daily. The ALAN would disrupt wildlife behavior, including activity and foraging patterns, and may cause attraction, disorientation, congregation, and increased collision risk in sensitive and migratory birds.

Why impact would occur: ALAN has been shown to change animal behavior in a variety of ways even where illumination does not spill into occupied habitat. Increased artificial light can displace wildlife to areas where perceived risk is lower; can change the reproductive timing or success in birds, which can lead to lower fitness; and can act as barrier to wildlife movement (Barrientos et al. 2023). Nocturnal migrating birds are drawn to artificial light;

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ALAN from operation of the Project until 1 or 2am every day of the year, especially in an area within the Pacific Flyaway, increases the potential for bird strikes and netting entanglement (Aulsebrook et al. 2021). Per Section 6.1.1.2 of the BRTR, due to the high aiming angle required to light the golf balls in flight from the building, the light spill from sports lighting is expected to exceed the threshold of significance for impacts to sensitive plant and wildlife species. MM BIO-4(1)(c) requires lighting design features to minimize impacts to wildlife for outdoor lighting but specifically excludes the outfield sports lighting. The DEIR does not demonstrate how application of wildlife-sensitive design measures primarily to other Project lighting sufficiently mitigates the biological effects attributed to the sports lighting itself.

Evidence impact would be significant: Several special status and migratory species occur or migrate through the Project site. Take of migratory birds is prohibited under the California Migratory Bird Treaty Act (Fish & G. Code, § 3513). Take of any endangered, threatened, candidate species that results from the Project is prohibited, except as authorized by State law under CESA (Fish & G. Code, §§ 86, 2062, 2067, 2068, 2080, 2085; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 786.9). Impacts to CESA listed species and their habitats may result in a mandatory finding of significance because the Project has the potential to substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species (CEQA Guidelines § 15065). CEQA also provides protection not for SSC which meet the CEQA definition of rare, threatened, or endangered species (CEQA Guidelines, § 15380). Inadequate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for impacts to sensitive or special status species will result in the Project continuing to have a substantial adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative effect on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species by CDFW.

While MM BIO-4 incorporates wildlife-sensitive design requirements for exterior lighting, these requirements do not address the Project's sports lighting. The DEIR identifies the sports lighting and its high aiming angle as a source of potentially significant biological effects. Where an EIR relies on mitigation to support a less than significant conclusion, the mitigation must avoid or sufficiently reduce the identified significant effect to support that conclusion (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21002, 21081(a); CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15091(a)(1), 15370).

CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2 requires disclosure of long-term irreversible environmental effects, including habitat alteration and disturbance. Continuous lighting elevates this level when it alters habitat conditions over time, to a level of unsuitability. The proposed Project lighting, as stated in the DEIR, is a permanent, long-term nighttime light, it constitutes a

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habitat disturbance when it is on continuously and disrupts avian habitat use. This impact must be disclosed and analyzed in the DEIR and is subject to mitigation, to avoid or minimize significant adverse effects on birds and other wildlife species.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

CDFW requests the following recommendations and mitigation measures are incorporated into the final CEQA document:

Recommendation # 2: Additional Lighting Analysis to Assess Wildlife-Specific Impacts. The DEIR should include a robust and scientifically grounded nighttime lighting analysis that fully discloses, quantifies, and evaluates all potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to sensitive avian and terrestrial wildlife species resulting from long-term exposure to increased nighttime illumination. This analysis should address factors such as light intensity, spectrum, duration, directionality, spillover, and skyglow; evaluate potential behavioral, physiological, and ecological disruptions; and incorporate best available science, site-specific data, and long-term monitoring requirements.

Mitigation Measure # 3: Lighting Features Specifications. Mitigation Measure MM BIO-4(1)(c) shall apply to all new lighting installations, including outfield lighting, so that illumination is minimized, tightly controlled, and designed to prevent unnecessary skyglow, light spillover, and broader ecological disruption.

Mitigation Measure # 4: Post-Construction ALAN Monitoring. A qualified biologist shall evaluate the relationship between nighttime lighting and observed bird-net interactions as part of post-construction monitoring. If monitoring indicates that Project lighting is contributing to bird attraction, disorientation, collision, or entanglement, lighting shall be modified pursuant to the monitoring and adaptive management plan. Such modifications may include shielding, re-aiming, dimming, reduction of unnecessary lighting, modification of lighting schedules, or temporary reduction of nonessential lighting during periods of elevated migratory activity or other documented high-risk conditions, provided public and aviation safety requirements are maintained.

Recommendation # 3: Alternative Operations Specifications. CDFW recommends the Project proponent explore alternatives to typical Topgolf operations to facilitate wildlife-sensitive lighting in the proposed outfield, such as use of photoluminescent or impact-activated LED golf balls at night.

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COMMENT # 3: Impacts to California Least Terns

Issue: The DEIR does not clearly address the CDFW's regulatory requirements for California least tern (least tern), an endangered species under CESA and a State Fully Protected species, nor does it clearly demonstrate how the Project would avoid impacts to this species.

Specific impact:

1. Construction Activities: Per the BRTR, although least terns were not documented during the 2024 reconnaissance surveys, they have the potential to occur, specifically for foraging, in the water of the San Diego Bay survey area. The Project could have potential impacts to their nesting and foraging habitat. The closest least tern nesting colony to the Project site is 0.5-mile northeast. Therefore, there is a high potential for the species to forage directly in the survey area. The Project is proposing to repair and replace approximately 550 feet of shoreline with nature-based solutions or riprap that could result in direct temporary impacts to the foraging habitat for least terns.
2. Proposed Structures (Barrier Netting System): Because this facility is within the Pacific Flyaway, a migratory path for seabirds, and within the foraging area for the nesting least terns, there is the potential for entanglement and collision with the new structures that are proposed post construction and during operation.

Why impact would occur: During in-water Project construction, there will be a temporary loss of eelgrass habitat adjacent to the Project site, which is a known foraging area for least terns. Temporary impacts would render the habitat inaccessible, displacing individuals and eliminating this foraging area during this phase of the Project. Construction of the Project is proposed to take up to 28 months, resulting in the loss of foraging habitat for up to two breeding seasons. If the least terns cannot forage close to their nesting colonies, they must expend more energy to look further away, which ultimately puts more stress on the animals during the breeding season, which is already the most vulnerable time of the year. Reduced foraging opportunities during the breeding season can lead to nest failure.

As stated in Comment #1, the proposed barrier netting system would pose a collision and entanglement risk for least terns. Collision and entanglement may result in injury or mortality of this Fully Protected species. If a least tern collided or became entangled in the barrier netting system, this would constitute Take under CESA.

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Evidence impact would be significant: California least tern is designated as a Fully Protected species under the California Fish and Game Code, section 3511 and take of Fully Protected species is prohibited. Additionally, California least tern is listed as endangered under CESA. Under the California Endangered Species Act, take of a state-listed species is prohibited except as authorized by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (F & G. Code, § 2080). Project activities and operation of the facility must be designed to avoid take of the species. The DEIR should clarify how Project activities will avoid potentially significant impacts to California least tern and revise the mitigation measures to address the species' Endangered and Fully Protected status.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure # 5: California Least Tern. Take of California least tern shall be fully avoided (Fish & G. Code, § 3511) through construction and operation of the Project. Temporary impacts to least tern foraging habitat shall be replaced at a 2:1 ratio to compensate for temporal loss of valuable foraging habitat. The Post-Construction Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan shall include: (a) performance criteria stipulating that there must be no impacts to least tern movement through the Project area; (b) focused least tern monitoring during the nesting season, with reports of all barrier netting-tern interactions provided to CDFW and USFWS; and (c) specification that any injury or mortality of least tern will require the project proponent to immediately contact CDFW and, under the guidance of a qualified biologist, immediately employ measures to avoid further impacts to least terns.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

1. **Avoidance of Nesting Birds and Raptors.** CDFW appreciates the inclusion of MM BIO-1(1) *Migratory Bird Treaty Act Compliance*, to address impacts to nesting birds and raptors protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. CDFW would like it to be included that nesting birds are also protected under California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513. MM BIO-1(1) requires pre-construction nesting surveys no earlier than 10 days prior to start of construction activities to confirm the presence or absence of nesting birds and/or raptors. However, nesting birds may initiate nests quickly during the breeding season, and surveys conducted several days prior to construction may not accurately reflect current nesting conditions. Therefore, CDFW recommends MM BIO-1(1) be revised to require pre-construction nesting surveys to occur within three 3 days prior to the start of activities to ensure active nests are not inadvertently disturbed. CDFW also recommends that MM BIO-1(1) clarify that if construction activities are delayed for more than three 3

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days after completion of the nesting bird survey, additional surveys shall be conducted prior to the initiation of construction.

Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Plan. CDFW recommends the Project's environmental document include mitigation measures recommended in this letter. CDFW has provided comments via a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan to assist in the development of feasible, specific, detailed (i.e., responsible party, timing, specific actions, location), and fully enforceable mitigation measures (CEQA Guidelines, § 15097; Pub. Resources Code, § 21081.6). The Lead Agency is welcome to coordinate with CDFW to further review and refine the Project's mitigation measures. Per Public Resources Code section 21081.6(a)(1), CDFW has provided a summary of our suggested mitigation measures and recommendations in the form of an attached Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (Attachment A).

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The [CNDDDB website](#)⁴ provides direction regarding the types of information that should be reported and allows on-line submittal of field survey forms.

In addition, information on special status native plant populations and sensitive natural communities, should be submitted to CDFW's Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program using the [Combined Rapid Assessment and Relevé Form](#)⁵.

The District should ensure data collected for the preparation of the DEIR is properly submitted.

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of environmental document filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice

⁴ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB>

⁵ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities/Submit>

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of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the environmental document filing fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the DEIR to assist the San Diego Unified Port District in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. CDFW requests an opportunity to review and comment on any response that the District has to our comments and to receive notification of any forthcoming hearing date(s) for the Project (CEQA Guidelines, § 15073(e)).

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Emily Gray⁶, Environmental Scientist.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

3D01B6DE84234FE...

for Glen M. Lubcke
Environmental Program Manager
South Coast Region

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program

ec: California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Glen M. Lubcke, Environmental Program Manager
Melanie Burlaza, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
Emily Gray, Environmental Scientist
Office of Planning and Research
State.Clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

⁶ Phone: 858-354-1748; Email: Emily.Gray@wildlife.ca.gov

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<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2023-07/DraftGreenTurtleCHBiologicalReport-June2023>

Megan Hamilton
 San Diego Unified Port District
 August 21, 2026
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Attachment A: Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)

CDFW provides the following language to be incorporated into the MMRP for the Project.

Mitigation Measure/Recommendation	Timing	Responsible Party
Recommendation #1 <u>Barrier Netting System Impact Analysis</u>. The DEIR should include a thorough impact analysis that clearly discloses and quantifies all possible and cumulative impacts to sensitive avian species, including California least terns, from the proposed barrier netting system. This analysis should at a minimum include site specific avian movement patterns, roosting, foraging, and migratory behaviors at different times of the year and how the installation of these structures would impact these patterns.	Prior to the adoption of the CEQA document	District
Mitigation Measure #1: <u>Post-Construction Avian Monitoring Program</u>. Prior to Project approval, the Project applicant shall prepare a post-construction Avian Collision and Entanglement Monitoring Plan in consultation with CDFW and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for review and approval by the District. The Plan shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and shall establish standardized methods sufficient to evaluate the effectiveness of the barrier netting system and associated avoidance and minimization measures. Monitoring shall occur for an initial 3-year period following commencement of Project operations, which may be extended if performance standards of the adaptive management plan are not met. The monitoring plan shall include, at minimum: standardized searches for injured and dead birds and observations of bird-net interactions, including avoidance, collision, and entanglement; a biologically appropriate monitoring frequency, including increased monitoring during bird migration seasons and representative nighttime monitoring sufficient to characterize nocturnal bird-net interactions; and a standardized reporting system shared with the District, CDFW, and USFWS.	Prior to Project Approval	Project Proponent/District

Megan Hamilton
 San Diego Unified Port District
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Mitigation Measure/Recommendation	Timing	Responsible Party
<u>Mitigation Measure #2 Avian Collision and Entanglement Performance Standards and Adaptive Management.</u> Prior to Project approval, the Project proponent, in consultation with CDFW and USFWS, shall establish objective and measurable performance standards for avian collision, injury, mortality, and entanglement with the barrier netting system. The performance standards shall identify thresholds that require implementation of corrective measures. Any collision, injury, mortality, or entanglement involving a state- or federally listed or Fully Protected species shall be reported to CDFW and USFWS within 24 hours of discovery. Adaptive management triggers shall include, at minimum, repeated collision or entanglement events associated with the same project feature or location and exceedance of the established collision or mortality performance standards. When a performance standard is exceeded, the Project Proponent shall implement appropriate corrective measures. Corrective measures may include, but are not limited to, modification of flight-diverter density, type, placement, or contrast; modification of net visibility, tension, or configuration; modification or replacement of perch deterrents; modification of lighting intensity, shielding, orientation, or operating schedule; and other measures demonstrated to reduce the identified impact. Following implementation of corrective measures, focused effectiveness monitoring shall be conducted to determine whether the applicable performance standard has been achieved or if additional measures are necessary. Monitoring shall extend beyond the initial three-year period where a performance standard is exceeded or corrective measures are	Prior to Project Approval	Project Proponent

Megan Hamilton

San Diego Unified Port District

August 21, 2026

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Mitigation Measure/Recommendation	Timing	Responsible Party
implemented and shall continue until effectiveness of the corrective measures has been demonstrated.		
Recommendation # 2: <u>Additional Lighting Analysis to Assess Wildlife-Specific Impacts.</u> The DEIR should include a robust and scientifically grounded nighttime lighting analysis that fully discloses, quantifies, and evaluates all potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to sensitive avian and terrestrial wildlife species resulting from long-term exposure to increased nighttime illumination. This analysis should address factors such as light intensity, spectrum, duration, directionality, spillover, and skyglow; evaluate potential behavioral, physiological, and ecological disruptions; and incorporate best available science, site specific data, and long-term monitoring requirements.	Prior to adoption of the CEQA document	District
Mitigation Measure # 3: <u>Lighting Features Specifications.</u> Mitigation Measure MM BIO-4(1)(c) shall apply to all new lighting installations, including outfield lighting, so that illumination is minimized, tightly controlled, and designed to prevent unnecessary skyglow, light spillover, and broader ecological disruption.	Prior to Project Activities	Project Proponent
Mitigation Measure # 4: <u>Post-Construction ALAN Monitoring.</u> A qualified biologist shall evaluate the relationship between nighttime lighting and observed bird-net interactions as part of post-construction monitoring. If monitoring indicates that Project lighting is contributing to bird attraction, disorientation, collision, or entanglement, lighting shall be modified pursuant to the monitoring and adaptive management plan. Such modifications may include shielding, re-aiming, dimming, reduction of unnecessary lighting, modification of lighting schedules, or temporary reduction of nonessential lighting during periods of elevated migratory activity or other documented high-risk conditions, provided public and aviation safety requirements are maintained.	During Business Operation	Project Proponent/ Qualified Biologist
Recommendation # 3: <u>Alternative Operations Specifications.</u> CDFW recommends the Project proponent explore alternatives to typical Topgolf	Prior to the adoption of the	Project Proponent

Megan Hamilton
 San Diego Unified Port District
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Mitigation Measure/Recommendation	Timing	Responsible Party
operations to facilitate wildlife-sensitive lighting in the proposed outfield, such as use of photoluminescent or impact-activated LED golf balls at night.	CEQA document	
Mitigation Measure # 5: <u>California Least Tern.</u> Take of California least tern shall be fully avoided (Fish & G. Code, § 3511) through construction and operation of the Project. Temporary impacts to least tern foraging habitat shall be replaced at a 2:1 ratio to compensate for temporal loss of valuable foraging habitat. The Post-Construction Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan shall include: (a) performance criteria stipulating that there must be no impacts to least tern movement through the Project area; (b) focused least tern monitoring during the nesting season, with reports of all barrier netting-tern interactions provided to CDFW and USFWS; and (c) specification that any injury or mortality of least tern will require the project proponent to immediately contact CDFW and, under the guidance of a qualified biologist, immediately employ measures to avoid further impacts to least terns.	Prior to start of Project activities	District

From: [Coden, Flora@Coastal](mailto:Coden,Flora@Coastal)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [Leslie, Kanani@Coastal](mailto:Leslie,Kanani@Coastal); [Lasiter, Melody@Coastal](mailto:Lasiter,Melody@Coastal); [Clatterbuck, Corey@Coastal](mailto:Clatterbuck,Corey@Coastal)
Subject: Coastal Commission Staff Comments - Draft EIR for East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 12:36:40 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-kxuebqdp.png](#)
[CCC_Topgolf Comment Letter_08242026.pdf](#)

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Hello Megan,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR for this project. Please find Commission staff comments attached. Feel free to let us know if you have any questions.

Best Regards,
Flora Coden
Port Planner
California Coastal Commission
7575 Metropolitan Drive, Suite 103, San Diego, 92108
flora.coden@coastal.ca.gov



CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

SAN DIEGO DISTRICT OFFICE
7575 METROPOLITAN DRIVE, SUITE 103
SAN DIEGO, CA 92108-4402
(619) 767-2370
EMAIL: SANDIEGOCOAST.CA.GOV



August 24, 2026

SENT VIA EMAIL ONLY

Board of Port Commissioners
San Diego Unified Port District
3165 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA, 92109

Re: Coastal Commission Comments on Draft EIR for East Harbor Island
Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project

Dear Chair Ann Moore and Commissioners:

Coastal Commission (Commission) staff appreciates the opportunity to review and provide the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project which was emailed to Commission staff on July 8, 2026. The project includes the demolition of unoccupied rental car facilities and associated structures; realignment of Liberator Way; redevelopment of approximately 9.8 acres for a three-story, 46 ft. tall building with 90-170 ft. poles and netting that encompasses the golf driving range complex and associated restaurant and retail uses and parking (Topgolf); and approximately 10.1 acres of waterfront park including a 20 ft. wide public promenade.

Standard of Review

The proposed project will require an amendment to the certified Port Master Plan followed by the issuance of a coastal development permit by the San Diego Unified Port District, which will be appealable to the Commission.

California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 13636 calls for port master plan amendments to be certified in the same manner as port master plans. Section 30711 of the Coastal Act (Pub. Resources Code, Div. 20) states, in part, that a port master plan shall include all of the following: (1) the proposed uses of land and water areas, where known; (2) the projected design and location of port land areas, water areas, berthing, and navigation ways and systems intended to serve commercial traffic within the area of jurisdiction of the port governing body; (3) an estimate of the effect of development on habitat areas and the marine environment, a review of existing water quality, habitat areas, and quantitative and qualitative biological inventories, and proposals to minimize and mitigate any substantial adverse impact; (4) proposed projects listed as appealable in Section 30715 in sufficient detail to be able to determine their consistency with the policies of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200) of the Coastal Act; and (5) provisions for adequate public hearings and public participation in port planning and development decisions. Section 30711 further requires a port master plan to contain information in sufficient detail to allow the Commission to determine its adequacy and conformity with the Coastal Act. Section 30700 of the Coastal Act states that Chapter 8 shall govern those portions of the San Diego Unified Port District, excluding any wetland, estuary, or existing recreation area indicated in Part IV of the Coastal Plan. The entire water area under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Diego is governed by Chapter 3 policies because San Diego

Bay is mapped as an estuary and wetland in Part IV of the Coastal Plan, and on the maps adopted by the Commission pursuant to Section 30710 of the Act. Section 30714 provides that the Commission shall certify a PMP if it conforms with and carries out the policies of Chapter 8 of the Coastal Act or, where a PMP provides for any of the developments listed as appealable to the Commission pursuant to Section 30715 of the Coastal Act, then that portion of the PMP must also be consistent with the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. Section 30716 requires that an amendment to a PMP meet the same standards of review. Finally, a unique provision with the review of Port Master Plans, and any subsequent amendments, is that the Commission may not adopt suggested modifications to them, as is provided for in the review of local coastal programs. (§ 30714.) Therefore, port master plans and subsequent amendments must be either approved or denied as submitted. Thus, it is critical that our offices closely coordinate to ensure the final plan is consistent with Chapter 8, and where applicable Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

Need for a Port Master Plan Amendment (PMPA)

The Draft EIR indicates that no PMPA would be required if the Port Master Plan Update is certified prior to the approval of the project. However, a PMPA is required for the reasons identified above, unless the PMPU is revised to incorporate the subject project, including adding it to the project list, as well as providing a more detailed project description, estimate of the effect of the project on coastal resources, and minimization/mitigation measures in order to determine whether the project is consistent with the Coastal Act.

Appealability

The Draft EIR states that the project would not be appealable to the Commission (other than the Liberator Way realignment portion). However, Commission staff determined that the Topgolf facility includes sufficient restaurant and retail space (6,180 square feet of restaurant uses and 367 square feet of retail uses) to qualify as a shopping facility under Section 30715 of the Coastal Act and therefore would be appealable.

Public Use of Tidelands

The Commission, in implementing the Coastal Act, encourages development on tidelands to be used for water-dependent or visitor-serving purposes that benefit the public, while maximizing visual and physical engagement with the waterfront. In the Port of San Diego, water dependent uses have historically included Port and marine related industrial facilities, commercial and recreational fishing and boating facilities, while visitor-serving facilities include parks, restaurants, hotels, shops, restrooms and parking areas, because these allow broad public access to the tidelands. Conversely, the proposed Topgolf facility is a commercial chain facility with a high cost to access, with no connection to, or even orientation towards the water (e.g., oriented to the east instead of to the south where views of the San Diego Bay would be expansive). The Draft EIR renderings illustrate the golf ball hitting bays oriented away from the waterfront, eastward towards downtown, thus not emphasizing or engaging the public with the coastal environment and instead facing large digital screens. As designed, the building contrasts with other visitor-serving uses along the bay, creating an obstruction to public views of the water while simultaneously only providing limited interior views of the Bay. This orientation would conflict with the Coastal Act's intent to ensure that waterfront development enhances, rather than diminishes, visual and physical connections to coastal resources (Section 30251).

Commission staff recognize that Topgolf is a commercial recreational use offering a variety of game, food and retail options, yet it is a largely enclosed structure facing away from the water, that would occupy a significant amount of land that could be better suited for a use that utilized or engaged with the waterfront location. The project also proposes a 2.5-acre private Topgolf parking lot with 289 parking stalls, further limiting the space dedicated to public access to the waterfront.

Avian and Bat Entanglement

The Draft EIR states that the project will use poles ranging from 90-170 ft. for the black, one-inch diameter mesh netting that encloses the range. The extensive use of netting combined with the substantial heights would cause significant potential for entanglement of birds and bats. The Draft EIR includes mitigation strategies including use of a black color for the mesh netting “to be visible to birds”, however it is unclear how this would have any positive impact at night. Another mitigation measure states that the mesh netting is made of polyester material and is flexible, which may help prevent injuries to birds, and the 1-inch mesh is ideal for reducing entanglement concerns for smaller birds. These statements are more relevant for a BMP, not a mitigation measure, and are not sufficient to reduce impacts. Commission staff is additionally concerned about entanglement impacts given that this site is located on the Pacific Flyway, one of the major migration routes in North America for migrating birds. The Draft EIR uses the example of Topgolf Burlingame to assess potential entanglement impacts, which has implemented the black mesh nets with bird marking devices with no incidents. The EIR should include comparison of this project with other Topgolf locations, since there are examples of entanglement issues at other Topgolf facilities such as a red-tailed hawk in [Florida](#), an osprey in [Virginia](#), an osprey in [South Carolina](#), and a hawk in [New York](#).

Plastic Pollution

The project proposes 4.5 acres of two-tone monofilament polyethylene grass blade turf in the outfield, which poses a significant concern for microplastics, rubber particles, chemicals, and metals associated with artificial turf and synthetic recreational surfaces to enter San Diego Bay through stormwater runoff, wind, flooding, or material degradation. Given the adverse impacts of artificial turf to water quality and marine resources, the Commission is opposed to the use of artificial turf containing plastic or rubber infill, including recycled tire-derived crumb rubber, and poured-in-place synthetic rubber surfaces within proximity to the San Diego Bay or any body of water. Additionally, recycled tire-derived rubber shall not be used as infill, shock padding, underlayment, or any other component of an artificial turf or recreational surfacing system. Please include an analysis of alternative materials for the outfield that would avoid coastal resource impacts, consistent with Sections 30230 and 30231 of the Coastal Act.

Lighting and Digital Screens

The proposed project would introduce a new source of lighting and potential glare that could adversely affect nighttime views, as well as contribute to wildlife behavior modifications that could result in greater likelihood of bird strikes and/or entanglement. The Topgolf facility’s proposed operating hours, until 1:00 a.m. Sunday through Thursday and

2:00 a.m. Friday through Saturday, would extend these lighting effects late into the night, increasing the potential for entanglement of migrating birds. As discussed in Section 3.1 of the Draft EIR, the light spill is expected to exceed the threshold for nighttime impacts from sports lighting due to the high aiming angle to illuminate the golf balls. The Draft EIR qualifies the outfield lighting as sports lighting under CALGreen Backlight, Uplight and Glare code, therefore exempting it from rating limitations. The mitigation measures for lighting further exempt outfield lighting from being directed downwards and shielded to reduce lighting impacts. Although sports lighting may be considered exempt under CALGreen code, the proposed project is within the Port's jurisdiction, and is subject to separate Coastal Act review, which has no such exemptions for sports lighting.

One mitigation measure describes use of a minimum 9-foot-tall obstruction, in the form of a berm or fence screening that extends throughout the entire outfield to reduce light, glare and light spill to the east at the inlet near the Coast Guard, however it is unclear how this minimum 9-ft. tall obstruction would block light spill from the 16 building-mounted light fixtures, mounted at approximately 27 feet and 42 feet above grade.

In addition, the project proposes two 50-foot by 30-foot LED high-definition digital screens mounted to the netting and poles at the far eastern end of the outfield facing back toward the building. The Draft EIR further explains that the screens could be visible to drivers passing by. In evaluating development under Section 30251 of the Coastal Act, Commission staff have historically been opposed to use of digital screens on Port tidelands as they result in visual clutter and are incompatible with the character of the surrounding tidelands. The cumulative effects of these large digital screens, the lighting and glare, and the bulk of the proposed building would compound potential impacts to wildlife species, including the endangered California least tern, which nests throughout coastal San Diego. An alternative that does not incorporate digital screens should be considered to reduce visual clutter and improve consistency with Coastal Act visual resource protection policies.

Predator Perching

The height of both the barrier netting system poles and the building itself could create elevated perching opportunities for raptors, increasing the likelihood of predation on smaller bird species and chicks of several species including the federally and state-listed endangered California least tern. The Draft EIR discusses perch deterrents; however this may not be sufficient due to raptors' ability to bypass certain perch deterrent designs by utilizing alternate ledges or footholds.

Least Tern Nest Site Impacts

There is a protected nesting site for the endangered California least tern across the street from the proposed project site at the San Diego International Airport, managed with US Fish and Wildlife Service. The cumulative impacts from the project—including the risk of entanglement, bright lighting from the building and outfield especially at night, the project creating an obstruction near the water where least terns forage, and increased predation risk associated with elevated perching opportunities—pose a substantial threat to nesting

and foraging California least terns at this site, which have already experienced decline over the past several years. Based on the project site's location between a least tern nesting site and potential forage area, the project should be sited and designed to prevent adverse impacts to these environmentally sensitive habitat areas, pursuant to Section 30240 of the Coastal Act.

Bulk and Scale

The project site lies between Harbor Drive, a major coastal accessway, and San Diego Bay and future development should open public views to the bay from Harbor Drive. We are concerned that the bulk and scale of the proposed development would instead wall off scenic public views of the bay and Harbor Drive. Alternatives should be considered that would minimize the bulk/scale of the buildings and provide view corridors of the bay.

Lower-Cost Visitor Serving Facilities

Given its location on public tidelands, the small fraction of the public who participate in golf activities, and the high cost typical of Topgolf facilities, Commission staff strongly suggest additional lower-cost programming to enable more members of the public to utilize the facility and waterfront location for recreation. The Draft EIR explains the "Topgolf Driving for Good" program, which offers community benefit opportunities geared towards youth programs, however due to the project location on public tidelands, there should be low-income programming for other groups as well.

Commission staff appreciate the addition of a walkway that would provide a north-south connection from the Embarcadero Downtown to San Diego Bay, thereby promoting coastal access. However, the walkway is specified as 8–10 feet wide and designated for multi-use, raising concerns about whether this narrow width can safely accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists.

Alternatives Analysis

Commission staff appreciates the discussion of alternative projects in the Draft EIR and would like to suggest two other alternatives to be analyzed for impacts. An alternative design featuring a fully enclosed range and outfield could substantially reduce entanglement risk to a less than significant level, minimize raptor perching opportunities, address concerns regarding plastic pollution associated with artificial turf runoff, and reduce lighting-related impacts. If feasible, the enclosure could be constructed of bird-safe glass in order to still emphasize the waterfront. This alternative should use materials with permanent design details that have a Threat Factor of less than 25 and incorporate bird-friendly designs that minimize transparency and reflectivity while providing visual cues for birds to avoid. Please consider an analysis of this option that could greatly minimize impacts to coastal resources.

Commission staff also recommends the evaluation of a project alternative that uses virtual golf simulators, thereby eliminating the need for nets, outdoor artificial turf, and bright nighttime lighting. With this alternative, the outfield area could be removed from the project, allowing for the additional space to be used as a waterfront park that would maximize public access to the coast, while opening up views of the San Diego Bay from

August 24, 2026

Page 6

Harbor Drive and avoiding many of the coastal resource impacts associated with the current project proposal (i.e., water quality, marine resources, avian/bat, public views).

Please note that these comments have been submitted on the part of staff and the Commission itself would be the ultimate decision-making body. These comments are based on the information that has been presented to us thus far and are not binding; the Commission and staff may have further comments or identify additional issues over time. We look forward to continuing our coordination with Port staff on this project. If you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at Flora.Coden@coastal.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Flora Coden".

Flora Coden
Port Planner

From: [Evans, Randy C \(Contractor\)](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#)
Subject: RE: Notice of Availability for the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Monday, July 13, 2026 11:15:12 AM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[image008.png](#)
[image009.png](#)
[image010.png](#)
[image011.png](#)
[image012.png](#)
[image013.png](#)
[Project Requirements Letter UPD #EIR-2023-134; SCH #2023110463.docx](#)

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Hi Megan,

Please forward this email and the attached Project Requirements Letter to the project developer for PRJ-UPD #EIR-2023-134; SCH #2023110463.

SDG&E has identified existing facilities within/nearby the proposed development area based on the preliminary information received. Once final project plans are available, please provide them so we can offer more detailed guidance.

- To submit an **Encroachment Request** or learn more, please click [HERE](#).
- To submit a **Quitclaim Request** or learn more, please click [HERE](#).
- To submit a request to a **Planner** for relocation or new service, or for additional information, please click [HERE](#).

Thank you,

Randy Evans

Land Management Technician I
Clark Land Resources, Inc.
San Diego Gas & Electric (Contractor)
Land Services Division

P (619) 676-3025

E revans3@sdgecontractor.com

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From: Megan Hamilton <mhamilton@portofsandiego.org>

Sent: Wednesday, July 8, 2026 9:11 AM

To: Megan Hamilton <mhamilton@portofsandiego.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Notice of Availability for the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project

Hello,

Please see the attached Notice of Availability for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project (formerly East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project and Port Master Plan Amendment).

Thank you,

Megan Hamilton

Senior Planner

Development Services

(619) 380-0765



connect: [\[portofsandiego.org\]](https://www.portofsandiego.org) [\[facebook.com\]](https://www.facebook.com/portofsandiego) [\[twitter.com\]](https://twitter.com/portofsandiego) [\[youtube.com\]](https://www.youtube.com/portofsandiego) [\[linkedin.com\]](https://www.linkedin.com/company/portofsandiego) [\[instagram.com\]](https://www.instagram.com/portofsandiego)

Port administration offices are open Monday-Thursday
and [every other Friday \[portofsandiego.org\]](https://www.portofsandiego.org) from 8am-5pm.



Randy Evans
Land Management Technician I
Clark Land Resources, Inc.
San Diego Gas & Electric
(Contractor)
8690 Balboa Ave., CPA01
San Diego, CA 92123
revans3@sdgecontractor.com

July 13, 2026

PRJ# **East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park**
UPD #**EIR-2023-134; SCH #2023110463**
APN# **760-010-08**

Dear Developer,

We have received preliminary information about your project. SDG&E has existing facilities within/nearby the proposed development area. We understand these plans are preliminary, and once final plans are drafted, please provide them for more specific direction.

SDG&E's preference is that you consider options that do not encroach within or encumber SDG&E's properties, easements, or rights-of-way. Allowable uses within SDG&E easements or rights-of-way are very limited in scope and type. Each request to use an SDG&E easement or right-of-way will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

If SDG&E can accommodate your project, your request may also require approval by the California Public Utilities Commission. If the project includes relocation of SDG&E gas or electric facilities, encroachment into an easement, or quitclaim of existing easement(s), the following documentation is required, as applicable:

- ☐ Map or plan illustrating the location of the easement(s) and any existing or proposed SDG&E facilities
- ☐ A complete set of design plans including the following is required, as applicable:
 - Grading
 - Site improvement plans (e.g., street improvement, drainage, sewer, water, fire service, structural wall, amenity, lighting)
 - Plan and profile (elevation) design plans for any structures, buildings, or other improvements in or near existing and proposed SDG&E easements
 - Landscape, irrigation, and habitat restoration
- ☐ Documentation of compliance with CEQA (e.g., final EIR, Notice of Determination), or evidence to show why the project is exempt from CEQA review
 - Environmental impacts related to any SDG&E facility relocations or encroachments must be contemplated in environmental review.
- ☐ A scaled exhibit or plan drawing clearly illustrating and highlighting the location and extent of all SDG&E easements, and all existing or proposed SDG&E facilities is required
- ☐ A description of the project entitlement status and copies of associated

documents (e.g., resolutions, letters of approval, approved site plans, tentative maps, final maps).

In addition to the above, the following documentation **may be required** for any project:

- ☐ A Title Report with plotted easements
- ☐ ALTA Survey
- ☐ An appraisal completed by an approved SDG&E appraiser to ascertain existing and/or proposed easement values or the loss in value of an easement that will be encumbered with new encroachments
- ☐ Any other relevant documents (e.g., owner's acknowledgement letter)

If the project proposes encroachments into existing or proposed SDG&E Transmission or Distribution easements, the following additional items may be required:

- ☐ A Consent Agreement between SDG&E and the property owner or developer
- ☐ Detailed Survey Grade Exhibits of the encroachments including approximate area of encumbrance
- ☐ An internal review by SDG&E Engineering, Operations, Land, Environmental, Legal and Risk Management departments to review conflicts, compatibility, safety, and risk
- ☐ Design changes may be required

Projects with parcel maps or subdivision maps that include the dedication of public roads or other public rights of way within areas of existing SDG&E transmission and distribution easements may trigger a request by the public agency for a Joint Use Agreement. **SDG&E will not enter into any agreement that subjugates SDG&E easement rights.**

Projects that relocate facilities out of an easement into a franchise right-of-way position may be subject to the requirement of obtaining a Joint Use Agreement from the City/County that protects SDG&E ratepayers from costs of future relocation.

It is advisable to consult with SDG&E early in the project conception or development. We will be happy to provide a more detailed explanation of the requirements listed above.

Sincerely,

Randy Evans

Land Management Technician I

Clark Land Resources, Inc.

San Diego Gas & Electric (Contractor)

www.sdge.com/LandServices

From: [Airport Planning](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: DEIR Comment Letter - East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 4:53:37 PM
Attachments: [DEIR_TopGolf_Comment_Letter_2026 - signed.pdf](#)

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CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

Attached please find a comment letter from the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA) regarding the DEIR for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed project.

Sincerely,
San Diego County Regional Airport Authority

Sent via email: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org

August 24, 2026

Ms. Megan Hamilton
San Diego Unified Port District
Development Services Department
3165 Pacific Highway
San Diego, California 92101

RE: East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project –
Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

As both the owner and operator of San Diego International Airport (SDIA) and the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) for San Diego County, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments on the project indicated above.

Discretionary Approvals

Table 2-3 indicates that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) would be the approving agency for an aviation easement. The FAA does not administer local aviation easements, and such an easement would be granted to SDCRAA in accordance with the SDIA Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) adopted and administered by SDCRAA, so the aviation easement should be moved in the table to be alongside the ALUCP consistency determination. Please see also further comments below regarding the matter of an aviation easement.

Cumulative Impacts

SDIA Expansion in Table 3-1 should be revised to “First phase of construction for the replacement of Terminal 1 was completed in September 2025. Completion of the entire project is expected to be in 2028. Future terminal improvements will include a post-security connector between Terminals 1 and 2, and the Terminal 2 East Modernization project as significant and ongoing projects cumulatively that should be considered in the immediate vicinity with the Port project.

Aesthetics

The DEIR proposes as a mitigation measure a 9-foot-tall perimeter berm or fence to shield vantage points to the east of the site from the glare of outdoor lighting trespass, but the DEIR does not assess the potential for airspace glare that could adversely affect pilot and air traffic controller visibility. Project lighting may create distracting or confusing visual conditions for aircraft on final approach to SDIA Runway 27, the predominant arrival flight path at the airport.

SDIA staff consultation with other airports in proximity to major light sources, including driving ranges near San Francisco International Airport and Harry Reid Las Vegas International Airport, reveal that these airports experienced significant impacts to pilot and controller vision from nighttime glare sources that necessitated considerable consultations with commercial operators and corrections to site light brightness and orientation to redress the nighttime glare effect pilots were experiencing.

Accordingly, these concerns warrant further analysis and the identification of additional mitigation measures within the DEIR to address potential glare effects on pilot and air traffic controller visibility. SDCRAA requests that the project sponsor engage in continuous coordination with SDIA Operations and Air Traffic Control Tower personnel during project design and throughout all phases of construction to ensure that no adverse impacts to flight procedures, navigational safety, or airport operations occur. Coordination protocols should also provide timely notification to airport users regarding construction activities that could affect airfield operations, particularly during periods of limited visibility, including marine layer and fog conditions.

Biological Resources

SDIA maintains nesting habitat on airport property for the endangered California least tern, which is monitored by state and federal wildlife agencies, and additional foraging habitat for this species exists within the project vicinity along San Diego Bay. The DEIR may not adequately address potential negative impacts from the project on the nearby California least tern breeding colony at SDIA. Since a peak of 7,130 pairs in 2009 (Marschalek 2010), the population of this state and federally endangered species has dropped to 2,401 pairs in 2025 (California Department of Fish and Wildlife unpublished data). Colony size at SDIA has also become precariously low in recent years and thus development projects in the area have the potential for cumulative

effects that could result in the extirpation of the tern as a breeding species from north San Diego Bay.

DEIR section 3.3.3 **Method of Analysis** notes that avian surveys were conducted in January and February for winter, June and July for summer, and October for fall, thus excluding any surveys during the peak of the least tern nesting season in May. No least terns were recorded by the surveys. The DEIR acknowledges the high potential for least terns in the project area based on the County Bird Atlas (Unitt 2004) and Port's baywide monthly avian surveys (Tierra Data Inc) but does not appear to have referenced previous EIRs for adjacent projects where local status of and potential impacts to least terns were addressed, such as those for the airport terminal expansion or for Sunroad Marina. Least terns regularly forage adjacent to the proposed project location, specifically off East Harbor Island, in Convair Lagoon, and along the shoreline of the USCG station and North Embarcadero. They also roost on and stage from the old seaplane ramps at the USCG station, and forage along the shorelines of North Island and Shelter Island.

In multiple places in the DEIR, nesting of least terns in the area is inaccurately characterized as being "approximately 0.5 miles northeast" at SDIA, and Figure 3.3-3 labels least tern nesting as being in the central airfield. Monitoring observations indicate the colony is located in the southeast portion of the airfield, and the eastern portion of the proposed project lies within the 1,200 feet buffer of concern and limited activity identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion. Measurements plotted on Google Earth show that the northeast corner of the project site is only 926 feet from the southwest edge of the main least tern nesting oval 03-S at SDIA, and approximately 1,177 feet from this season's western-most nest. The proposed 170 feet tall poles and netting along the west side of Liberator Way are 1,572 feet from the oval 04-S nesting oval, 1,822 feet from oval 03-S, and 2,312 feet from the nearest 2026 nest.

Given the proximity of the breeding colony to the proposed Topgolf structures, line-of-sight modeling is needed between the nesting ovals and the 170 feet tall poles and fencing, lighting, and three-story building in order to adequately assess potential impacts. Potential impacts are posed both during construction, including noise, lighting, and equipment height (predatory corvid/raptor perch potential), and during post-construction daily operations, including lighting, netting entanglement, corvid/raptor perch potential, gull/raptor/corvid nesting potential, and obstruction of flight paths between bay foraging areas and the nesting colony. A project alternative should be included that relocates or reorients the Topgolf structures farther west,

farther away from the nesting colony and foraging areas, or repositions the tallest and most lighted structures to be on the west side of the complex.

Section 3.3.1.6 **Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Linkages** notes least tern nesting at SDIA and the potential for least tern foraging south of the project but fails to address the obstacle that the project creates between the colony site and foraging habitat.

Section 3.3.5.1 **Threshold 1: Candidate, Sensitive, or Special-status Species, Impact Analysis, Sensitive Wildlife Species, Direct Impacts** recognizes that shoreline stabilization efforts and barge “implementation ... could directly impact ... California least tern through temporary displacement of individuals and rendering habitat inaccessible during construction of the Project. Direct impacts ... would be potentially significant.”

The section on **Indirect Impacts, Structures** recognizes that “structure-related indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife species during construction activities and operation of the Project would be potentially significant.” These include “potential indirect impacts from increased bird strikes on and entanglement in the new structures proposed by the Project could result in behavioral changes and potential mortality for the sensitive bird species”, and “raptors utilizing the barrier netting system poles as perches could negatively impact the colony by predating chicks, fledglings, and adults.” It continues that “Without the use of perch deterrent devices in the Project design, the potential indirect impacts from the new barrier netting system poles could result in mortality by predation of the sensitive bird species”. However, no anti-perch devices are 100 percent effective, and while their implementation may reduce frequency of predation, it will not eliminate raptor or corvid use of the structures.

The section on **Lighting** recognizes that “The Project would result in new and increased nighttime lighting during construction activities and operation, which could disrupt behaviors and cause mortality (i.e., bird strikes) to the sensitive wildlife species” and that “lighting-related indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife species during construction activities and operation of the Project would be potentially significant.”

The section on **Noise and Vibration** recognizes that “Construction-related noise and vibration in the Project area could result in indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife species ... including through abandonment of foraging habitat ... and nesting habitat ... These sensitive wildlife species may temporarily or permanently leave their foraging or nesting habitats to avoid noise generated from construction activities, which may lead to reduced reproductive success and increased mortality.” “Therefore, indirect impacts to sensitive foraging birds from temporary construction

noise levels would be potentially significant.” And “if construction begins during the nesting season ... the increased noise levels during construction could result in indirect impacts to nesting ... and impacts would be potentially significant.” (Although applicable to least terns, in the DEIR this last sentence does not specifically include them).

The section on **Trash and Garbage** recognizes that “The increased presence of trash and garbage in the Project area during construction and operation could result in indirect impacts to the sensitive wildlife species”.

Section 3.3.5.4 **Threshold 4: Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Linkages** recognizes that “The new structures and lighting, and the potential for bird strikes and entanglements, could interfere with the ability for this area to continue to function as a wildlife movement corridor and habitat linkage because it could cause a significant impact to the sensitive wildlife species...” “Therefore, direct impacts to wildlife corridors, habitat linkages, and movement of migratory and resident bird species would be potentially significant.”

The sections on **Mitigation Measures** state that implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-4 would mitigate potential impacts, and they include efforts to limit operational lighting, perch potential, entanglement, trash, and limiting construction activity to daylight hours. However, they should also include limiting the height of cranes, equipment, and any temporary structures in order to reduce the potential for corvid or raptor perching; lowering cranes and equipment when not in use; and implementation of anti-perch devices on any equipment or temporary structures within line-of-sight of the nesting ovals.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1, Construction Noise and Lighting Impact Mitigation, should be revised to indicate the California least tern nesting season starts on April 1.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4, Wildlife-Safe Building, Barrier Netting System, and Lighting Design Guidelines, should add permanent educational signage throughout the project area to help reduce wildlife attractants and support protection of the endangered California least terns and other sensitive bird species with messaging such as:

- No Littering
- Keep Trash Can Lids Closed
- Do Not Feed Birds or Wildlife

Mitigation Measure BIO-4(b)(v), Barrier Netting System, should consider using spider-style pole-cap deterrent devices in lieu of, or in addition to, the proposed perch deterrent devices, as they may be more effective at preventing Western gulls perching on netting poles.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4(b)(vi) should provide annual employee training and response procedures at the start of the migratory bird nesting season.

Despite the recognition by the DEIR of potentially significant impacts to least terns and proposed Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-4, the measures listed are only limited to the project site itself and fail to include any monitoring of impacts from the project on the least tern nesting colony nor any adaptive management responses if impacts are detected.

Land Use and Planning

In its capacity as the ALUC for San Diego County, SDCRAA issued a determination of conditional consistency for the project with the SDIA ALUCP on April 3, 2025. That determination was predicated upon FAA airspace determinations issued for the proposed project building, netting support poles, and temporary construction crane to support the project. The FAA determinations specified that marking and lighting conditions for the netting poles and construction crane would apply, and SDCRAA reiterated those as conditions in its consistency determination.

However, each of those FAA determinations has expired, and a search of the FAA Obstruction Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis website indicates that no extensions to renew those FAA determinations were issued prior to their expiration dates. Therefore, in accordance with federal law requiring project sponsors to notify the FAA of proposed construction, new applications for the project building cardinal points, netting poles, and construction crane must be submitted to the FAA and maintained as valid prior to the commencement of project construction.

Furthermore, the SDCRAA consistency determination specified that, in accordance with the SDIA ALUCP, because the project netting poles and construction crane would require marking and lighting conditions per FAA determination, the ALUCP requirement to dedicate and record an airspace aviation easement in favor of SDIA as airport operator applies to the project premises.

Transportation

Vehicle Trip Generation: The project will generate new vehicle trips that will likely increase traffic along North Harbor Drive and nearby streets and intersections within the project vicinity, but the DEIR does not assess traffic impacts to queueing, delays, or level of service on North Harbor Drive from Harbor Island Drive to Laurel, Hawthorn, or Grape Streets, including Liberator Way and Crosswind Way between those points. The DEIR also does not assess the cumulatively considerable traffic impacts in the local setting given the existing traffic conditions on North Harbor Drive and related nearby streets.

The DEIR does not assess whether the reconfigured Liberator Way corridor and modified intersections can accommodate project traffic while maintaining acceptable access to airport-related facilities. The DEIR should clarify whether the project will involve signal retiming at the intersection of Liberator Way and North Harbor Drive and how that would impact traffic queueing and delays.

The DEIR trip generation and parking benchmarking appear to be based on studies using a single comparison site, the Topgolf facility in Scottsdale, Arizona, using traffic counts data from August 2014, twelve years ago and during an off-season tourism period. It is unclear how much data was collected and how busy that facility was at the time it was collected. For confidence in the analysis, more recent data from one or more comparable facilities and including a peak tourist season is appropriate.

The “Local Mobility Analysis for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project” by Chen Ryan Associates from May 2024 is repeatedly cited in the DEIR but was not included in the technical appendices and must be provided for full public disclosure and review.

Figure 2-6 must be revised to correct two observed discrepancies: the exit from Liberator Way to North Harbor Drive shows a northbound through lane for which there is no possible destination, as only left and right turns are possible at that intersection, and the westbound exit from Liberator Way to Harbor Island Drive includes a left turn lane despite a median that would prevent such a turn.

Table 1.1 of Appendix O1 appears to supply only weekday morning and afternoon peak hour trips, but as a recreational facility the project is likely to generate considerable trips on weekend days which should be disclosed and assessed as well. That same table notes a superscript for "Park Open Space", but no note is provided.

Figure 3.1 of Appendix O1 shows two crosswalks across a curved Harbor Island Drive at a one-way stop for vehicles at the T intersection with the realigned Liberator Way. The requisite sightline from a curved path of travel and stopping distance for vehicles to safely observe pedestrians using such a crosswalk should be assessed for safety of travel conflicts.

Parking Demand Capacity: There is a discrepancy in the parking spaces per hitting bay factor used as a basis for concluding that the project provides sufficient parking spaces. While the impact analysis of 3.13.5.5 of the DEIR cites a rate of 3.89 parking spaces per hitting bay based on the Scottsdale Topgolf facility, the attachment report for the Burlingame Topgolf parking study to Appendix O2 cites the same Scottsdale Topgolf facility as having 437 spaces for 102 bays, which would be a rate of 4.28 spaces per bay. This difference raises the question of whether the appropriate factor was used in Table 2 of Appendix O2 and replicated in Table 3.13-7 of the DEIR as the preliminary, unadjusted basis to calculate project-provided spaces and conclude that the number of spaces is sufficient since those tables used the lower 3.89 figure.

The parking analysis of the Scottsdale Topgolf facility appears to be based on only three days in a single weekend of the same August off-peak season with Appendix remarks noting significant overflow parking during that duration, without reference to the corresponding hitting bay occupancy levels.

The validation comparison to the Las Vegas Topgolf facility in Appendix O2 further reduces the number of project parking spaces per hitting bay to a 2.6 figure. That validation states that aerial images of the Las Vegas facility were taken “between February 18, 2024, and February 3, 2024”, but notes that the highest occupancy dates were two of the 14 dates (June 13, 2021, and September 23, 2022) that happen to be available within that range but may not necessarily be representative of peak demand periods; those latter dates are definitely not within the range of when the images were indicated as taken.

These facts call into question the appropriate computation factor of parking spaces per hitting bay as the basis for the DEIR concluding sufficient parking spaces are provided by the project.

That position is augmented by considerations that the analysis includes an airport reduction factor that assumes Topgolf patrons will park and walk from airport parking locations but does not include discussion of how the proposed 400 Topgolf project employees are accounted for in the parking spaces, though Appendix O2 suggests they would park within the Topgolf lot and not along Liberator Way. It is not

reasonable to assume that newly created on-street parallel parking spaces along the newly realigned Liberator Way will be sufficient to absorb project parking demand of patrons or employees, especially given the walking distance for many such spaces to the Topgolf site.

SDCRAA affirms the DEIR reference to Port District street parking meter management and enforcement in both the Topgolf lot and parking along Liberator Way to prevent airport user parking diversion. SDCRAA requests that the project prohibit overnight parking in both the lot and along the street as the most effective means to preclude parking by airport users that would only further displace project Topgolf patron parking, which may already be insufficient.

SDCRAA is grateful for the opportunity to provide comments on the project and reiterates a request for continued coordination with staff throughout the project timeline to ensure SDIA operational concerns are addressed. Thank you for your consideration of these comments, and SDCRAA looks forward to reviewing the responses to the comments in this letter.

Please contact Sjohnna Knack, Director of Planning, Noise, and Environment, at sknack@san.org or (619) 400-2639 to further discuss any concerns in this letter or answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Angela Shafer-Payne (Aug 24, 2026 16:36:45 PDT)

Angela Shafer-Payne

Vice President/Chief Development Officer

ASP/eg

From: [pkbishop](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf at Mission Bay
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 10:11:28 AM

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This is a terrible land use waste. Callaway Golf has a Top Golf facility leased by the state at Del Mar Fairgrounds. It is under- utilized. Why use land for a facility that can be enjoyed only by those who want to drink beer and hit golf balls? Callaway is sweetening this proposal with all kinds of things like playgrounds. The lights and noise are a turnoff. I hope this is soundly disapproved. Thank you.

Peggy Bishop
Pkbishop@roadrunner.com

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S8+, an AT&T 5G Evolution capable smartphone

From: [Ryan Brady](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf & Waterfront Park Project
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 7:55:47 AM

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Hello,

The impact on traffic alone is enough to stop this project in its tracks. That corridor is extremely busy due to the nature of its proximity to the airport. This project, if passed, would be detrimental to an already congested roadway. There must be better locations available.

Thank you for your time.

Ryan Brady

From: [Craig Cameron](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: No Top Golf
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 12:29:18 PM

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Top golf is old agiging business idea and really is not an improvement. Get better idea or just leave it be thats fine too.

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: [Rebecca C](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 9:08:21 AM

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Dear Members of the Port of San Diego Board,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to reject the proposed Topgolf development on San Diego's waterfront.

I moved to San Diego from New York, and one of the first things that captured my heart was the bay. Not because it was filled with attractions, but because it wasn't. The quiet stretches of shoreline, the wide views across the water, and the feeling that you could simply exist beside the bay without being asked to buy a ticket or enter another commercial experience felt increasingly rare in modern American cities.

That sense of openness is part of San Diego's identity. It is one of the reasons people choose to live here, to visit, and to build their lives here.

There is a quiet confidence to San Diego that has always set it apart. The city's mid-century character, its gentle pace, its parks, marinas, and public waterfronts have never needed to compete with louder cities. They have simply been themselves. That authenticity is not outdated. It is one of San Diego's greatest strengths.

A Topgolf facility would undoubtedly be successful as a business. But success alone should not determine what belongs on our waterfront. Topgolf can be built almost anywhere. A peaceful public shoreline with unobstructed views, native habitat, and room for reflection cannot.

Across the country, cities are beginning to recognize that once open public spaces are lost to commercial development, they are rarely recovered. Every generation inherits a little less quiet than the one before it. We should be asking not how much activity we can fit onto our waterfront, but how much of its character we are willing to preserve.

The bay belongs to everyone. It should remain a place where families picnic, people walk their dogs, artists sketch the horizon, children watch sailboats drift by, and residents simply sit on a bench with nowhere else they need to be. Those experiences may not generate quarterly revenue, but they generate something even more valuable: a sense of belonging, civic pride, and connection to place.

A truly confident city understands that not every piece of public land must be monetized. Sometimes the wisest investment is preserving what already makes a place extraordinary. San Diego's waterfront is not empty land waiting to become something else. It is already one of the city's greatest achievements.

I ask you to protect the qualities that have made San Diego beloved for generations. Future residents should inherit a waterfront defined by open skies, calm water, and public access, not one that could be mistaken for any commercial district in America.

Please choose preservation over commercialization. Once this piece of San Diego's character is gone, it cannot be rebuilt.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to the future of our waterfront.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Cloudy
4119 Eagle Street
San Diego, ca

From: [BOB DAVIS](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Proposed TopGolf and Waterfront Park
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 11:15:25 AM

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As a born and raised San Diegannow 71 years old, I would really like to see this happen! TopGolf is a very fun thing to do for great golfers all the way to novice golfers! Let's make good use of this land and beautify an area that has been nothing but a "car lot" for many years. I wholeheartedly recommend this use as proposed! Thank you.

Sincerely, Bob Davis
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Rick Hagerman](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [Rick Hagerman](#)
Subject: Top Golf
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 9:13:09 PM

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Hard to believe this project is even considered for approval. The NETS surrounding the facility are the biggest EYESORE ever to be considered. Someone has to be on the "take" to even bring this to a vote. BAD IDEA!!!!

From: colin_hart@icloud.com
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: No to Topgolf
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 10:53:36 AM

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Hello,

I would reject the proposal of building a Topgolf facility at the Waterfront. It seems like a shortsighted and wasteful use of such valuable space. It probably should not be dedicated to just one gimmicky use.

Thanks,
Colin

From: [Matthew Hudson](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 9:56:44 AM

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Yes please!

Sent from my iPhone

From: [samuel kelete](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Public Comment on Proposed Topgolf project
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 8:53:56 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I don't think it's a good use of land to put a Topgolf there. When the Topgolf fad ends what can the land be repurposed for? Doesn't the business lose money? That's not good for a facility that cannot really be repurposed when it fails. In my honest opinion the facilities are a bit of an eyesore. Topgolf would be better more inland like in Mission Valley.

Best,

Concerned Citizen Sam

From: [Art Lewis](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Support for Top Golf project
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 8:13:01 PM

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Hi Megan,

I'm writing to express my support for the proposed Topgolf project near the airport.

I believe it would be a great addition to the area, providing another family-friendly entertainment option while generating jobs, increasing tourism, and supporting nearby businesses. The location also seems well-suited for this type of use given its proximity to the airport and surrounding commercial development.

I hope you'll give this project your full consideration and support.

-Art

Art Lewis

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From: [Jason McNamara](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: EIR Draft for East Harbor Island Project
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 12:41:17 PM

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Hello,

I am submitting my questions and comments for the EIR Draft. Thank you for public input. Take care and be well.

1. Transportation and Traffic (Significant & Unavoidable)

The EIR acknowledges that traffic impacts will be significant:

Question: Given the proximity to San Diego International Airport, how does the EIR account for cumulative traffic during peak tourism seasons vs. local daily commute hours? The airport traffic is already difficult to navigate during peak hours.

Comment: The proposed Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan lacks specific, enforceable metrics. Request a requirement for quarterly traffic monitoring and a contingency plan if traffic congestion exceeds projected levels on Harbor Drive and Liberator Way.

2. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

Question: What specific, localized carbon sequestration or emission-reduction projects are being implemented to offset the "significant and unavoidable" GHG increase from this development?

Comment: The current mitigation strategy relies on vague regional offsets. Request a "Net Zero" requirement for the facility's operations, including energy-efficient lighting and onsite renewable energy generation.

3. Water Quality & Artificial Turf

Question: The Draft EIR must provide an independent chemical analysis of the specific synthetic turf proposed. What are the projected leaching rates for PFAS and microplastics into the North Basin over a 10-year lifespan?

Comment: Request the inclusion of a "Precautionary Monitoring Program" that requires the Port to perform biannual sediment and water quality testing in the adjacent bay waters, with immediate remediation requirements if chemical concentrations exceed baseline levels.

4. Light and Noise Pollution

Question: How does the lighting design specifically account for the "dark sky" requirements necessary for migratory birds and marine life in the San Diego Bay?

Comment: The current proposal for late-night operations is incompatible with the surrounding ecological sensitivity. Request a "lights-out" or "dimming" mandate starting at 10:00 p.m. and an architectural requirement for sound-dampening materials in the hitting bays to prevent

noise carry-over into the bay.

5. Public Trust and Land Use

Question: Why is a private, fenced-off driving range considered a "higher and better use" of public tidelands compared to an open-access, non-commercial recreational park?

Comment: The project necessitates a Port Master Plan Amendment (PMPA). Request that the Port provide a comparative analysis of the revenue generation potential vs. the long-term public utility value of the land, specifically addressing how the "public" amenities (promenades) are protected from being subsumed by the private entertainment footprint.

Be Well,

Jason

M: +1.619.629.4071

From: [Anthony Philpott](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Support for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment and Topgolf Project
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 12:12:05 AM

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To the San Diego Unified Port District,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed East Harbor Island Redevelopment, specifically the inclusion of a new Topgolf facility and the associated waterfront park project.

My wife and I live in downtown San Diego. We believe this project would be a fantastic addition to the area, transforming underutilized space into a vibrant destination for both residents and visitors. Adding an entertainment district of this caliber would provide a unique, family-friendly activity that our community currently lacks.

We are particularly excited about the prospect of having a flagship Topgolf location here. It is exactly the kind of modern, high-energy venue that fits well with the spirit of San Diego. Furthermore, the plan to pair this with a new public waterfront park and promenade ensures that the development remains accessible and inviting to the public, adding significant value to our shoreline.

Thank you for your hard work in developing this

From: [Roger Ramsey](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf at the port
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 7:37:32 AM

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Hello,

I am strongly against Top Golf at the port. Top Golf has been underperforming for years. Callaway Golf sold their interest to an investment company which is looking for quick gains and not long term performance. Top golf would move in and be bankrupt within a few years. The trendiness of it has worn off.

Thank you,
Roger Ramsey
San Diego 92104

From: [miles segni](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 9:09:57 PM

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All the idea of expanding entertainment options along the water is excellent, TopGolf may not be the best candidate.

On the flip side, if top golf does not do well, it requires a lot of empty land. Repurposing it may not be that difficult.

From: [Ben Stimac](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Public Comment on the East Harbor Island Redevelopment
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 8:13:14 AM

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Good Morning Megan,

I am emailing with my thoughts on the proposed East Harbor Island Redistricting project.

While the waterfront park and "eatertainment" aspect of the redistricting are a good public use of the space, providing revamped facilities and good business opportunities, I take extreme exception to even the hint of ruining San Diego with a blemish of a Top Golf. These wastes of space are an eyesore wherever they are, even more so on one of San Diego's main promenades. One my favorite memories of SD was the first time I got to visit (a long time before I moved here), taking in the view of downtown & Coronado from the plane. Imagining that view ruined by towing poles that take space away from the public makes me physically ill.

A good friend once said to me that Top Golf's are the staple of every second-tier city in the US. We all know that SD is anything but second-tier. We should not be rolling over to the prospect of tourism when redistricting our public parks, when doing so already has ruined our housing market, fills our beaches with litter, and our streets with hit and runs.

I support this redistricting with the stern opposition to the inclusion of Top Golf. May that failing business never have a place in a city of our distinction.

Thank you,
Ben Stimac

stimac.b14@gmail.com

From: [Sean Volkman](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Public Comments on the Draft EIR – East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 11:06:22 AM

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project.

First, I want to acknowledge that I support continued investment in San Diego's waterfront and recognize that a Topgolf entertainment venue could become a significant attraction for both residents and visitors. The project has the potential to generate tourism, create jobs, and increase economic activity. However, I have several concerns regarding the proposed location that I respectfully ask the Port to consider before moving forward.

My primary concern is the displacement of the existing rental car operations located adjacent to San Diego International Airport. The current location provides travelers with convenient access immediately after arriving by air. Relocating these services could create unnecessary inconvenience for visitors while requiring additional infrastructure investments elsewhere.

Additionally, Harbor Island already experiences significant congestion due to airport traffic, hotels, commercial activity, and public recreation. Introducing a major entertainment destination that attracts thousands of additional daily visitors is likely to increase vehicle congestion along North Harbor Drive and surrounding roadways. This could negatively affect airport access, emergency response times, and the overall transportation experience for both residents and visitors.

I also encourage the Port and the City to carefully evaluate the long-term transportation costs associated with this project. Increased visitation may eventually require additional investment in Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) bus or trolley service, roadway improvements, intersection modifications, and parking infrastructure. These indirect public costs should be weighed alongside the projected economic benefits.

While I believe San Diego would greatly benefit from a Topgolf facility, I question whether East Harbor Island is the most suitable location.

As an alternative, I encourage the Port and City to explore the feasibility of locating this type of development on or near Fiesta Island. Fiesta Island offers many of the same desirable waterfront characteristics while presenting a unique opportunity to revitalize an underutilized public asset. The island already has an established roadway network and substantial available space that could better accommodate an entertainment destination of this scale.

A thoughtfully planned redevelopment of Fiesta Island could:

- Revitalize an underutilized portion of Mission Bay.
- Create a new destination for residents and tourists alike.
- Reduce congestion impacts near San Diego International Airport.
- Encourage additional private investment in Mission Bay while preserving Harbor Island's critical transportation function.
- Expand recreational opportunities without displacing existing airport-support operations.

I believe relocating the project to Fiesta Island could achieve the same economic benefits while creating a transformational improvement for another part of San Diego that has tremendous untapped potential.

Thank you for considering these comments during the environmental review process. I appreciate the Port's commitment to public engagement and look forward to seeing a project that balances economic development, transportation efficiency, environmental stewardship, and the long-term interests of the San Diego community.

Sean Volkman
C: 619-623-9690

From: [Jeremy Yu](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project comment
Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026 8:14:05 AM

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To whom it may concern

Please provide a better understanding on why such project was even considered besides letting the land vacant?

I live far away (3-4 miles north) from the project area, what concerns me is the potential outcome of this project have impact on aviation safety, as well as distractions to commuters on North Harbor Dr / Airport Terminal Road.

Golf fields have always been inland and away public areas. The airport is located directly next to the golf entertainment arena, high speed golf balls and the hitting noises it produces can cause distraction to drivers, shock to humans, and adding noise stress to wild animals nearby.

The recent addition of new airport roadway aimed to relief traffic congestion. New Top Golf Project would put additional unnecessary cars on North Harbor Dr, effecting in/out airport traffic all day long. Additionally, arena visitors will taken away airport parking spots with large events attracting large crowds, lowering the spaces available to flyers. Please consider taking necessary steps on these comments.

I am not supporting the Top Golf project near the San Diego airport. It would add traffic congestion even more, such precious land should be used for airport expansion.

From: [Jp Lj](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: NOOOOO topgolf
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 5:33:27 AM

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Do your job Port of San Diego. Fulfill your mission. Protect the port. Keep it for the people.

Low-rise development with multiple options for people of all budgets is the right approach.

150-ft nets, bright lights and waves of drunk people in Sprinter buses is entirely inconsistent with your mission.

We don't want to be Las Vegas. We don't want to be the Bro-Port where drunk guys come and go in an already over trafficked area. We don't want to be a place that only the rich can afford and Topgolf literally costs hundreds of dollars for a session. That's not something the average San Diegan can afford.

Let them have Sorrento Valley which they already have under contract. Let them go to South Bay near the new Gaylord resort where there's plenty of vacant land. But don't give up a prime viewing corridor that should be protected for the public.

No to Topgolf on East Harbor Island.

Thank you,

James Armstrong
(telephone and address available upon request sent to the above email)

From: [Craig Blanke](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 3:28:33 PM

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Megan- I was published a few years ago in the SD U/T's Letters To The Editor regarding the proposed Top Golf playground after reading their December 5th article "Top Golf secures 40- year lease commitment for flagship venue on San Diego Bay".

I was hoping this proposed travesty went away, but it seems it has reared its ugly head again. As cruise ships enter our beautiful bay they'll see Fort Rosecrans on the bluffs above and the Coronado Naval Base to their right, and what's that? Oh, a huge driving net with hitting bays on 9.5 acres of bayfront property! It is so San Diego! I just can't wait to hit a small bucket with a beer and some greasy wings! As great San Diego Ambassador's from Carlsbad, please tell Callaway and Partners to find another venue to spread the sport of golf. They owe it to San Diego.



Craig Blanke
President/CEO/CFO
Pacific Ocean Media

■ [\(619\) 857-5362](tel:(619)857-5362)
■ cblanke85s@gmail.com
■ [Connect with me on LinkedIn!](#)

From: [Sharon Choi](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: No to Topgolf and waterfront project
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 3:13:25 PM

You don't often get email from sharon.b.choi@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello,

I vote no to this project! Traffic is bad enough and parking hard enough to find. Thank you!

Sharon Choi
sharon.b.choi@gmail.com
858.280.4571

From: [Matthew Dartez](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf - Waterfront
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 10:38:36 AM

You don't often get email from matthew.dartez@outlook.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi,

Just wanted to send an email about how supportive I am of the TopGolf and entertainment sector project!

<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/san-diego-public-invited-comment-proposed-topgolf-waterfront-park-project/4047677/>

Additionally, pairing this with Midway rising would be AWESOME!

Anyway we can get a trolley extension to the airport and Point Loma too and make this even better?

--

Matthew Dartez
matthew.dartez@outlook.com

From: [Dan Dreifort](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf waterfront Park comments
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 11:22:55 AM

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Hi!

It's crucial that we ensure excellent pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to any new development, and minimize parking lot sprawl, especially near the water.

- Dan
3327 Copley Ave. 92116

From: [David Hackbarth](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Waterfront Park Project Draft EIR
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 9:07:54 PM

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Subject: Public Comment: Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project Draft EIR

Dear Megan Hamilton and the Port of San Diego Development Services Department,

I am writing to submit my formal public comments regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project

As a local stakeholder, I have strong concerns about the balance between commercial development and true public space on our waterfront. While I welcome the addition of a new park, I question the overall value of introducing a massive, commercialized "eatertainment" facility like Topgolf to this public land. The Port Authority should prioritize maximum accessibility and non-commercial public spaces for the community over private, profit-driven ventures.

Additionally, I want to comment specifically on the project's proposed circulation and active transportation infrastructure:

Separated Bike and Pedestrian Routes: The final project design must feature dedicated, physically separated bicycle routes that are completely isolated from pedestrian walking paths. Mixing high-speed bicycle traffic with slower pedestrians creates preventable safety hazards.

Learning from Past Infrastructure Failures: The community cannot afford a repeat of the recent North Harbor Drive airport upgrades. Despite extensive renovations and a massive budget for the San Diego International Airport Terminal 1 project, the area completely failed to implement seamless, top-tier, protected bike paths along that entire shared corridor. The Port must learn from this mistake and ensure that the Topgolf and Waterfront Park project establishes an actual, highly functional, grade-separated route rather than another disjointed bottleneck. Efforts should be made to make biking along the waterfront more attractive and safe. This should be a priority.

True Public Space Maximization: The footprint of the project should lean heavily into expanding open, free, and unrestricted green spaces rather than prioritizing commercial parking and driving range facilities.

I urge the Port of San Diego to revise the project plans to guarantee top-tier, separated multi-use paths and to protect our public waterfront from over-commercialization. Commercialization is not the answer that the public wants. Look how often the area around the County Building is used for events. This could be

duplicated carefully in the Waterfront Park area with adequate parking and bathrooms.

David Hackbarth
dhack7@icloud.com
Mobile: 619-818-3149
City resident at 2891 Brant St.

From: [Nowell Helms](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top golf comment
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 11:29:14 PM

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The proposal to allocate 10 acres of prime waterfront land on East Harbor Island to Topgolf is an inefficient use of public assets that prioritizes a fading "eatertainment" concept over long-term municipal utility.

First, the project is a significant misallocation of high-value coastal property. This land sits on the bayfront near a major international airport; committing it to a specialized driving range—essentially a giant net-enclosed structure with 170-foot poles—blocks public access and aesthetic vistas in a region where open space is scarce. This is a permanent commitment to a low-density, single-purpose facility at a time when San Diego should be focusing on transit-oriented development or public amenities that serve a broader cross-section of the population. Second, the "eatertainment" business model is increasingly precarious. Topgolf's parent company has faced significant financial turmoil, including major goodwill writedowns and a recent sale to a private equity firm at a fraction of its previous valuation. As the post-pandemic fad wanes, competition from lower-capital-intensity simulators and social gaming venues has eroded their margins. Entrusting a 40-year lease to a firm in a struggling sector creates a systemic risk for the Port District, potentially leaving the city with a specialized, difficult-to-repurpose "monstrosity" if the business fails to sustain its revenue projections.

Finally, the location itself is logistically compromised. The site is a former industrial landfill with documented environmental sensitivity, and the added traffic from a high-volume entertainment venue will only exacerbate the existing congestion around the San Diego International Airport. Choosing to develop this site for a commercial driving range rather than prioritizing public transit, infrastructure, or true mixed-use community space is a failure of urban planning.

From: [Susan Krzywicki](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Proposed Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 5:09:15 PM

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Please ensure that the entertainment is at least outdoor-oriented. Why should we be building facilities on rare coastal-view land that are just enclosed buildings? Put those inland and leave the coast for the coastal outdoor activities - nature.

Regards,

Susan Krzywicki
susankrzywicki@mac.com
www.susankrzywicki.com
(619) 318-4590

From: [Tyler McDonald](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Comments on waterfront park option
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 10:39:33 AM

You don't often get email from tylerjamesmcd@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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As a lifelong san diego resident, I strongly oppose more of our public space being allocated for golf or driving ranges, and would be disappointed if Topgolf is able to secure such a large portion of our waterfront.

From: [Eric P](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: top golf
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 9:57:26 AM

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The Port should really reconsider including Top Golf at the harbor. Since the agreement was made 3 years ago, this business has shown to be a fling that is failing. It already sold to private equity for far less than they valued it. It would be a disaster to have as the focal point of redevelopment when it is ALREADY an outdated business. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guxBwYjQ_GI

I don't have any business interest in this, or alternate proposals instead of Top Golf, but I know that it is a very specific infrastructure and once it fails will not be easily repurposed. Top Golf is going downhill quickly, and is not the anchor business that would be successful for such a long-awaited redevelopment like Harbor Island.

Also, my biggest interest in Port land redevelopment is park space and ease of movement. I am wondering why the area along the waterfront across from Laurel St is not in any redevelopment plans to take out the 44 parking spaces, one-way driving and make a wide, beautiful, safe promenade from the maritime museum to harbor island and on to point loma.

Eric Pray
Ocean Beach resident.

From: [GEORGE SCHEEL](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 3:55:04 PM

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Hello

I rarely write to public officials but I rarely see as bad an idea as ruining our beautiful harbor with a failing trend like Topgolf. The port had an obligation to keep these amazing coastal areas not only open to the maritime industry but useful. I can't think of a worse use of this area. The trend of Topgolf is so over and it is trying to exploit the city to boost it up. It will not work and the vital boating and real recreation opportunities will be lost. Terrible idea.

Ridiculous use of resources

Just google how unsuccessful Topgolf. It would tape the beautiful harbor and leave an empty ugly building.

Thank you

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Sarah
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Proposed Top Golf
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 11:22:28 AM

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Good morning,

I am Sarah Weinstein, I live in San Diego and am active duty military. I'm a homeowner in the 92103 area code.

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed top golf location. I am excited about the prospect of a public waterfront park with a promenade, plaza areas, playgrounds, restrooms and public art, but I don't think this is the location for top golf. It is my feeling that this waterfront area is wasted on a top golf. I love to play and think it is an excellent activity, but would be better placed elsewhere in San Diego

And not taking up valuable water front area which I would prefer be used for additional art, playgrounds, and outside area to be enjoyed by San Diego residents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Sarah Weinstein

From: [Enrique Zapata](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Subject: Comments on the Draft EIR – East Harbor Island Redevelopment / Topgolf Project
Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026 9:41:28 AM

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment / Topgolf Project.

I would first like to make it clear that I am **not opposed to Topgolf or golf-related entertainment. In fact, I am an avid golfer myself**, and I have enjoyed playing golf for many years. I understand why Topgolf has become such a successful entertainment concept and I believe it is a valuable attraction.

My concern is not whether Topgolf is a good project—it certainly is. My concern is whether **Harbor Island is the highest and best use for this type of development.**

Harbor Island is one of San Diego's most unique public assets. It offers irreplaceable waterfront views, direct access to San Diego Bay, proximity to downtown, and serves as one of the first impressions for millions of visitors arriving through San Diego International Airport. These qualities cannot be recreated elsewhere.

Unlike waterfront parks, promenades, marinas, cultural attractions, or public gathering spaces that require a waterfront setting, **Topgolf does not depend on being located on the bay to be successful.** Across the country, Topgolf facilities thrive in commercial districts, shopping centers, former industrial areas, and locations with convenient freeway access. Their success is driven by population density and accessibility—not waterfront views.

For that reason, I believe Topgolf could be successfully developed on numerous alternative sites within the San Diego region, while Harbor Island cannot be duplicated.

The fundamental question should not be whether Topgolf is a good attraction, but rather:

Is this the best possible long-term use of one of the last premier waterfront redevelopment sites in San Diego?

In my opinion, the answer is no.

Given the rarity and value of this public waterfront property, I believe the redevelopment should emphasize uses that maximize public enjoyment while taking full advantage of the bay itself, such as:

- A signature waterfront park and expanded promenade
- Restaurants and outdoor dining overlooking the bay
- Family-oriented attractions and interactive public spaces

- Maritime, educational, or cultural facilities
- Public plazas capable of hosting concerts, festivals, and community events
- Kayak, paddleboard, sailing, and other water recreation opportunities
- Green spaces, gardens, and scenic overlooks
- Visitor-serving attractions that create an experience uniquely associated with San Diego

These types of amenities would serve residents and visitors of all ages while creating a destination that is distinctly San Diego.

Many of the world's great waterfront cities have intentionally reserved their premier waterfronts for iconic public destinations that define their communities. Examples include:

- **Sydney Harbour**, where waterfront parks, promenades, restaurants, and cultural landmarks create one of the world's most recognizable public spaces.
- **Vancouver's Coal Harbour and Stanley Park**, which prioritize public access, walking paths, parks, marinas, and spectacular waterfront views.
- **Chicago's Navy Pier and Lakefront Trail**, which combine recreation, dining, entertainment, public events, and open space along the shoreline.
- **Baltimore's Inner Harbor**, which transformed former industrial land into a vibrant waterfront destination centered around tourism, museums, restaurants, public spaces, and maritime attractions.
- **San Antonio's River Walk**, demonstrating how thoughtfully designed public waterfront spaces can become defining attractions that generate tourism, economic activity, and civic pride for generations.

These destinations have become internationally recognized because they maximize public access and celebrate their unique waterfronts rather than dedicating large portions of them to uses that could be located elsewhere.

I also share concerns expressed by reviewing agencies regarding preservation of public views, the visual impact of the proposed 170-foot netting, potential impacts to migratory birds and other wildlife, and the importance of ensuring meaningful public access and affordable recreational opportunities on these public tidelands.

2023-134-EHI-Topgolf-Draft-EIR-Appendices.pdf

As an avid golfer, I would enjoy having a Topgolf in San Diego. However, **as a citizen and taxpayer, I believe Harbor Island deserves something that future generations will view as one of San Diego's signature waterfront destinations rather than a use that could have been successfully developed elsewhere. I think golfers can find their way to Toogolf facilities anywhere in a city, but does not need to be in a prime location.**

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Decisions made today will shape Harbor Island for decades to come. Once this extraordinary waterfront site is committed to a single private entertainment use, the opportunity to create a truly iconic public destination may be lost forever.

I respectfully encourage the Port of San Diego to carefully consider whether this proposal represents the highest and best use of this irreplaceable public waterfront and to explore alternatives that maximize public access, tourism, recreation, environmental stewardship, and long-term public benefit.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to the future of San Diego's waterfront.

Respectfully,

Enrique Zapata

(619) 484-5036

From: [Chuck](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Date: Monday, July 13, 2026 6:17:52 PM

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I believe it would be an absolutely great idea to sponsor Topgolf on the San Diego Bay. I have visited Topgolf facilities throughout the United States and it would be a great addition to the San Diego lifestyle in my opinion. Having lived here for many years since 1978 I strongly recommend that this project be allowed to pass and proceed. It would benefit many San Diegans and bring a little New Life to the Waterfront area.

From: [Alisa-Mae Cruz](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Comments Regarding Topgolf Waterfront Proposal
Date: Monday, July 13, 2026 8:42:42 PM

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Dear Port of San Diego,

I would like to give some comments regarding the recent Topgolf Waterfront Proposal that was unveiled on July 10th, 2026.

In my opinion, this would not be a good use and development of the waterfront land as it currently stands.

I'm worried especially given that Topgolf has been through recent financial challenges and a business turnaround. It makes me ask why would the city of San Diego invest in a company that has these issues, if they want this waterfront proposal to be approved or for the waterfront land to be used to boost either visitors, businesses, or financial gain for the city. What would happen to the land if all that investment ends up to a company that cannot even maintain its own financials?

There is also the environmental and wildlife impact that this project would cause if it moves forward. The San Diego bay is already heavily affected by the beach and city activities surrounding it, and as outlined in the Department of Fish and Wildlife section of the proposal, I feel as if the construction and development will be a net negative.

"The San Diego Bay shoreline is located within the Pacific Flyway. Although the terrestrial portion of the Project area is largely developed, the shoreline and ornamental vegetation provides important stopover habitat for migratory species and shorebirds."

You can move the site where the Topgolf waterfront would be built, you cannot move and reverse the environmental impact/damage.

There is also other environmental risk other than the wildlife as outlined in the California Geological Survey.

"The project area is intersected by a zone of required investigation for surface fault rupture..."

Is it really worth the risk to build in an area so susceptible to surface fault ruptures/earthquakes especially with how hard it is to recoup financially afterwards?

Some other minor comments/concerns would also be:

- Additional noise and light pollution to the city
- Obscuring the view of the San Diego bay
- The proposal does not sound confident or knowing how to amend and address the issues numerous groups have brought up which have been listed within the proposal itself

That will be all.

Thank you for your time reading through my comments, and I hope the rest of the public lets their voice be heard as well regarding this.

From,
Alisa-Mae Cruz

From: [C Peek](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf and Harbor Island development
Date: Monday, July 13, 2026 7:52:52 AM

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Hello,

The proposal for the use of prime waterfront land on Harbor Island once again will obstruct the water view from Harbor Drive. It is a ridiculous plan To put a giant net obscuring the water for the Top Golf Facility and entertainment area. That type of development should be in an area that doesn't obscure views.

What are the parking plans and what does the port intend to do when there aren't enough funds coming into a facility? This is such a Money grab and wrong use for his prime property. The fees to use Topgolf are Exceedingly expensive. The Port Authority is again making another poor decision, (such as allowing a car rental Facility on prime property for many years). Why can't there be a development that appeals to a bigger population, not just golfers? What exactly is in the entertainment center and once again do you really feel that people are going to pay huge parking fees, huge fees to use these areas on a consistent basis? Sure, when the place first opens it will be packed, but then what? I think it's going to be a disaster.

Carla Pekin

From: [Sam Steenbergen Coxmail](mailto:Sam.Steenbergen@coxmail.com)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report – East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project
Date: Monday, July 13, 2026 3:42:27 PM

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The Honorable Members of the Board of Port Commissioners:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project.

As a new San Diego resident and someone who has previously worked in a municipal Planning Department, I recognize the importance of balancing economic development with responsible environmental stewardship. I encourage the Port to demonstrate that the DEIR adequately analyzes and mitigates the project's cumulative environmental impacts before any approvals are granted.

Specifically, I request that the DEIR clearly demonstrate that traffic impacts have been fully evaluated. Harbor Island already experiences significant congestion associated with San Diego International Airport, particularly during peak travel periods. Additional vehicle trips generated by a large entertainment venue and surrounding commercial uses have the potential to increase traffic delays, vehicle idling, and associated air emissions. I ask that the DEIR clearly explain how these cumulative traffic impacts have been analyzed and what mitigation measures are proposed to reduce them.

I also request that the DEIR adequately evaluate the cumulative effects of increased traffic, noise, lighting, and human activity on the surrounding waterfront environment and wildlife. This area has already experienced substantial change from airport expansion, marina development, and related infrastructure improvements. The environmental analysis should demonstrate that the combined effects of these existing conditions and the proposed project have been comprehensively evaluated and that appropriate mitigation measures have been identified where significant impacts may occur.

Finally, I encourage the Port to evaluate transportation demand management strategies that could reduce reliance on private vehicles, including improved transit access, bicycle and pedestrian connections, shuttle service, and other measures that would help minimize congestion and improve air quality.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. I respectfully request that these issues be fully addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Report and that the Port demonstrate how cumulative environmental impacts have been evaluated and mitigated in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Sincerely,
Priscilla Steenbergen
2240 Shelter Island Drive
San Diego, CA 92106

From: [Frederik Andersen](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment — Eatertainment District RFP Inquiry
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 7:32:45 PM

You don't often get email from fred@padeln9ne.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Megan,

I'm reaching out for more information on the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park project, specifically the competitive solicitation process anticipated for the "eatertainment" parcels adjacent to Topgolf.

I run Padel N9NE, the largest padel facility in Southern California, currently based in Sorrento Valley, with a second location opening in San Marcos this fall. We're actively evaluating sites in Downtown San Diego and would be very interested in bidding on this opportunity.

Could you point me to any available information on the anticipated RFP timeline, parcel specifications, or eligibility criteria, or let me know who on your team is best positioned to speak to the solicitation process? Happy to jump on a call if that's easier.

Best regards,



Frederik Andersen

Director of Operations

Padel N9NE

■ +1 858 616 7213
■ fred@padeln9ne.com
■ www.padeln9ne.com
■ San Diego, California

From: [Aaron Dellefield](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Comment on Top Golf waterfront project
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 9:11:05 AM

You don't often get email from dellefield@msn.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I am writing to give my support to the Top Golf waterfront project. The current space is not being utilized to its potential. A Topgolf and entertainment complex will be an iconic and recognizable addition to the city skyline. The current pedestrian and bike path will provide great accessibility from Downtown and Point Loma. And now that the airport infrastructure has removed thousands of cars a day from Harbor Drive, accessibility and traffic concerns are better addressed. On social media, NIMBYs primary concern seems to be how it looks which is a personal issue for them and not a valid concern to deprive the city of a complete redevelopment of an underutilized space along the waterfront.

Thank you for your time.

Aaron Dellefield

From: [Kathy Ellis](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Alleluia! Let's go forward with this plan!
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 5:00:52 PM

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We are long time Del Mar residents and frequent out of town hosts. A Topgolf range and further beautification of the waterfront is a real bonus. Please vote for this plan.

Dr. And Mrs. Donald Ellis
Del Mar, CA

From: [Yaniv Gershom](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Waterfront / Top Golf Project Review
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 9:23:28 AM

You don't often get email from ygershom@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi Megan,

I'm writing to express my support for the proposed East Harbor Island Topgolf and Waterfront Park project. The combination of a large public waterfront park, improved pedestrian areas, dining, and entertainment sounds like a great use of the site and an exciting addition to San Diego.

I hope the project moves forward.

Best,
Yaniv Gershom

From: [MARTIN Habel](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Proposed Top Golf Project
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 7:56:21 AM

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Please do not approve this project. It will be an eyesore for the beauty of the San Diego Bay. There are so many more things that could be done here, like a big park area that would be used by all instead of wealthy golfers. The vast majority of San Diegans are not golfers and there are enough other golf courses and driving ranges around the county.

--

Regards,
Martin Habel
mrhabel2047@gmail.com
858-740-8286

From: [Woody Jones](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 6:22:05 AM

You don't often get email from woodyjones3035@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Don't do it!

From: [Todd Kirichkow](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf Project
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 6:52:03 AM

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed Topgolf facility on East Harbor Island. I urge the Board of Port Commissioners to approve this project and move forward with construction as soon as possible.

Based on the findings of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the environmental impacts of the project are low and manageable. Given these minimal disruptions, the benefits of this facility far outweigh the concerns. This development will revitalize Liberator Way, provide a fantastic recreational space for residents and visitors, and bring a significant economic boost to the San Diego waterfront.

Thank you for considering my feedback. I hope to see this exciting project approved and underway without unnecessary delays.

Sincerely,

Todd Kirichkow

San Diego Resident

From: [Ryan Lamkin](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 10:23:01 AM

You don't often get email from ryan.c.lamkin@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello,

I wanted to comment on the draft EIR for the East Harbor Island redevelopment. I have no additional environmental concerns about this project and am excited to see it move forward! I live in downtown and stumbled upon Liberator Way during one of my walks. It's very unpleasant right now and the development would be great to revitalize the area.

Thanks for all you do!
Ryan Lamkin, Marina District

From: [Cheryl Ward](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Harbor Island redevelopment
Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 8:30:40 AM

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Golf has such limited interest to the general population of San Diego and visitors from around the world. Why dedicate so much of our beautiful bay to likely a little used venue for people who have lots of money. San Diego has many other golf venues.

A more general use area makes more sense.

Thank you.

Cheryl Ward
92122

Cheryl Ward
619-894-3575

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From: [Deborah Gostin](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Proposed redevelopment of East Harbor Island for a Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2026 3:51:56 PM

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Good afternoon,

I've just learned about the proposed redevelopment of East Harbor Island for a Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project, and I am adamantly opposed to it.

As a 66-year old native San Diegan who currently lives very close to the Lindbergh Airport, I can vouch for the already impacted drive from my apartment on First Ave between Walnut and Brooks to anywhere near the Airport, including my favorite walking path on Harbor Island.

There are simply too many things going on in this small stretch of land, and what used to take ten minutes to travel through by car has now doubled, if not tripled or quadrupled during the rush hours.

A park, added parking, etc. all sounds nice to the uninformed citizen, but to add even more undefined "entertainment" to an area already full of restaurants and aquatic businesses, would be largely irresponsible, especially with partially closing lanes to accommodate a new and improved entrance.

Please reconsider this proposal submission, and perhaps submit one as a much smaller portion of the land needed, or propose a new location and start over again.

Respectfully,

Deborah Gostin
San Diego Native

Sent from my iPhone

From: mitchelljohnmcneill@gmail.com
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf San Diego
Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2026 8:13:38 AM

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Hello,

I just wanted to share my thoughts on top golf in San Diego. I think this plan is an AMAZING idea. The road is way less traffic jammed with new road to airport so anyone complaining about that is nonsense. This area is such an incredible location that would hugely benefit from all these updates. Topgolf is such a fun, unique place that my friends and I absolutely love. It's a great activity for visitors looking for something to DO. Whenever I'm traveling in a city with a Topgolf I always make it part of my plan. I really really would be so excited to see this plan come together and add another amazing attraction to this city. I'm born and raised here in San Diego. Growing up between downtown, Coronado, and imperial beach. Currently live in Point Loma. And I highly support this idea ! Let's keep improving this city ! Thank you !

Mitchell McNeill
619.807.5310

From: [John Anagnos](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Yes to TopGolf San Diego
Date: Thursday, July 16, 2026 8:10:37 AM

You don't often get email from jeanpaulanagnos@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi there,

This is John Anagnos. Please bring topgolf to San Diego. I go every year for my birthday with all of my friends. I also go as much as I can. It would do really well here in San Diego. It would bring in a lot of tax revenue.

Thanks,
John

From: [TIM LIPSKY](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: NO on Top Golf
Date: Thursday, July 16, 2026 8:24:28 AM

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Hi
Nobody wants the icon of boring suburban living in a coastal location period.

Thanks
Tim

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Craig Leweck](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf
Date: Friday, July 17, 2026 3:41:20 PM

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Greetings,

I would like to discourage the use of Harbor Island for a business that is physically massive and does not require limited coastal space to exist. Put it in East Village to enhance that area. K1 did it. Don't commit that land to a business that does not maximize the opportunity for people to enjoy an important asset. Park space with parking is the best solution.

Regards,

Craig Leweck
Scuttlebutt Sailing News

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Hunter Moss](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top golf
Date: Saturday, July 18, 2026 1:26:01 PM

[You don't often get email from hunterjohnmoss@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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Hello,

I will keep this brief.

Nobody is asking for Top Golf to come to San Diego. Your 1750 page review is a complete waste of time, money, as well as other city resources. Top Golf is a fad that has been trending down for years. People go once and never return. It is a complete gimmick and people have completely lost interest once they've been once.

How about making this something sustainable that people would actually use? Perhaps a trolley station to bring people to the airport? A restaurant collective? Just about anything else would be better than freaking top golf.

NO THANK YOU.

From: [tom/karen evans](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: top golf
Date: Sunday, July 19, 2026 7:25:49 AM

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One more area of walled off bay.

One more sellout?

It's hard to believe this is the best use of this bay front property for all citizens of San Diego.

tom evans

From: [Rick Morgal](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [Michael Radunsky](#); [Vikki](#)
Subject: Topgolf Waterfront Development EIR Comment
Date: Sunday, July 19, 2026 1:46:09 PM

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Seems like a good opportunity to demonstrate the latest technology required to remove all the microplastics from the site's runoff. Serving as a public awareness venue in what microplastics are, how they reach the environment and what is involved in removing an invisible, yet omnipresent pollutant from our waterways and ocean.

Kiosk educational sites on the adjacent public waterway walk would provide an ideal venue to educate the public about how Topgolf is leading the way in microplastic mitigation. Tours of the facility that perform the microplastic filtration is also a possible public benefit, with public and charter schools being potential attendees.

Not just a water relocation project, where the runoff is pumped away, but a clean up of the microplastic degradation of the turf, netting and all other plastic pollutants the Topgolf operation would otherwise externalize the cost of these impacts to the common ocean. There is an opportunity to use this land, its proximity to the bay and the city for Topgolf's benefit.

The public benefit of understanding how microplastics affect our world, how we can reduce their impact, through thoughtful product selection and utilization would be a worthy cultural counterbalance to the loss of other opportunities that would serve a wider swath of the public, if an alternative use was determined.

Verification of all runoff being filtered would become the Port of San Diego's responsibility. Samples of the runoff before and after filtration would be performed and the port would also be responsible for ensuring all runoff was captured for filtration, with Topgolf responsible for designing, building and maintaining runoff catchment systems effective functionality as well as procurement of the needed microplastic filtration equipment.

The entire area is currently serving those that can afford a rental car and the support of those vehicle's upkeep, which to be fair, is a broad public use service (although not an ideal use of the site). Rental cars are arguably accessible and useful to most of the general population. The proposed use is purely for those with sufficient funds to pay \$250 per person to walk around a golf course for the afternoon. A much more elite member of the public, resulting in a reduction in the general public's benefit of the land from how it is currently being used to keep rental car upkeep cost effective in San Diego.

It does seem reasonable to require Topgolf to also build significant free public bathroom access on the waterfront walkway, paid for, and maintained, by Topgolf's facility. The general public is not getting much benefit from this development and there should be efforts to include education about how this facility is not going to further pollute our oceans, while giving people drawn to the location an opportunity to relieve themselves in clean and well lit bathroom facilities.

Richard Morgal
1135 Hornblend St.
San Diego, CA 92109

From: [rhettv23](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Sunday, July 19, 2026 12:24:46 PM

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Port of San Diego,

I regularly visit the Bayfront for recreation. I enjoy most of Harbor Island as it is. I do not believe that a Top Golf facility is a proper use of the area presented in the plan.

The thousands of added vehicle trips to this facility will generate an excess amount of pollution to an area already burdened with jet and vehicle exhaust associated with the airport.

The added traffic in an already heavily traveled area will also present an added burden to the existing flow.

The financial uncertainty of the company backing the project leaves us exposed to the probable failure of the project. This would saddle the port with an expensive, unfinished eyesore.

I feel that we would be better served with a modern facility that would enhance the waterfront while allowing the rental companies to continue servicing the vehicles that are used by passengers arriving across the street. That would also allow for extending the waterfront promenade that currently exists on the west side of the island.

Thank you,

Joseph Rhett Varnadore
7467 Mission Gorge Rd Spc 250
Santee, CA 92071

From: [Anthony Ciulla](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf Project proposal OBJECTION
Date: Monday, July 20, 2026 6:10:56 AM

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

As a coastal resident of San Diego living in Ocean Beach near the project site, a local homeowner, and a frequent user of the Harbor Island parks and shoreline, I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed Topgolf development.

The environmental impacts of this project are deeply concerning. The lighting required for this commercial endeavor would illuminate a large portion of the shoreline, disrupting native and migratory wildlife.

Additionally, this project contradicts the stated objectives of both the City of San Diego and the California Coastal Commission to provide free shoreline and bay access for all. Instead of serving the general public, this development allocates a massive area for expensive entertainment that benefits a limited clientele. It offers no educational, environmental, or aesthetic value to the majority of citizens.

Please record my formal objection to this project. My preference is to leave this area undeveloped and as-is.

Thank you,

Anthony Ciulla
4832 Muir Ave
San Diego, CA 92107
623-201-9086

From: [andrew kownacki](mailto:andrew.kownacki@gmail.com)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf venue
Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2026 8:33:38 PM

You don't often get email from andrewpkownacki@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Ms. Hamilton:

I am a native San Diegan, a 26 year resident of OB/Point Loma and I am disgusted by the Port's plan to lease prime waterfront property to Topgolf. The entire tidelands are in trust for ALL Californians, not just golf snobs who want to push out those without the means to participate in a very upper crust, snobby activity enjoyed by mostly wealthy white people.

The description of the area describes it as a polluted eyesore. That is because "someone" decided it would be a great idea to put a rental car fuel/maintenance/repair facility on prime bay front property. The addition of the Topgolf facility will not be an improvement.

I have both walked and biked the "eyesore" street between Harbor Drive and Harbor Island. Surely we can do better than put in an elitist facility that will surely add more light and water pollution to the area. Plus, that location is very close to the Eastern approach to North Island. As recently as a couple days ago I watched a C-130 land at North Island via this approach.

I don't think putting 170' light towers close by the Coast Guard facility will enhance air safety and will further restrict airspace.

Sincerely,
Andrew Kownacki

From: pwk4871@gmail.com
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Response to and Comment on Topgolf DEIR
Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2026 11:57:54 AM

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I share the concerns of many San Diegans about this proposed project. I think TopGolf is an inappropriate use, because, as one critic notes:

"Coastal areas suited for water-oriented recreational activities [. . .] shall be protected for such uses. Cal. Coastal Act § 30220;

· All port-related developments shall give highest priority to the use of existing land space within harbors for port purposes, as well as, provide for other beneficial uses consistent with the public trust, including, but not limited to, recreation and wildlife habitat uses, to the extent feasible. Cal. Coastal Act § 30708;

· Scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas." Cal. Coastal Act § 30251.

These guiding principles strongly suggest that the Project is inappropriate for its proposed location. A golf driving range is neither coastal-dependent or oriented, serves no relevant port purposes, and would adversely impact scenic coastal views and habitats. The Project would effectively privatize ten acres of prime coastal tidelands"

Thank you for including this comment in the public record.

Paul Krueger
San Diego
619-250-3887

From: [Shortwaves](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf Environmental Report
Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2026 10:18:34 AM

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As bad as is the current use of this irreplaceable Bay Area property, the building of a Top Golf park will be even worse! The “cage” itself that will surround it will be a monstrosity and eyesore, visible from many areas of the Bay.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to develop that property in way that complements both San Diego and the Bay. Please don't let the potential income from a commercial use of this property outweigh the opportunity to create a Bay-oriented attraction that all residents and visitors can enjoy!

Bob LaRose
3576 Utah Street
San Diego CA 92104

From: [Philip Schutt](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [Capt. Philip Schutt](#)
Subject: Proposed Topgolf Development on East Harbor Island
Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2026 11:31:02 AM

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To the Port of San Diego Commissioners,

I strongly oppose the proposed Topgolf development on East Harbor Island.

San Diego's waterfront is a finite public resource. Once it is converted into a private commercial entertainment venue, it is effectively lost to future generations. We should be asking ourselves whether every remaining piece of open waterfront must become another corporate development.

Enough is enough.

More traffic around the airport. More construction delays. More dust, noise, and disruption. More concrete replacing open space. More commercialization of one of San Diego's most valuable public assets.

Must every square foot of our city be built out?

This project places a large, privately operated golf entertainment complex on public tidelands that should remain focused on maritime, coastal, and public-serving uses. A golf driving range is neither water-dependent nor port-related. It is a commercial entertainment business that could be built almost anywhere. Our waterfront cannot.

I agree with the concerns raised by San Diego CoastKeeper and believe the Draft Environmental Impact Report demonstrates that this project conflicts with the intent of the California Coastal Act.

Section 30220 states that coastal areas suited for water-oriented recreational activities shall be protected for those uses.

Section 30708 requires that port-related developments give the highest priority to port purposes while allowing other public trust uses such as recreation and wildlife habitat whenever feasible.

Section 30251 requires protection of scenic and visual coastal resources and directs that development protect public views, minimize visual impacts, and enhance degraded coastal areas.

The proposed Topgolf development fails these standards. It is not coastal-dependent. It serves no meaningful port function. Instead, it would privatize approximately ten acres of prime public waterfront for a commercial business while permanently altering the character of Harbor Island.

The project also raises significant concerns that deserve careful consideration:

- Increased traffic congestion on Harbor Island and around San Diego International Airport.
- Light pollution from a massive illuminated driving range operating into the evening.
- Tall perimeter netting that would permanently alter scenic waterfront views.
- Noise from a late-night entertainment venue adjacent to public recreational areas.
- Loss of opportunities for additional parks, shoreline access, maritime recreation, and open public space.
- Potential impacts to shoreline habitat and coastal resources identified throughout the Environmental Impact Report.

I am also concerned about the long-term viability of Topgolf itself.

The company has recently experienced corporate restructuring, layoffs, leadership changes, and a significant reduction in valuation, resulting in the sale of a controlling ownership interest. While these business decisions are separate from the environmental review, they raise an important public policy question.

Should San Diego dedicate irreplaceable public waterfront property to a corporation whose long-term business model is uncertain? If the company struggles or closes in the future, the public could be left with a highly specialized commercial structure that is difficult to repurpose, occupying land that should never have been removed from public use in the first place.

Finally, I have concerns regarding aviation safety.

Has the Federal Aviation Administration reviewed and approved the proposed lighting design and operating conditions to ensure there will be no interference with aircraft approaching or departing San Diego International Airport? Given the project's proximity to one of the nation's busiest airports, this question deserves a clear and transparent public answer.

Harbor Island should be a destination that celebrates San Diego's maritime heritage, expands public access to the waterfront, enhances parks and coastal recreation, and preserves scenic views for everyone—not another corporate entertainment complex that could just as easily be built inland.

Public waterfront belongs to the people of San Diego, not to the highest bidder.

I respectfully urge the Port Commissioners to reject the proposed Topgolf development and pursue alternatives that preserve public access, support maritime and coastal uses, and protect the unique character of San Diego Bay for future generations.

Closing Statement

This decision is about far more than a golf entertainment venue. It is about the future of San Diego's waterfront and whether we will honor our responsibility as stewards of a public resource that belongs to everyone.

Once this waterfront is privatized and developed, we will never get it back. Future generations will not remember the promises of economic development—they will inherit the choices we make today. They deserve a shoreline that remains open, scenic, accessible, and connected to San Diego's maritime heritage, not another commercial attraction that could have been built almost anywhere else.

Please protect this irreplaceable public waterfront. Reject the proposed Topgolf development and pursue a vision that prioritizes public access, coastal recreation, maritime uses, environmental stewardship, and the long-term interests of the people of San Diego over short-term corporate development.

Respectfully,

From: [Cam Stephens](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Support for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment / Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2026 1:00:43 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

You don't often get email from cam@sandiegogolf.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

I'm writing to share my strong support for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project. I love the idea, and I believe it's exactly the kind of project San Diego should be getting behind.

As someone who works in the San Diego golf industry, I see every day how much golfers love this region. We're home to Torrey Pines, Aviara, and La Costa — courses that have hosted PGA and LPGA events — and to the golf manufacturing capital of the world in Carlsbad, with TaylorMade, Callaway, and Cobra Puma all based here. Combine that with our year-round weather, and San Diego is a golf destination unlike anywhere else. A Topgolf on the bay fits perfectly into that identity and gives visitors and locals one more reason to come play.

The location is ideal. Turning an industrial parking lot into a 10-acre public waterfront park, a bayfront promenade, and an entertainment district creates real public access where there's none today. And sitting right next to the airport, it'll be one of the first things travelers see as they land — a welcome to San Diego that puts our waterfront front and center.

Beyond the experience, this project will drive real economic activity — drawing more visitors, supporting local jobs, and generating additional tax revenue that benefits the city and the region.

I hope the Board of Port Commissioners moves this project forward. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Cam Stephens

Cam Stephens

Owner/Chief Executive Officer



San Diego Golf Reservations
13330 Paseo Del Verano Norte, Suite T
San Diego, CA 92128
866-701-GOLF reservation center
858-342-2800 cell
cam@sandiegogolf.com
www.linkedin.com/in/cam-stephens

San Diego Golf: www.SanDiegoGolf.com
Palm Springs Golf Reservations: www.PalmSpringsGolfReservations.com
Showtime Golf: www.ShowtimeGolf.com



From: [Agess, Inc.](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Port Redevelopment EIR - comments
Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2026 8:28:32 PM

You don't often get email from agessinc@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello Meghan,

My main environmental concern is with the use of fresh water grass, shrub, trees and other landscape opportunities such as seawater farming option should be considered as fresh water usage for these new facilities and all of the port is an expenses but also a negative environmental impact when ocean water is accessible and viable for these new facilities especially the park space. Happy to share more but would also like to make a comment that alternative hardscape should be considered as blacktop has continual heat, maintenance and pollution issues and has a negative environmental impact. Even mandating cool color paint on blacktop is a step toward long term stewardship.

Renewable energy to make the site at least less dependent on the grid but due to scale of project the project could achieve full energy sustainability or even be regenerative with solar canopy shade structures around.

Lastly storm water runoff into the bay has a negative impact and can be mitigated with natural systems such as floating islands, trash collection systems.

The Hope of new master plans could and should be no impact using new tech.

Nathan G. White
CEO, Agess, Inc.
714.262.5177
www.agessinc.com

From: [Chris Wasden](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Comments on Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Sunday, July 26, 2026 3:29:08 PM

You don't often get email from cwasden17@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I am writing to register my complete disapproval of the Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project. I can't think of a use that could be more poorly suited for our bay than a driving range, because this is just an upscale driving range with bars and restaurants. One that might generate revenue, but still just a driving range.

Coastal land is limited. That's why land such as this is in a public trust. The Public Trust Doctrine says that such land should connect the public to the water, and uses should be limited to those that are water dependent. A driving range clearly does not meet this criteria.

A driving range can be anywhere. There are already many scattered around the county. None are on the shores of a beach or bay. A project like Topgolf should be located in Mission Valley or, perhaps, Otay Mesa. There is no reason for this project to be on our waterfront. Allowing it to be built will only prevent us from developing the types of amenities that can only be sited on the bay.

The only valid argument I've seen in favor of this project is that a Topgolf facility would be better than what is there today. Can the bar be set any lower than that? That is not a compelling reason; any and all new uses would be better than what is there today. What should go there must be water dependent. Additional marinas and boating facilities come to mind, together with parks and restaurants, as such marine uses must be on the water. Let's not waste a great piece of bayfront land on a project that could be built inland.

In addition, the 4.5 acres of artificial turf is completely out of character right next to the bay. It should be obvious that the turf will degrade over time; it's what plastic does when it sits outside in constant exposure to the sun and salt air. After rains, microplastics and other toxic materials from the turf are guaranteed to wash into the bay. It's essentially a slow-motion pollution plant.

Finally, the 170-foot netting and all of the outdoor lighting that this project requires is a complete eyesore / visual blight. I visit Harbor and Shelter Islands at least three times per month to enjoy the bay and scenery. Nobody wants the view of the bay, and of the downtown from Harbor and Shelter Islands, obscured by the netting, or to be blinded by bright lighting that will make the many viewpoints on the islands no longer worth visiting.

For example, the view from Tom Hamm's is one of the city's best. The lights of this driving range will pretty much wash that view out. But the bright green turf will be attractive to look at.

This project should be disallowed so that one that is better suited for this scarce, valuable bayfront site can be developed instead. Wasting such a public resource for a driving range is a huge, huge mistake. Please wait for a project that is reliant on a waterfront site.

Thank you.

Best,

Chris Wasden
4681 Edison Street
San Diego, CA 92117

From: [Neal Schneider](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: The East Harbor island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park
Date: Monday, July 27, 2026 8:22:45 PM

You don't often get email from neals92110@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please consider these facts:

1. Somewhere between 8% and 30% of the population in the United States plays golf in one form or another, depending on who's source you're inclined to believe. Regardless, it's a small percentage of the general population.
2. The vehicular traffic patterns on Harbor Drive barely cope with the daily traffic as it is - adding a significant increase would make the traffic intolerable. I'm certain that your own analysis supports this argument.
3. There is no denying that there are dramatic shifts taking place in the cultural context of Generations X, Y and Z which largely refuse to embrace many of the choices of the Baby Boomers. By and large, they are not going to patronize a driving range. You are considering a project for people who are going to die soon.
4. This is a prime piece of real estate and you're considering a driving range? That's the best you can do? Maybe it pencils out on paper but this goes way beyond ROIs and acceptable use of precious bay-front property.

This is a unique opportunity for the Port of San Diego to invest in an iconic landmark that identifies our beautiful city. It's something that the city is missing and desperately needs. I can take line-art drawings of the Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Opera House, the St. Louis Arch, the Golden Gate Bridge to almost anywhere in the world and people will recognize them. Hell, I could take a line-art drawing on the Hollywood sign in Los Angeles (even with the letters removed!) and even people in remote locations would be able to identify it. This would make San Diego, my community, an international destination right next to the airport. Geez!

This is going to require those with inspiration, foresight and courage to take a stand for the future of our county and it won't be easy. There will be vehement opposition ("What? You're going to spend how much on this crazy project? I won't allow it!") but there was staunch opposition to all of the projects I mentioned in the previous paragraph. I wish I had the creativity that's needed so I could make suggestions but my mind doesn't work that way. Think of the pride our community would feel if the Port of San Diego took the bull by the horns, defied the odds, rejected the criticism and built something so grand that people would sing songs about those who made it happen. This is in your grasp. Please. An opportunity like this is very important, valuable and rare. Don't approve the
The East Harbor island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park.

-Neal Schneider
Point Loma

From: [Bill Tippetts](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#); [PublicRecords](#); [Lesley Nishihira](#)
Cc: [Janet Rogers](#); [Bill Tippetts](#); [M. Dan McKirnan](#); [Pam Heatherington](#); [Diane Coombs](#); [Scott Andrews](#); [Andrew Meyer](#); [Courtney Brown](#); [Patrick McDonough](#); [Ali Martin](#); [Charles Rilli](#); [Peter Andersen](#); [Kim Tolles](#); [Jim Peugh](#)
Subject: Topgolf Financial Review and Concerns
Date: Monday, July 27, 2026 1:37:22 PM
Attachments: [Topgolf Financial Review Final July 27.pdf](#)

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Dear Ms. Hamilton/Port of San Diego:

We are submitting the attached letter to the Port of San Diego that discusses serious concerns we have identified with the financial status of Topgolf and financial risks posed to the Port District by the proposed TopgolfSan Diego project. Based on our review of publicly available data and independent evaluations of Topgolf, we strongly urge the Port District to expeditiously contract for an independent financial assessment of Topgolf and the TopgolfSanDiego project. And then provide the findings at a public meeting prior to taking actions to approve the project.

We request that this letter be included in the administrative file for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront CEQA project.

Please provide copies to the Board of Port Commissioners, Executive Director, and other relevant Port District managers and staff.

These concerns are independent from numerous environmental impacts that we have previously identified in letters to the Port and that we will address in separate letters on the Draft EIR.

Janet Rogers and Bill Tippetts are the primary contacts if the Port District wishes to discuss the letter with us.

Sincerely
Bill Tippetts and Janet Rogers

San Diego Unified Port District, Development Services Department
Attn: Megan Hamilton, Senior Planner (EHITopgolf@portofsandiego.org)
3165 Pacific Hwy
San Diego, CA 92101

Submitted 27 July 2026 via email to EHITopgolf@portofsandiego.org

Subject: Financial Implications and Risks of the Topgolf Project for the Port of San Diego

Dear Board of Directors/Ms. Hamilton:

We and the supporting organizations have extensive histories working on coastal issues, including participation in the review and processing of Port District of San Diego (Port District) planning documents and individual projects. We have provided our concerns about this proposed project's potential environmental impacts during its pre-CEQA planning phase and when the Port issued its CEQA Notice Of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in 2023.

Since then, the Port District has not provided any information about Topgolf's status and its financial situation, nor does the recently issued Draft EIR require any disclosure or evaluation of financial conditions of a project. We have reviewed Topgolf's (Topgolf Callaway Brands Corp; NYSE:MODG) history, recent financial condition, and sale to a private equity firm. Based on our review of many publicly available documents, including Topgolf Callaway's financial reports, we believe that the Port District should be very concerned that the financial outlook for this project faces serious financial and operational difficulties. This information and the implications for the project's long term success call for an independent financial review to determine the viability of a Topgolf entertainment venue before the Port District makes its determination on the project's environmental effects (i.e., to certify or deny the Environmental Impact Report).

Approval of Topgolf on San Diego Bay's public tidelands would continue the Port's practice of converting tidelands to "commercial recreation" developments. Doing so reduces free public recreation, including major contiguous parks, as well

as reduces sensitive natural habitats or precludes their restoration. As the Trustee of these Public Lands, and given the significant historical losses of natural tidelands, the Port needs to prioritize public access, green space and protection of the coastal tidelands over revenue generation.

Why Focus on Topgolf's Financial Status Now?

Effective Jan 1, 2026, Callaway sold a 60% share of Topgolf to private equity firm Leonard Green & Partners, L.P. ("LGP"). Topgolf's continuing decrease in sales and increased liabilities resulted in Callaway's decision to separate from Topgolf and return to its core business. Starting in 2026, the financial situation of Topgolf will not be available to the public. Its health, success or failures, will not be visible in public reporting. Since the Port's finances rely on receiving a share of revenue from its leases, substantiating revenue would be difficult to verify without any public financial data related to Topgolf's revenue.

Reviewing the financial information from the last couple of years is necessary to see the downward trend of the business.

It was clear at Callaway's Fourth Quarter 2025 Earnings Conference Call with investors held February 12th, 2026, that Callaway was glad to divest itself from this gamification entity.

The February 12, 2026 press release stated, "We successfully completed our 2025 strategic initiatives, which were to return Callaway to a pure play golf equipment company and strengthen our balance sheet," commented Chip Brewer, President and Chief Executive Officer of Callaway Golf Company. "The sale of our Jack Wolfskin business and the sale of a 60% stake in our Topgolf business have simplified our portfolio, generated significant cash, **eliminated our liability for any Topgolf venue financing and operating leases** (emphasis added) and allowed us to pay down \$1 billion of term debt, leaving us in a net cash position and with future upside opportunity in Topgolf given our 40% remaining stake."

There were 2 slides in the investor presentation related to Topgolf. One slide stated that Callaway Golf Company (CALY) closed the sale of a 60% majority equity interest in Topgolf resulting in:

- ~\$800M in cash proceeds
- No operating role at Topgolf
- No exposure to Topgolf leases or future debt payments
- No capital call obligations

- 40% minority stake provides CALY with potential future upside
- Anticipated holding period of 4 to 5 years

The next slide stated that after the sale of Topgolf CALY repaid \$1Billion of outstanding borrowings and the board authorized a new \$200 Million stock buyback program. That is the extent of Topgolf in the investor presentation.

The 4th quarter and annual information presented at the annual investors meeting excluded any information on Topgolf's 2025 performance. The reports were all presented on a "continuing operations" basis. Despite Topgolf being a major part of the company in 2025, no 4th quarter or annual financial information for those operations were released in February.

In both the press release and the investor presentation, eliminating liability for Topgolf venue financing and future debt payments, operating leases, capital call obligations and operating responsibilities was a huge weight off Callaway's shoulders.

The subsequent release of the 2025 Annual Financial Report mainly presented the continuing operations for Callaway, but Topgolf's 2025 financial reporting is under Discontinued Operations, starting on page 104.
<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/543544887/>

Despite the fact that that all of the goodwill, \$1.35 billion, and \$99.6 million in the brand name value were written off in 2024, the value of Topgolf's brand name was impaired again in 2025 by \$284.0 million and Callaway recorded a \$143.1 million loss on the sale to bring the value the company down to the \$1.1 billion sale price.

For 2025, Topgolf had a net loss of \$406.9 million. Even if the brand name impairment and the loss on the sale are removed, it still lost \$20.2 million.

Callaway's additional impairment of the Topgolf band name, recording a loss on the sale and another net loss in 2025 is indicative of continued decline. Private equity wasn't prepared to buy it without further discounts on the remaining assets and liabilities. In total, Callaway lost about \$1 billion on its Topgolf adventure. There is no goodwill left on the books for a good reason.

Given the fact that the Port Board is considering a 20 plus year lease for a Topgolf facility on Harbor Island, it is important to understand Callaway's determination to shed Topgolf. In an attempt to understand that decision we'll review the last couple

of years of financial data and the negative turn in customer behavior and sentiment toward Topgolf.

What happened to Topgolf?

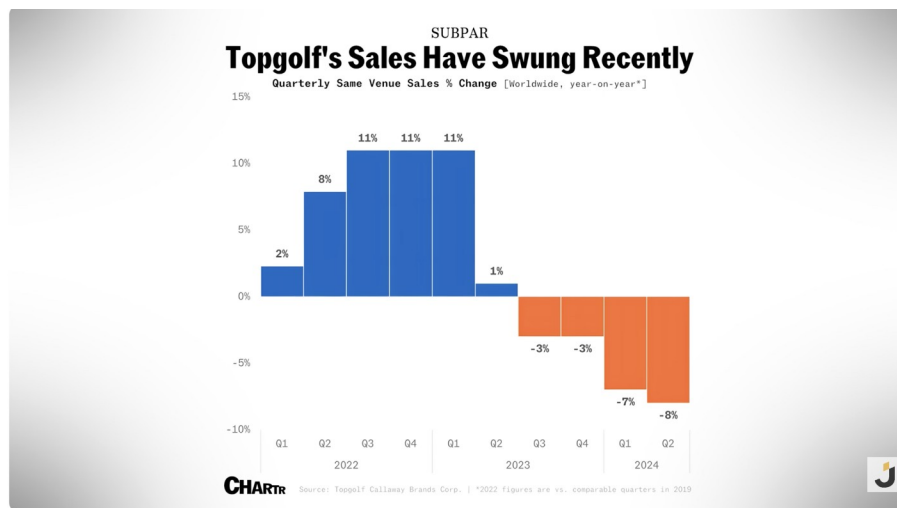
March 3, 2026 What Went Wrong with Topgolf? How the Once-Buzzy Concept Lost Nearly \$1 Billion in Value

<https://www.dmagazine.com/business-economy/2026/03/topgolf-callaway-what-went-wrong/>

Frequency is a main driver for Topgolf's problems. In the March 3, 2026 D magazine article Ben Swanger wrote "The average Topgolf customer visits just 1.2 times per year. That gives the company one shot—maybe two, if it's lucky—to extract meaningful spend. Strip away the branding and buzz, and Topgolf's underlying model looks far less exotic, says top national golf broker Steve Ekevich: **"a restaurant-and-bar concept carrying \$30 million to \$40 million in construction costs per location."**

Another analysis by *JunkBondInvestor*. *TopGolf: How One Decision Destroyed a \$2B Golf Revolution* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpwmWNMVsnY>)

This analysis includes a graphic showing the underlying problem



TopGolf: How One Decision Destroyed a \$2B Golf Revolution

Reviewing the Port of San Diego's involvement with Topgolf and relevance of its recent financial activities: In December 2023, the Port District Board directed staff to prepare one or more Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to create an entertainment district on East Harbor Island. In addition, the Board also authorized staff to sign a non-binding term sheet with Topgolf, which provides staff with a negotiating framework for any potential future real estate or lease agreement to be submitted for future consideration by the Board. The non-binding term sheet provides a proposed lease term of 20 years with four, five-year options to extend.

Fairly shortly after initiating the project's formal relationship with the Port District, the company, which had formed by a merger in 2021, announced plans in 2024 to split the two entities (i.e., Topgolf and Callaway) in 2025. Later in our letter we discuss the down turn in Topgolf's business leading to the decision to spin-off the company in September 2024 and the exit of the Topgolf CEO in July 2025, just before the separation was supposed to happen.

November 18, 2025 Topgolf Callaway announced that it had signed a definitive agreement to sell a 60% stake in its Topgolf and Toptracer business ("Topgolf") to private equity funds managed by Leonard Green & Partners, L.P. ("LGP"). This transaction was effective January 1, 2026 and valued Topgolf at approximately \$1.1 billion. Callaway's ownership of Topgolf has been a downward ride. Topgolf was purchased in 2020 for an implied equity value of approximately \$2.6 billion and a recorded book value of \$3.1 billion, due to timing of stock values. In 2024 all of Topgolf's goodwill was written off and the brand name devalued leaving the value of Topgolf at \$1.6 billion on the combined books (discussed in detail later).

Now Callaway is left with 40% ownership and Topgolf's value was written down again. The new value is 58% less than the implied equity value originally purchased and 65% less than the original book value.

The failure to hire a new Topgolf CEO and this deeply discounted price present corporate financial conditions that are very different from the company that the Port District entered into its relationship with in 2023. Purchase by a private equity firm provides no information into what will happen with the company.

Here are two of many examples of reasons for questioning the Port's interest, if not risk, in entering into a long term financial arrangement:

TOPGOLF CALLAWAY BRANDS COMPLETES SALE OF MAJORITY
STAKE OF TOPGOLF TO LEONARD GREEN & PARTNERS

<https://ir.callawaygolf.com/news-releases/news-release-details/topgolf-callaway-brands-completes-sale-majority-stake-topgolf>

5 straight quarters of decreases in revenue and \$36 per person for a glorified driving range is not sustainable.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSBKWuNEdzQ/?hl=en>

Topgolf's decline is due to a combination of macroeconomic factors and a shift in consumer behavior, such as preferring real driving ranges and golf courses, resulting in decreased same-venue sales and profitability. New initiatives are being tried to counteract these trends. High inflation has made the experience seem too expensive for many consumers, while a slowdown in corporate events has further hurt revenue. High interest rates are impacting debt from continued expansion. Competition from various new digital event spaces, such as digital golf venues that can be created at a fraction of the capital cost of building a Topgolf site, as well as in-home entertainment technologies, is furthering the decline.

Summary of Concerns

Financial evaluation:

- Risk factors identified in the Topgolf Callaway 2024 annual report
- Total impairment, \$1.35 billion of Topgolf Goodwill, and partial impairment of \$99.6 million of Topgolf brand name in 2024.

- Decreasing revenue of same venue facilities -\$123.3 million in 2024, and continued decline in Q1 and Q2 2025; decreasing operating income of Topgolf facilities in 2025
- Share Prices
- Problems with short-term debt compared to available cash
- Spinoff/partial sale
- Competition from less costly new digital only venues and home entertainment packages, especially the Virtual Reality (VR) sports using immersive technology.

Topgolf facilities evaluation:

- Review of difficulties with individual facilities' obtaining project approvals
- Competition with local golf facilities

Financial Evaluation

Our review relied primarily on Topgolf Callaway's financial statements, with additional information drawn from internet sources (see Attachment). These data suggest that the company's financial outlook is mixed at best.

Topgolf Callaway Financial Reports 2024 Annual Report

(<https://www.allianceproxy.com/topgolfcallawaybrands/2025/ar/HTML1/tiles.htm>)

2025 Quarterly Earnings Reports Q1, Q2, Q3

(<https://www.topgolfcallawaybrands.com/financial-information/quarterly-results>)

1. Risk Factors

In order to understand the problems facing Topgolf, looking at the risks listed in the financial statements is a good place to start. Although listed as risks that imply potential future concerns, many of the risks are already impacting the company.

2024 Annual Report Excerpts (beginning at on Page 13)

- *“Unfavorable economic conditions, including as a result of inflation or otherwise, could have a negative impact on consumer discretionary spending and therefore negatively impact our results of operations, financial condition and cash flows.”*

Here, Topgolf acknowledges that inflation is impacting its consumer business; other sources cite consumer complaints that it is expensive and not good value for money.

- *“Our revenue growth and profitability are impacted by our same venue sales, which have recently declined, and there are material risks to our ability to increase such sales.”*

More specifically, the report documents that same venue sales decreased Topgolf segment revenues by \$123.3 million in the 2024 fiscal year.

Same venue sales continued to decline Q1 and Q2 2025. There is a slight increase in Q3. Although Topgolf’s operating income for Q3 2025 rose 9.9% over the same period in 2024, the first 9 months of 2025 is down 14.5% or -\$12.7 million compared to 2024, despite the addition of 6 new venues since last year.

- *“We face intense competition in each of our markets and operating segments, and if we are unable to compete effectively, it could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations, financial condition and growth prospects.”*

Topgolf acknowledges that it operates primarily in the consumer entertainment industry, which remains highly competitive. Consumers have a wide variety of options to spend their leisure time and discretionary entertainment dollars. Their venues compete for consumers’ time and discretionary entertainment dollars against a broad range of other out-of-home entertainment options, as well as increasingly sophisticated forms of home-based entertainment and other out-of-home entertainment options, which may result in greater competition from home-based entertainment options in the future. The failure to compete favorably against these other out-of-home and home-based entertainment options could have a material adverse effect on the business, and results of operations and financial condition.

- *“The growth strategy for our Topgolf business depends in part on our ability to open new venues in existing and new markets.”*

A key element of the growth strategy for the Topgolf business is to open additional venues in locations to provide attractive unit economics and returns on investment. Unfortunately, the capital costs of building a Topgolf center are far greater than many of its competitors, especially

home based entertainment. Continuing to build new centers without building a loyal customer base at existing locations, may not be a winning strategy. Opening new venues in or near markets in which they already have venues could adversely affect the sales at existing venues. Existing venues may make it more difficult to build a consumer base at a new venue in the same market. Sales cannibalization between venues may become significant in the future as they continue to expand operations and could affect sales growth, which could, in turn, materially adversely affect the business, financial condition or results of operations. Multiple Topgolf, or subsidiaries, are already operating or planned in the San Diego area which would compete for the limited customer base.

- *“New venues, once opened, may not be profitable or may close, which would adversely affect our business as well as our financial condition and results of operations and ability to execute our growth strategy.”*

The decline in revenue from facilities open for more than 24 months is discussed below, including the closure of some venues.

- *“Our active lifestyle and Topgolf venues businesses face risks associated with changed consumer tastes and preferences and fashion trends.”*

Topgolf has already seen a decline in consumer and corporate traffic after the post-pandemic boom. Corporate events have significantly declined and consumers are not returning, due to the novelty wearing off and concerns that it isn't good value for money. Under the current economic conditions, many consumers see Topgolf as too expensive. This decline in consumer sales likely impacted the impairment of the Topgolf brand name.

- *“Our current senior management team and other key executives are critical to our success, and the loss of, and failure to adequately replace, any such individual could significantly harm our business.”*

The loss of Topgolf CEO Artie Starrs in July 2025, caused a delay in the planned split of Topgolf and Callaway. As a result, the parent company sold Topgolf to a private equity firm to complete the separation by the end of 2025.

2. Goodwill Impairment

Goodwill is a measurement of the premium paid over the fair market value of a purchase. It is an intangible asset capturing factors such as potential additional economic value of the asset, a good reputation and the revenue potential of a loyal customer base. In 2024, total impairment of Topgolf's Goodwill was \$1.35 billion, plus \$99.6 million partial impairment of the trade name Topgolf in 2024, totaling \$1.45 billion ((<https://golfonemedia.com/topgolf-callaway-brands-reports-big-q4-loss/>)).

This impairment was explained in 2024 Annual Report (pages F-35 and 36), as follows:

“Goodwill Impairment. During the fourth quarter of 2024 we conducted our annual assessment of goodwill for all of our reporting units. During our assessment, we determined that the carrying value of the Topgolf reporting unit exceeded its fair value, resulting in the recognition of a goodwill impairment charge \$1,352.4 million. The impairment was driven by sustained unfavorable macroeconomic conditions, including elevated inflation and interest rates, which have continued to put downward pressure on consumer and corporate discretionary spending. This trend contributed to declines in same venue sales, which led to management’s determination during the fourth quarter of 2024 to decrease the number of planned venue openings in the near term as compared to previous projections.....

Following this impairment, there is no remaining goodwill related to our Topgolf reporting unit as of December 31, 2024.”

“In conjunction with our annual assessment of goodwill mentioned above, we performed an impairment assessment on our indefinite-lived intangibles during the fourth quarter of 2024 and determined that the intangible asset related to the Topgolf trade name was impaired. As a result, we recognized an impairment loss of \$99.6 million to write-down the Topgolf trade name to its new estimated fair value”

The write-downs in the values of Goodwill and trade name raise several concerns. Callaway merged with Topgolf in March 2021 at “an implied negotiated price” of \$2 billion, payable in common stock. However, the stock price increase between signing and closing impacted the purchase price for accounting purposes. They

recorded a \$3.1 billion purchase price, even though no additional shares were issued.

An asset is considered to be impaired when its carrying value exceeds its fair value. They determined the fair value based upon the discounted cash flows expected to be realized from the use and ultimate disposition of the asset. During the fourth quarter of 2024 they conducted their annual assessment of goodwill and indefinite-lived intangible assets for all of their reporting units. During the assessment, they determined that the carrying value of the Topgolf reporting unit exceeded its fair value, resulting in the recognition of a goodwill impairment charge \$1,352.4 million and a trade name impairment charge of \$99.6 million to write-down the Topgolf trade name to its new estimated fair value.

Following the impairment, the remaining carrying value of the Topgolf assets on the books is only \$1.6 billion, which is considerably lower than the initial negotiated price of \$2 billion. Four years later, with considerable expansion, the fair market value of the Topgolf is \$400 million less than the original negotiated price and \$1.5 billion less than the recorded price.

The \$1.35 billion impairment along with a \$99.6 million impairment of the brand name Topgolf, contributed to the net loss of \$1447.7 million or \$1.45 billion for 2024 for the consolidated business.

Since Goodwill is the premium over the fair market value, if Topgolf retained certain intangible value such as the value of a loyal customer base, then a partial impairment was possible. The company decided to only use the fair market value and no goodwill remained.

A complete write-off of goodwill typically indicates that the expected benefits from a past acquisition never materialized, or that the company significantly overpaid for the acquired entity. This can raise concerns among investors and stakeholders about management's judgment and the future prospects of the business unit.

Because Goodwill is an intangible asset representing the premium paid over the net assets during an acquisition, a write-down is triggered by a decline in the acquired company's performance or a negative change in market conditions. Based on the risks listed and the discussion in the 2024 annual report, it appears that both circumstances occurred.

3. Declining Revenues for Venues

For its revenue analysis, the company divides Topgolf into two segments: new venues-less than 24 months old and same venue-Company-owned and operated venues with 24 or more full fiscal months of operations as of the year of comparison. Topgolf's revenue growth and profitability are impacted by same venue sales, which have recently declined, and there are material risks to their ability to increase such sales. The change in same venue sales decreased Topgolf segment revenues by \$123.3 million in the 2024 fiscal year, a decline trend continued in First and Second Quarters of 2025.

The quarterly reports for 2025 continue to show serious difficulties for Topgolf. Although the 3rd quarter report finally showed an increase in revenue over the same period in the previous year, the 9 month comparison of Topgolf operating income between Sept 2025 and Sept 2024 shows a 14.5% decline of -\$12.7 million, despite the addition of 6 new venues.

4. Share Prices

Despite the rise in the stock market, the closing prices of Callaway, and then Topgolf Callaway, common stock steadily decreased with the purchase of Topgolf in 2021: 2019 (\$21.20); 2020 (\$24.01); 2021(\$27.44); 2022 (\$19.75); 2023 (\$14.34); 2024 (\$7.86) and 2025 (\$11.67). Toward the end on 2025, the price started to rise with the announcement of the sale. Since Topgolf is no longer a publicly traded entity, its market value is unknown.

5. Problems with short-term debt compared to available cash

At the end of 2024 and through Q1 2025, available cash for Topgolf Callaway was not enough to cover current liabilities, which shows that all the revenue from various segments were not generating enough cash to pay the bills. The Company sold its European clothing brand, Jack Wolfskin, on May 31, 2025 for cash, which alleviated this short term cash problem.

Short-term Debt analysis (in millions)	12/31/2024	3/31/2025	6/30/2025
---	------------	-----------	-----------

Cash plus Accounts Receivable	\$620.3	689.2	\$1021.5
less Current liabilities	<u>825.9</u>	<u>925.6</u>	<u>1015.7</u>
Over/(Under)	-\$205.6	-236.4	\$5.8

6. Spinoff/Partial Sale

In September 2024, Topgolf Callaway decided to separate the two companies. Some analysts wondered if the decision came too late. The stock price had fallen 40% since Callaway acquired Topgolf, corporate outings have sharply declined, and customers find it too expensive.

- The spin-off was initially expected in the second half of 2025, As mentioned previously, concerns about the departure of the CEO delayed that and a private equity company agreed to purchase a 60% share of Topgolf. It is unclear how this will impact the company's overall performance and the status of individual venues.

Topgolf Facilities Sites' Evaluations

1. Review of difficulties with individual facilities obtaining project approvals.

As noted in the 2024 annual report (page 3) there is significant competition for “consumers’ leisure time and discretionary entertainment dollars against a broad range of other out-of-home entertainment options including other dining and entertainment venues, sports activity centers, traditional driving ranges and other establishments offering simulated golf or multi-sport experiences, arcades and entertainment centers, movie theaters, sporting events, bowling alleys, nightclubs, and bars and restaurants.”

Competition from other sports venues such as digital golf can be set up in an existing facility, such as a mall, for approximately \$100,000. In contrast, developing a Topgolf facility is estimated to cost between \$15 million and \$50 million, depending on factors like location, size, and amenities, which require a significant investment to cover land acquisition, construction of the multi-level driving range, advanced technology, and the build-out of restaurants, bars, and event spaces. Also, if the Port's Topgolf project failed, the facilities' unique design

would require significant reconstruction to repurpose its unique shape and open bays. A capital intensive entertainment model does not necessarily make a transformational golf experience.

Our review of the status of Topgolf projects in the US over the past several years identified at least five facilities that have failed, been canceled, or halted for a variety of reasons. While there are approximately 100 facilities nationwide (<https://topgolf.com/us/locations-by-state/>), the problems at these sites, plus the corporation's financial concerns described previously, comprise strong reasons for questioning the feasibility of the East Harbor site proposal – which are in addition to the environmental policy and impacts that we have described in our letters to the Port District.

- The first Topgolf facility in the US, which opened in 2005 at Alexandria VA, closed in 2020, in part due to its out-dated infrastructure and the opening of a new Topgolf venue in neighboring Maryland (<https://offbeatnova.com/2021/01/07/americas-first-topgolf-abandoned-in-alexandria/>).
- A planned facility in New Orleans LA was withdrawn after a competing venue opened several miles away and site-related legal issues went unresolved (<https://veritenews.org/2025/08/01/river-district-topgolf-music-civil-rights-museum/>).
- In Timnath CO the public voted down a proposed facility based on aesthetic (visual) and environmental (bird incidents) concerns about the use and height of facility netting (<https://bizwest.com/2023/06/27/yes-vote-in-timnath-says-no-to-topgolf/>).
- Two other proposed locations have been halted - but apparently not yet eliminated - in Detroit MI where concerns about wetlands impacts halted project processing (<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2025/02/27/canton-topgolf-wetlands-permit-denied-egle/80468926007/>) and Little Rock AR where the project has been delayed, but not stopped; the project is in an urban location with no apparent environmental issues (<https://www.wxnews.org/local-news/2025-04-11/topgolf-delays-construction-developer-now-expects-2026-opening>).

2. Competition with local golf facilities

The above-described Topgolf facilities encountered concerns and constraints that are similar to what the East Harbor Island site faces: potential environmental impacts, aesthetics/visual impacts, and competing or similar venues. With regards to competing and similar venues, San Diego has a plethora of golf courses, over 90, many with driving ranges. Examples of those that are relatively close to East Harbor Island with driving ranges include: Torrey Pines; Mission Bay; Tecolote Cyn; Riverwalk Mission Valley; Balboa Park; and Coronado.

In addition, San Diego has several Topgolf-like venues:

- Stadium Golf Center near Mission Valley (<https://stadiumgolfcenter.com/>) has elevated hitting bays and a large driving range.
- Topgolf has agreed to convert an existing driving range in Sorrento Valley to a Topgolf facility (<https://press.topgolf.com/2022-11-10-Topgolf-Plans-to-Open-Two-Venues-in-San-Diego-Area>), and
- there is the existing Topgolf virtual simulation facility at the SD Bay Marriott (<https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/sandt-marriott-marquis-san-diego-marina/experiences/topgolf/>).

The Topgolf experience does not replicate the golf experience because the golf balls are different for Topgolf. The golf balls are designed to fly shorter distances, have a hard, durable cover, and are equipped with an embedded RFID chip for tracking and scoring. These features are necessary for Topgolf's limited-space driving range, which prioritizes the interactive game experience over distance.

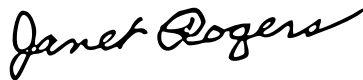
Our review of social media comments about Topgolf suggests that large family or friend groups find the experience too expensive and corporate events have dwindled partly due to so many people working remotely that it is hard to bring people together. Although some concepts develop into mainstays, others fade as a gimmicky fad. Considering the large capital outlays to create a Topgolf facility, an on-going revenue stream to cover the capital outlay may not be sustainable, especially on San Diego's bay where everyone has so many other opportunities for entertainment.

Our Conclusions

Topgolf's financial standing and outlook are seriously troubling. Its corporate structure and financial standing, the downward trend in sales, the lack of transparency resulting from the purchase by private equity, its troubles with recent projects getting approved or constructed, and the obvious existing competition from many golf courses with driving ranges and other Topgolf/Topgolf-like facilities all suggest significant financial risks for the Port District and raise doubt about Topgolf as a prudent investment on public tidelands. Topgolf in 2026 is not the same entity that it was in 2021 or 2023.

We strongly recommend that the Port District have an independent, in-depth financial analysis conducted of Topgolf and this specific project and prepare a report for the public to review before scheduling the project for a decision to approve or deny it.

Sincerely,



Janet Rogers



Bill Tippetts

Supporting Organizations

Janet Rogers and Susan Simon, Co-Chairs
Embarcadero Coalition

Pam Heatherington, Executive
Director
Environment Center of San Diego

Dan McKirnan, Board of Director
Environmental Health Coalition

Scott Andrews, Vice President
Save Our Access

Diane Coombs, Chair
Waterfront Coalition

Additional External Sources that Address Topgolf Callaway Financial Status

March 8, 2025 Is Topgolf Callaway Brands Using Too Much Debt?

<https://simplywall.st/stocks/us/consumer-durables/nyse-modg/topgolf-callaway-brands/news/is-topgolf-callaway-brands-nysemodg-using-too-much-debt>

October 9, 2025 Topgolf Spin-Off Delay: What It Means For Investors

<https://www.topgolf.club/topgolf-spin-off-delay/>

October 28, 2024 Topgolf Downgraded to sell on Fear Spin-Off Comes “Too Late”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-08-23/topgolf-modg-hit-by-double-downgrade-on-fear-spinoff-comes-too-late?embedded-checkout=true>

September 13, 2024 Topgolf duffed: Will Going It Alone Give the Range Play new Loft?

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikedomj/2024/09/13/topgolf-duffed-can-going-it-alone-give-the-range-play-new-loft/>

August 12, 2024 Topgolf Eyes Potential Spin-off Amid Struggling Sales and Traffic

“Topgolf has been getting high scores for experience, but not so much for value.”

<https://www.fsrmagazine.com/growth/nextgen-casual/topgolf-eyes-potential-spinoff-amid-struggling-sales-and-traffic/>

From: [Rhonda Mason](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf and waterfront redevelopment plan
Date: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 12:36:07 PM

You don't often get email from rhondmason@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms. Hamilton,

I am writing to express my concern and objection to the inclusion of the Top Golf driving range. My objection is due to the negative environmental impact of artificial grass and its runoff into the bay plus the addition of 2000 more cars a day on Harbor drive, which is already a traffic jam. It will only serve a small part of the community. Not to mention a 3 story building with lights on until 2 am is an eyesore and would obscure the bay.

Why not make it accessible to the public with parks, climbing walls, skate parks, bayside restaurants? It will need more than 180 parking spaces.

It could be the terminus for a train spur from downtown to the airport which is badly needed.

I understand redevelopment takes investment but why this particular company and their plan to promote their brand. I do wonder how the bidding process was put out to the public and why this project was chosen.

Rhonda Mason LCSW,ACC
619 251 4618

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From: [Pamela Fairley](#)
To: [PublicRecords](#)
Subject: Top Golf
Date: Thursday, July 30, 2026 12:17:35 PM

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I have read that you are working on a Top Golf project on Harbor Island.

I have been a resident of Point Loma since 1977.

I strongly oppose the Top Golf project. As stated in a letter to the Editor of the Union-Tribune yesterday, this is an elitist activity, and there is no need to have this on public land at the waterfront. This activity could happen just as easily far from the water.

Additionally, the high profile of the surrounding netting would be dangerous to the many birds in the area. Please consider public park land as a preferred use of this area.

Pamela Fairley

From: [Leah Gualtieri](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Draft EIR for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment
Date: Friday, July 31, 2026 1:56:17 PM

You don't often get email from ms.leah.rose@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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To whom It May Concern:

Today I am writing in response to the EHI Redevelopment project on Harbor Drive.

There is a great deal of commercial development along the San Diego Bay waterfront. I'm sure it has been beneficial to the Port in terms of revenue. However, as a long time sailor in San Diego who avails themselves of the marinas, the mooring fields, and the facilities along the bay, I've got grave concerns about increased development in the area.

The entire bay along Harbor Drive is inundated with traffic and congestion. Laurel Street is far too narrow to accommodate the cars leaving the airport and other bay area facilities. Most, if not all marinas currently charge for parking. On Harbor Island, the only free parking is across from the Marina Cortez lot and is often full. Many boaters must now pay for the privilege of parking their cars and sailing on others' boats in San Diego.

How does the Port hope to alleviate any of these issues by adding yet more development along the waterfront? As a boater, I and many others use the bay to enjoy all the beauty inherent in the sea. We do not need more congestion in this area. We need the Port and the City to work together to come up with a solution to the congestion that already exists. Add to that, the traffic that will increase once the airport is completed.

Please heed the request of San Diego residents to enjoy their city without any more increase in stress and frustration.

Sincerely,
Leah R. Gualtieri
619.602.2466

From: [Jonathan Kistler](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Harbor Island Comment
Date: Saturday, August 1, 2026 9:33:07 AM

You don't often get email from jonathan.kistler@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

August 1, 2026

Dear Ms. Hamilton,

My name is Jonathan Kistler and I have lived in downtown San Diego for the past 15 years. My wife and I and our dog visit Harbor Island frequently and thus we are very interested in the redevelopment plans.

I think redeveloping Harbor Island is a great idea and instrumental in welcoming visitors to America's Finest City while also providing more entertainment and recreational opportunities to the locals.

The Top Golf proposal is a good one, but I think there is room for improvement.

San Diego is a golfer's paradise and some of the local courses are on every golfer's bucket list. Having a golf focused facility directly across from the airport would be ideal.

I believe that Callaway has sold Top Golf to a different entity. I know that Callaway struggled to make Top Golf a consistent source of revenue. Top Golf attracts a wide variety of golfers, but many patrons are attracted to Top Golf for the social aspect rather than being true fans of the game. Due to this lack of core interest, combined with a relatively high participation cost make regular, repeat customers a rarity.

The Top Golf structure is very large with tall posts, netting and lighting that don't fit the scale of Harbor Island in my opinion. And, much of the acreage is used only as a receptacle for golf balls.

Financial concerns, ability to attract fans of the game and thus repeat patrons as well as the size of a Top Golf structure make me wonder if a different plan would be considered.

I propose that instead of a Top Golf structure, alternatives that are still golf focused would be considered. The meshing of virtual golf bays with real life chipping and putting would use the space more efficiently and I think it would attract more serious golfers and repeat patrons.

The creation of a large putting green (such as the Dance Floor at PGA Frisco, Texas) would be a fun addition that would challenge golfers regardless of their experience and skill level.

Many golf resorts today are increasing engagement with the addition of Par 3 short courses and upscale versions of traditional mini golf. The goal being fun for all levels of golfers and introducing more people to the game.

The redevelopment of Harbor Island that includes a golf focused recreation area is a great idea and I think many locals and tourists would go back to an area like this again and again. I think it would become a destination in and of itself as well as, the front door to San Diego.

Thank you for your consideration.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at Jonathan.kistler@gmail.com.

Best regards,

Jon Kistler

From: [NORM DEWITT](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Harbor Island Golf
Date: Sunday, August 2, 2026 10:25:09 AM

You don't often get email from architect@cox.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

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A golfing range... I cannot imagine a use that takes more of our precious bayfront property for less community benefit than a golfing range. I've seen one of these not far from a home I own in Gilbert, Arizona and its vertical scale rivals a large scale hotel resort. This should not be allowed on our bayfront. The negatives outweigh the benefits. Norm DeWitt 3779 Milan st, San Diego CA 92107 619-917-2555

From: [Scott Mac Laggan](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf San Diego
Date: Monday, August 3, 2026 8:58:39 AM

You don't often get email from smaclaggan@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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On July 16, 1938 when Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the new San Diego City and County Administration building on the Embarcadero, he warned San Diego about walling off our waterfront. He said we would regret it. We ignored his advice and now regret it.

This TOP GOLF monstrosity would make it even worse. Please see attached photo. Thank you.

Scott Mac Laggan, Point Loma (619) 223 4820

From: [Mark Solo](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf
Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2026 5:41:23 PM

[You don't often get email from jimsolo@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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PLEASE! NO!! For sooo many reasons. Come n port get it right because the city hasn't.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Cheryl Geyerman](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf at the harbor
Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 2:58:57 PM

[You don't often get email from cgeyerman@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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Allowing Topgolf to build its facility at the harbor is not a good use of what little beauty is near the airport. Please do not allow this to be built. There are many golf opportunities around San Diego that won't ruin a lovely place that can be used by tourists or residents.

It is just a terrible use of the land.

Cheryl Geyerman
University City,
San Diego

Sent from my iPad

From: [Joan Raphael](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: No on Topgolf
Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 9:03:43 PM

You don't often get email from jlfraphael@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I am very concerned about the damage these nets and poles could do, especially to migratory birds. While I understand this might be an amenity for humans, I think the harm to animals particularly birds, outweighs this possible amenity!

Sincerely,

Joan L. Raphael
San Diego, CA.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Wendy Reuben](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Concerns about Top Golf being located on Harbor Island
Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 8:28:13 AM

You don't often get email from reubenwd@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Port of San Diego,

As a Downtown resident, former boat owner and avid golfer I am still very much against the placement of Top Golf on Harbor Island. I have been to Top Golf and the placement of that entertainment facility is a waste of valuable port land. Top golf does not need the view of the city or bay to attract patrons.. The city needs more open space on the water for all San Diegans and visitors to enjoy. Please reconsider their application.

Sincerely, Wendy Reuben

--

Wendy Reuben
619-972-3563
reubenwd@gmail.com

From: [JOHNATHAN MICHAEL RICE](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: RE: Topgolf environmental study BS
Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 3:53:00 PM

You don't often get email from johnathan.rice@ucla.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Whoever is complaining about the birds and lights needs to look at a fucking map and realize there's a fucking airport nearby. For fuck's sake We need third places as a society. San Diego and its young adult population Needs an outlet to socialize with the community far more than any fucking birds. Priorities, people!

From: [CustomerServiceCenter](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#)
Subject: FW: Keep Toogolf Site to one story
Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 10:47:27 AM

Good morning Megan,

I am forwarding an email received by Customer Service.

Efrain

-----Original Message-----

From: laurie wright <laurietew@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 10:38 AM
To: CustomerServiceCenter <customerservicecenter@portofsandiego.org>
Subject: Keep Toogolf Site to one story

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Please limit the proposed Topgolf facility to one floor. We need to be careful to not allow many more birds to be killed. They are vital to our well being too.

Thank you,
Laurie Wright
500 W Harbor Dr #709
San Diego

From: [Chase Davis](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: EIR Comment - East Harbor Island Redevelopment
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 1:42:10 PM

You don't often get email from chase.davist@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Build it. Tax it. Don't let the NINBYs prevent a development that satisfies so many competing objectives. It serves as a commercial use and tax-revenue increasing parcel, it provides a nice upgraded public space along the bay, and replaces acres of underutilized (but still covered in concrete) land.

I support this project as it stands.

Chase Davis
817-726-6704

From: [Robert Hall](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Don't Permit TopGolf Microplastic Pollution Project
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 9:39:15 AM

[You don't often get email from bilgepump100@sbcglobal.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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Here we are in 2026 still debating whether petrochemical-based plastic is beneficial to human health and the environment. Please stop encouraging harm in the name of “fun”.

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is concerned about microplastics due to their environmental persistence, mobility, particle size and potential to cause adverse impacts to human health and the environment. Microplastics meet the environmental persistence and mobility in environmental media hazard traits (See Cal. Code Regs. tit. 22, section 69405.3 and Cal. Code Regs. tit. 22, section 69405.6). Due to their mobility in the environment, microplastics have become ubiquitous in all ecosystems. They are in human food supplies and can become airborne, thus posing a threat for inhalation exposures. Microplastics have even been found in umbilical cord blood suggesting fetal exposures. Available data revealed that over 4,000 species, including humans, have been exposed to microplastics, and that some of these exposures may be harmful. Microplastics also meet the particle size or fiber dimension hazard trait because it is well established that plastics and microplastics have the propensity to degrade into such small sized particles in the environment (See Cal. Code Regs. tit. 22, section 69405.7).

A plastic driving range is totally unnecessary. If passions and hobbies are this toxic to humans and the environment, find another sport. None of us needs to be this selfish. Modify or eliminate this project immediately.

Bob Hall
94117

From: [Sara Hickmann](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf - not for the waterfront
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 9:06:43 PM

[You don't often get email from dr.sara.hickmann@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Hamilton,

I have lived in Point Loma for the past 12 years, a a home owner and pay taxes. I work 2 jobs to afford to live here and chose this part of the city for its views, access to water and sense of community. Please do not allow a Top Golf monstrosity to be built along our waterfront. San Diego is losing its way with these massive projects in a landscape that is not a grid. We are locked in as a Peninsula and it's sad to watch its destruction by people who don't live here and don't understand. There are plenty of places for Top Golf but the waterfront is not it. Los Angeles put theirs on the west side of the city but not on the water. Maybe take a page from another large city's playbook. You can't undo these decisions. The construction of the airport has shown us that aeditions aren't always improvements.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sara Hickmann, Ph.D.
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Vikki Korporeal](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Proposed Top Golf on the Bay
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 4:58:38 PM

You don't often get email from terifvik@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am a Pt Loma resident and strongly oppose building a Top Golf along the bay. It's a gigantic netted structure and eyesore. Does not belong at a beautiful bayfront where views are not obstructed. Let alone adding additional traffic on Harbor Island. In my opinion, any structures around the bay should be water oriented, hospitality, tourism and restaurants. I have been to Top Golf locations and it is fun, but does not belong on Harbor Island. Please deny this request.
Respectfully
Victoria Korporeal

From: [Patrick Magner](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Golf Park
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 7:35:03 PM

You don't often get email from galwaymedicalsd@aim.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please NO !

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

From: [David Myers](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [David Myers](#)
Subject: Opposition to East Harbor Island Topgolf Redevelopment — Draft EIR Comment
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 9:18:16 AM

You don't often get email from davidmyers1155@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To the Port of San Diego Board of Commissioners and Development Services Department:

I am writing in outright opposition to the proposed Topgolf complex on East Harbor Island. This project does not belong on San Diego's waterfront, in any configuration, at any scale. The draft EIR's own findings are damning enough that no mitigation package changes the fundamental verdict: this is the wrong use for public tidelands.

This is public trust land, and it should stay that way. Under the Public Trust Doctrine, San Diego Bay's tidelands are held for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the people — not for lease to a national entertainment chain building a three-story driving range with 170-foot netting poles. A commercial golf attraction fenced off behind netting and turf is the opposite of public access. It privatizes a public shoreline and calls it revitalization.

The wildlife impact isn't a side effect — it's the headline. Up to 2.4 million birds migrate through San Diego County on peak days, and roughly 522 species depend on this bay to nest or rest along their route. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the San Diego Bird Alliance have both identified the same threats in the record: raptors using the poles as hunting perches, birds disoriented by artificial light at night, and birds flying into netting they cannot see. Even the mitigated "one-story alternative" still comes with netting, still comes with lighting, and still sits directly in a heavily trafficked flyway. There is no version of this project that doesn't put wildlife in the way of golf balls and nets.

It pollutes the bay it sits on. With 4.5 acres of artificial turf and a facility engineered to send golf balls out over open water, this project guarantees a steady stream of microplastics and stray balls into San Diego Bay — plastics that end up in fish tissue and ultimately in the region's own food chain, as San Diego Coastkeeper has pointed out.

"Amenity to the community" is the wrong frame. The Port has described this project as a community amenity. A driving range behind netting, benefiting a single corporate tenant, is not the same thing as public shoreline access. A waterfront park serves the public. Topgolf serves Topgolf.

I am not asking the Port to shrink this project. I am asking the Port to reject it and pursue redevelopment of East Harbor Island that actually returns the waterfront to public use — not one that trades the bay's ecosystem and the public's tidelands for a corporate entertainment lease.

Respectfully submitted,
David Myers
La Mesa, CA

From: mkreeber@aol.com
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Golf on the Waterfront
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 6:22:34 PM

You don't often get email from mkreeber@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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So many things about waterfront living to enjoy but I do not think golf is one of them. Blocking views, sending balls into the water and using a public location for a totally inappropriate private activity is surely not the best you can do for Harbor Island. Playground, public parking, picnic facilities would all be better uses. Please don't approve the golf project. Thanks for listening.

Mary Katherine Reeber
Point Loma

From: [Lindsay Van Gelder](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026 8:24:53 AM

You don't often get email from lindsay@mindspring.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am concerned about the light pollution cited in this article and its impact on birds. Better to use this land for nature and low impact water activities.

Lindsay VAN GELDER
Hillcrest



A new report explores impact of Topgolf, part of the port's East Harbor Island redevelopment, on the waterfront
timesofsandiego.com

PENINSULA BEACON

A Times of San Diego Publication

ENVIRONMENT

A new report explores impact of Topgolf, part of the port's East Harbor Island redevelopment, on the waterfront



by Andi Ruiz • Times of San Diego

Aug. 4, 2026, 1:11 p.m.



East Harbor Island. (Photo by Andi Ruiz/Times of San Diego)

Lights, poles and nets at a proposed waterfront golf and entertainment center could have a negative impact on habitats and native species, according to an environmental analysis of the project.

The concerns are addressed in a draft environmental impact report (EIR) on the redevelopment of East Harbor Island being sought by the Port of San Diego, which would include a Topgolf complex and waterfront park, each covering about 10 acres.

The report cites light pollution and height of the Topgolf poles and nets as notable impacts.

Bright light, according to the analysis, could disrupt the behavior of birds and attract them to nets in the structure, leaving them entangled.

A proposed alternative would limit the Topgolf to one story, as compared to the currently proposed three stories. The planned 108 hitting bays would drop to 34 and the height of the netting poles would fall from 170 feet to 140 feet with the shift to a one-story structure.

According to the EIR, those changes would reduce impacts from light and glare, transportation and greenhouse gas emissions.

The area planned for development sits next to Harbor Drive, adjacent to Harbor Police Headquarters and across from San Diego International Airport's home for car rentals. The site is currently made up of asphalt lots with fencing along the bay, said Lesley Nishihira, vice president of planning and development at the port.

She said the project is intended to be a "huge amenity to the community," revitalizing the area to bring visitors to the waterfront.



Matt Smith, senior director of real estate at Topgolf, said the entertainment company is excited to see the East Harbor Island draft EIR, which was released July 8, out for review.

"Topgolf has been engaged with the Port of San Diego on the redevelopment of East Harbor Island, which includes our proposed Topgolf, since 2019," Smith said "We remain firmly committed to working with the Port to see this entitlement process through to a successful conclusion."

The public is part of that process.

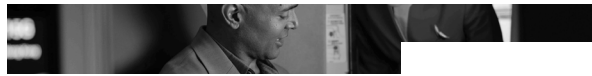
The comment period, which is open through Aug. 24, is a required part of EIRs under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). EIRs must be completed before the approval of a project.

CEQA gives the public the chance to review an analysis of proposed developments and their potential impacts and allows them to weigh in on the projects.

“This is the time in the process to make concerns known,” Nishihira said. “Rather than (once) it’s under construction and people go ‘Hey what’s going on?’”



Fly with Cathay Pacific



California Department of Fish and Wildlife is one of the parties that noted the height of the poles and golf netting, as well as the impacts from artificial light at night.

In an email statement, agency officials said developments like the port’s can harm ecosystems in many ways, including over predation, disruption of migratory bird species and entanglement of birds in the nets.



“The indirect impacts can lead to reduced overall health of the animals, population declines and even direct mortality of individuals,” a spokesperson from CDFW said.

Lesley Handa, lead ornithologist at the [San Diego Bird Alliance](#), said there are about 522 species in San Diego County that use the bay for migration routes and as their main habitat for nesting.

She said concerns focus on Raptors, a carnivorous bird that preys on other birds. They would be able to perch on the 170-foot poles, which could increase the mortality rate of prey that nests in the harbor.

Migratory birds also could fly into nets as they navigate the coastline. On the heaviest migration days, up to 2.4 million birds fly through San Diego County, Handa said.

Even with the proposed alternative nets, operators of Topgolf would need to monitor them closely to watch for birds needing rescue.

“There are other locations that would have a lower impact than putting it along the coastline,” Handa said. “I’m hoping that they might consider moving the location because this is a very unfavorable location.”



Plastics in the water are another issue.

[San Diego Coastkeeper’s](#) Senior Attorney Patrick McDonough said that beyond the airspace questions, there are risks from golf balls heading into the bay, along with bits of the projected 4.5-acres of artificial turf at Topgolf.

He said this is not only a problem for the animals, but for humans as fish tissue absorbs plastics, which end up in the food chain for humans.

“At Coastkeeper, we are trying to connect people with our waters.” McDonough said. “That’s what we want to be connecting people to, not 170-foot-tall driving nets.”

In addition, he points to the Public Trust Doctrine, which protects the use of tidelands and other waterways for “the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public,” according to the California State Lands Commission.

McDonough encourages not only organizations, but the general public, to take part in this comment period if they have concerns over the port’s development.



“This is the public’s land,” McDonough said. “These tide lands are to be held for the benefit of the people of San Diego.”

Port staff will review the comments on the draft EIR and respond to them. Both will be included in the final EIR.

Late this year, the project and the final EIR could go before the port board for consideration, along with an Option-to-Lease agreement for the proposed Topgolf portion of the redevelopment.

View the EIR [online](#) or in person at the Port of San Diego clerk’s office, 3165 Pacific Hwy., or San Diego Central Library, 330 Park Blvd.

The public comment period closes at 5 p.m. Aug. 24. Comments can be submitted in writing via email, to mhamilton@portofsandiego.org, or the post, Port of San Diego, Attn: Megan Hamilton, Development Services Department, 3165 Pacific Hwy., San Diego, CA 92101-1128.

From: [Rachel Stillwell](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top golf
Date: Friday, August 7, 2026 10:55:54 AM

[You don't often get email from rachelstillwell1@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern, I am a lifelong citizen of San Diego and enjoy our open park space beaches, and bases. Please do not put a commercial interest such as topgolf in a public open space. These spaces are intended for citizens to enjoy. Please do not put this here. it would make me sad.
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Mercy Baron](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [Mercy Baron](#)
Subject: Comment on the TopGolf Project
Date: Sunday, August 9, 2026 2:30:53 PM

You don't often get email from mercyless68@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I'm working with the San Diego Natural History Museum on bio diversity projects in several of our canyons and dunes. We're already seeing what is happening to our avian populations in these areas. They are being reduced and even decimated in some areas. If you don't know how important this is to the success of our local environment then you need to do MUCH more research. That netting absolutely needs to NOT happen as our bird population will definitely get caught up in it. If these issues aren't addressed there will be plenty to deal with by our environmentalists.

Mercy Baron
Retired Archaeologist
Currently writing a Tidepool Program for the San Diego coastline
On the bio diversity team for the Natural History Museum

From: [Molly Bowman Styles](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: TopGolf Development
Date: Sunday, August 9, 2026 8:10:39 AM

[You don't often get email from mollybstyles@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello, Megan.

I'm writing to voice my opposition to the TopGolf development proposed for East Harbor Island.

The project's environmental impacts would be catastrophic to local and migratory birds and marine life. The project is also a poor use of public land, restricting a slice of our waterfront to golfers who can afford the luxury of playing rounds of Las Vegas-style golf in a net-encased resort.

Our waterfront belongs to the people of San Diego, not to wealthy people who have luxury of time to putt golf balls around an illuminated course, while drinking alcohol and shooting the breeze.

Like indoor skydiving facilities, TopGolf's cache soon would tarnish, leaving San Diegans with a dilapidated eyesore along our beloved bay. In its aftermath, restoring the site for any kind of environmental public purpose would be next to impossible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm regards,
Molly Bowman-Styles
619-857-4429

Sent with joy and blessings!

From: [Jennifer Greenhall](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Opposition to the redevelopment of East Harbor Island
Date: Tuesday, August 11, 2026 2:44:44 PM

You don't often get email from jgreenhall@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Mr. Hamilton,

I am a resident of San Diego and am writing to express my strong **opposition** to the Port of San Diego's redevelopment of East Harbor Island into a Topgolf complex and waterfront park.

We need to protect our wetlands. We do not need more frivolous commercial enterprises that will harm our environment and endanger both marine and bird species.

The project would destroy our waterfront. The light pollution, the height of the Topgolf poles and nets, the balls, and the artificial turf would be horrific to all species and the environment.

As a steward of the well-being and best interests of our city and port, you must **OPPOSE** the redevelopment project proposed for East Harbor Island.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Greenhall
7574 Plein Aire
San Diego, CA 92127

From: [Oliver Selwyn](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: please vote no on East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf
Date: Tuesday, August 11, 2026 2:27:45 PM

You don't often get email from oliver.selwyn@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello, thank you for understanding my concern about this project. I am deeply concerned about the impact on both local and migratory birds. Currently, San Diego residential and commercial buildings take up the vast majority of our coastal land. Permitting 170-foot netting and lights (or even 140) will certainly kill massive amounts of birds, which are already impacted by the airport. The surviving bird population will certainly have substantially reduced health.

Please vote no on the Topgolf Redevelopment. They can certainly find more suitable land much further east.

Regards, Oliver

From: [David Coppa](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf Proposal
Date: Saturday, August 15, 2026 1:46:03 PM

You don't often get email from david.a.coppa@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I strongly oppose the proposed lease and construction of a Top Golf facility on San Diego bay. It's a very poor use of a previous bay front property that is owned by the citizens of San Diego.

This property should be developed with the idea of providing the best scenic views and also making the whole area accessible to general public.

The Top Golf Proposal will be an eye sore that benefits just a few that can afford to pay high prices to use this property that belongs to the public trust. Top Golf can be built anywhere as since a driving range has and needs no connection to the waterfront.

I support a full rejection of the Top Golf Proposal!

David Coppa
San Diego 92120

From: [Happy Nerd](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project.
Date: Sunday, August 16, 2026 2:38:31 PM
Attachments: [Top Golf EIR PC - 8-2026.pdf](#)

You don't often get email from svnerd@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please see attached comments document regarding Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project.

Thank you,

Mario Garcia

August 14, 2026

Port of San Diego
Attn: Megan Hamilton
Development Services Department
3165 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101-1128
mhamilton@portofsandiego.org

Re: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Harbor Island
Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project.

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project, as part of the Port's efforts to enhance and activate the San Diego Bayfront. The Project calls for a new public waterfront park and public promenade, an entertainment district anchored by Topgolf, and supporting infrastructure. The project proposes the following:

- New public waterfront park (10.1 acres) with:
 - A 20-foot-wide waterfront promenade
 - Active and passive uses (such as plaza areas, a pavilion, playgrounds, cultural uses, seating, shade structures, public art, and restrooms)
- Entertainment district (16.5 acres) with:
 - Topgolf (9.8 acres)
 - Additional "eatertainment" concepts that are to be determined via a competitive public solicitation process
- Realignment of Liberator Way, which would also include:
 - New public parking
 - Pedestrian sidewalks
 - Planting buffers
 - Reconfiguration and/or modification of intersections at North Harbor Drive and Harbor Island Drive
- Landscaping and supporting public infrastructure and utilities

Nature-based Solutions

The draft EIR states that the Project would remove, repair, and/or replace the existing concrete revetment with shoreline protective devices such as riprap and, where feasible, nature-based solutions.

In order for the Project to be consistent with the Port Master Plan (PMP) Ecology Policies:

ECO Policy 1.1.12: Science-based management practices shall be used on Tidelands to guide water, sediment, and natural resource decisions.

ECO Policy 1.1.17: The District shall prioritize the use of nature-based solutions composed of natural or sustainable materials that increase shoreline biodiversity and coastal resiliency, including but not limited to living shorelines and wetland and coastal habitat restoration, where feasible and applicable

ECO Policy 1.1.19: Support creative and innovative solutions to improve the resiliency of the Bay's marine ecosystems and the biodiversity within Tidelands.

ECO Policy 1.1.23: The District shall pursue opportunities to create, preserve, enhance or restore intertidal and subtidal habitats in areas that have historically been impacted by development.

and the San Diego Bay Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP), Top Nine Highest Priorities Projects for implementation including: Sustainable Shoreline Structures and Habitat Enhancement, to improve the habitat value of shoreline infrastructure.

The Project should commit to the installation of nature-based shoreline protective devices during the initial construction phase. The nature-based shoreline will provide habitat that will attract native species to the shoreline thereby improving the biodiversity of the existing area. The increase in biodiversity will in turn provide foraging opportunities, increasing the potential for the survival of numerous species including birds, fish, turtles and marine mammals. The benefits to species outweigh the minimal additional construction costs.

Barrier Netting System

The impacts from the "barrier netting system", while recommended by the California Green Building Bird-Friendly Design Standards, will not be known until the netting is in place and avian monitoring conducted. The draft EIR states that the netting system could be considered a significant impact without mitigation, thus the requirement for mitigation measure Bio-4 (2) Performance Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan. This plan is recommended to be implemented for 3 years yet the life of the project is for decades. The length of time the barrier netting system is monitored should be extended to a minimum of 5 years or longer dependent on monitoring results. The monitoring plan should include adaptive management that only reduces the required monitoring when the monitoring indicates that no birds have been killed, entangled or impacted by the netting after a set amount of time. Relying on the monitoring results from Topgolf Burlingame, (opened December 13, 2024) to state no incidents have occurred, has limited benefit due to the very short time frame the facility has been in place. No frequency of monitoring, monitoring results or adaptive management measures from Topgolf Burlingame were included in the analysis thus, the need for monitoring results to determine what if any long-term impacts could occur from the netting system.

California least tern

The nesting season for the California least tern is April 1 to September 15, not April 15th, as described in mitigation measure Bio-1.

California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy

Mitigation measure Bio-3(a)(3)(iii) – states that mitigation performance monitoring shall be conducted per California Eelgrass Mitigation Plan (CEMP) at zero, 12 and 24 months. This mitigation measure should be revised to state post construction mitigation monitoring to be completed at zero, 6, 12, 24, 36, 48 and 60 months as detailed in the CEMP.

Netting Inspections

Mitigation measure Bio-4(1)(b)(vii) - includes routine inspections of the outfield nets. These net inspections should also include monitoring and reporting of any dead or entangled birds.

Permit Requirements

Mitigation measure Bio-5 – delete “shall consult”, as any in-water construction will be required to obtain Clean Water Act and other permits from the listed regulatory agencies.

Impacts to Intertidal Habitat

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act includes any area that is subject to the ebb and flow of the tide. The ACOE uses the highest anticipated tide in San Diego Bay, to determine the start of their jurisdiction which is elevation +7.79' Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW). The San Diego Bay INRMP defines four in-water habitat types which includes intertidal (+7.79' MLLW to -2.0' MLLW) shallow subtidal (-2.0' MLLW to -12' MLLW), moderately-deep subtidal (-12' MLLW to -20.0' MLLW) and deep water (> -20.0' MLLW). All these habitats are within ACOE jurisdiction. Per the INRMP, intertidal habitat encompasses the area between high and low tides and is subject to varying degrees of tidal submergence. Losses in this zone have been the most severe of all bay habitats, with the greatest decrease in north and central bay (over 90%). Intertidal habitats include wetlands, salt marshes, sandy beaches and mudflats.

The draft EIR Biological Resources section 3.3 and Threshold 3: Jurisdictional Aquatic Resources, provides a lengthy discussion of shallow subtidal and moderately deep subtidal habitats. Unfortunately, these sections do not mention intertidal habitat, nor do they include any discussion of impacts to intertidal habitat (i.e. wetlands) that could be caused by the Project. The final EIR should include a discussion of any potential impacts to intertidal habitat or wetlands from the Project. The regulatory agencies will need this information for permitting.

Thank you,
Mario Garcia
Undergraduate Planner

From: [Darlene Kanzler](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Do not build top golf
Date: Monday, August 17, 2026 9:23:42 PM

You don't often get email from dar.kanzler@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Port of San Diego,

Please do not move forward with the top golf project. This is horrible use of public land. There is not even a playground on Harbor Island. Please build something all San Diegans can enjoy regardless of age and income.

Thank you,
Darlene Kanzler
1431 Pacific Highway
Suite 707
San Diego, Ca
92101

From: [Jane Lacovara](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Gulf comment
Date: Tuesday, August 18, 2026 9:33:12 AM

[You don't often get email from jlacovara@ambalux.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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Good morning,

Thank you for taking my email. I would like to register a comment against a top gulf on Harbor Island. I do not know all the facts on the case but I do know (from personal use in other cities) that they are a very large eye sore and the netting traps birds from time to time. It is a good idea to build the top golf in a suburban area that has large box stores and chain restaurants. Thank you for listening. Jane
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Timothy Smith](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Too Golf San Diego
Date: Tuesday, August 18, 2026 7:27:58 PM

You don't often get email from smithtimothy04@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Good Evening Ms. Hamilton,

I have heard talks of top golf bringing one of its locations to San Diego and I truly hope this happens. This would bring in an additional spot for locals to have some fun and enjoy this sport as well as bring in more tourists to this area. I think it would be a great idea to have top golf here as I have tried out a couple of their locations. They are so fun and the economical growth this could have would be something we could always use. Please let them bring one of their locations here.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Timothy Smith

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Mark Ranyak](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Public advocacy comment about the Topgolf project on East Harbor Island
Date: Wednesday, August 19, 2026 1:03:26 PM

You don't often get email from mranyak@hotmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am writing to express strong opposition to the proposed Topgolf project on East Harbor Island on the San Diego Bay within the tidelands regulated by the California Coastal Act and entrusted to the Port of San Diego's stewardship. This proposed development is absolutely not a coastal dependent or even coastal related use and has no place on our precious Bay. The giant nets would be a total eyesore and create environmental concerns not being properly addressed. There is no valid justification for placing this non-coastal private recreation facility that requires restrictive use fees within the public tide lands. The Public Trust Doctrine must overrule any developer's desire for profits or the Port's need for income that are currently motivating the push for this unacceptable proposal. Please do not allow this project to go forward.

Mark Ranyak
Downtown Resident
700 West Harbor Dr
San Diego, Ca

Sent from my T-Mobile 5G Device
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: [Janet Rogers](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Public Comment on Topgolf DEIR
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2026 1:14:10 PM

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Commissioners,

No matter how you evaluate Topgolf on Harbor Island, it is a bad idea. Please reject the Topgolf proposal.

Topgolf turns out to be a gimmicky facsimile of a driving range and unable to retain loyal customers. The recurring pattern with venues over 2 years old is that the novelty wears off, people decide it isn't worth the money and sales plummet.

Callaway wrote off nearly \$1 billion to get rid of the sinking concept and eliminate the debt Topgolf created by building \$30-\$40 million venues. Sales from a restaurant and bar with a game facility aren't covering construction costs and the unique building shape can't even be repurposed.

Add the environmental issues including microplastics and bird strikes on our beautiful bay, and what a mess. Just the Aesthetics are enough to cancel the proposal. These ugly black 17 story high nets can be seen for miles, ruining the views to and from the bay, but the DEIR only used very limited views. Most cities put Topgolf on marginal land, like industrial parks or the edge of town. Las Vegas put one in the middle of a highway. Don't add an eyesore to our bayside.

On top of everything else, golf of any kind is not coastal related and should not be allowed. The Coronado golf course was grandfathered in. That doesn't make other golf sites allowable. Commercial recreation on tidelands needs to support a coastal related use. This project doesn't do that. It is not incidental either. Topgolf is meant to be the anchor for a large non-coastal related entertainment district. That is a really bad idea for this location.

North Bay doesn't have sufficient wet lands and natural habitat for nesting birds and a park so people can visit the water, something different from a beach. It isn't the Tijuana Estuary, but let's restore the area with a nature reserve and park. We need more nature, not more golf games.

In 2024 the Port had \$95 million in net income. In 2025 the Port had \$71 million in net income. This April, the Port bought a \$20 million 20 year Treasury bond, despite the fact that government guidelines say investments should be limited to 5 years. Don't say you need this revenue to do other projects. The Port is rolling in dough when it has that much money to lock away in excess of needs. Please don't keep selling out the public assets and public access to developers.

The environmental groups are doing a great job responding to the environmental issues in the DEIR and I support them.

Please devote more land to nature and public access, since the Port is greatly exceeding its financial needs as a non-profit entity.

Sincerely,
Janet Rogers
Downtown, San Diego

From: [Kyle Black](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Saturday, August 22, 2026 10:14:37 AM

You don't often get email from kymblack17@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please accept this public comment, sent on August 22nd @10:14AM.

To keep it blunt, the proposal for this plan is ridiculously stupid. Roughly 60% of California's coastline has been developed or anthropogenically impacted in some way. While this project is proposed to occur on already developed coastline, it is still set to introduce even more short and long term impacts in an already challenged environment. Noise disturbances, various forms of runoff and impacts on water quality, and pollution just some of the potential impacts for the development phase of this week. Not to mention the noise and light pollution, trash, and continued use of chemicals on the turf will all impact the surrounding waters IF this proposal is completed. The Port of San Diego already has many challenges with high usage from recreational fishers and boaters, shipping containers to one of the largest ports in the world, and constant abuse and exploitation of the marine environment that it doesn't need ANOTHER nightmare. Please REJECT this proposal and any other future proposals that are similar. Again, please protect the wildlife, preserve the water quality, and protect our oceans from this potentially devastating impacts

From: [Anthony Collins](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Feedback - East Harbor Island Redevelopment
Date: Saturday, August 22, 2026 4:02:19 PM

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am writing to provide my feedback on the potential redevelopment of East Harbor Island.

I share many of the same concerns addressed in the environmental impact report related to the construction of a Topgolf facility: the one- to three-story height; the noise and light pollution; the nets; and the potential impact on the water and wildlife. Equally, and on a community level, I feel that a large facility such as Topgolf isn't right for the location and area. In my opinion, we should be working to create human-scale spaces for people to enjoy being outdoors, especially near the harbor. This means more promenades, green spaces, shaded areas, walking and bike paths, playgrounds, food kiosks/cafes, restaurants, and small shops. Creating a large facility like Topgolf goes against that. Additionally, instead of the proposed project area being cut in half by a road to accommodate cars, this should be a connected area that prioritizes people, pedestrians, and bikes throughout and not just on a promenade along the water; it should be comfortable, walkable, and transit-accessible - with a car access road likely able to parallel Harbor Drive.

This is such an amazing opportunity to create a truly great multi-use destination on some the most prime real estate in San Diego. I hope we're able to prioritize people in doing so.

Best,

Anthony Collins
Point Loma/Ocean Beach
atphifer@gmail.com
760-525-0168

From: [Suzanne Pettigrew](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Top Golf
Date: Saturday, August 22, 2026 2:30:58 PM

You don't often get email from spettigrew@cox.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please do not obstruct any more of our waterfront.
A longtime San Diegan

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Jim Royer](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Public Comment – Opposition to East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Saturday, August 22, 2026 7:17:35 AM

You don't often get email from jroyer1@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

I am writing to submit a public comment opposing the proposed East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project, including the proposed Topgolf facility and associated development.

I support expanding meaningful public access to San Diego Bay and improving the East Harbor Island waterfront. However, I do not believe the proposed three-story Topgolf complex is an appropriate use of this sensitive coastal location. The Draft EIR identifies numerous environmental issues associated with the project, and I am particularly concerned that the project would introduce substantial new environmental impacts in an area that is important to San Diego Bay's wildlife and coastal ecosystem.

1. Significant risks to birds and other biological resources

The proposed Topgolf facility would include a 4.5-acre outfield enclosed by netting supported by poles ranging from approximately 90 to 170 feet in height. The Draft EIR's analysis identifies biological-resource concerns associated with the project's lighting and tall netting structures. Bright nighttime lighting can alter wildlife behavior and attract birds toward the netting, creating a risk of entanglement and mortality.

This is especially concerning because East Harbor Island is immediately adjacent to San Diego Bay and lies within an important coastal environment used by migratory and resident birds. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has specifically raised concerns regarding tall structures, artificial light at night, disruption of migratory birds, and bird entanglement associated with developments of this type.

The Port should not dismiss these impacts simply because mitigation measures may reduce their significance. A project that requires extensive monitoring and rescue of birds to operate safely is fundamentally poorly suited to this location.

2. Artificial lighting and the 170-foot netting would substantially alter the coastal environment

The proposed 170-foot poles and large net structure would create a major vertical and visual intrusion along the waterfront. More importantly, the combination of tall structures and nighttime illumination could create an artificial environment that is incompatible with the ecological functions of the bay.

The Port's own alternatives analysis reportedly identifies a substantially smaller one-story alternative—with only 34 hitting bays rather than 108—as having reduced impacts from

lighting and glare, transportation, and greenhouse-gas emissions. This demonstrates that the environmental impacts are directly related to the scale of the proposed facility.

Rather than approving the maximum-intensity alternative, the Port should seriously consider the environmentally preferable alternatives, including eliminating Topgolf altogether and dedicating substantially more of the site to public parkland.

3. Potential pollution of San Diego Bay

I am also concerned about the proposed 4.5 acres of artificial turf and the possibility of golf balls, plastic materials, and degraded synthetic turf entering San Diego Bay.

This is not simply an aesthetic concern. Plastic material entering the bay can become persistent marine pollution and can ultimately enter aquatic food webs. The Port should provide a rigorous analysis of the potential for synthetic turf fibers, plastic components, and golf balls to escape the facility during normal operations, extreme weather, flooding, or deterioration of containment systems.

The project should not be approved without a comprehensive analysis of these potential impacts and enforceable measures that prevent pollutants from entering San Diego Bay.

4. Increased vehicle traffic, air pollution, and greenhouse-gas emissions

The project would replace the existing use with a major regional entertainment destination containing 108 hitting bays, restaurants, bars, lounges, retail uses, and a substantial parking facility. This would generate significant additional vehicle trips to an area already affected by traffic associated with San Diego International Airport and Harbor Drive.

The Draft EIR identifies transportation, air quality, and greenhouse-gas emissions as environmental issues. The Port should give greater weight to the project's operational vehicle emissions and not treat them as an unavoidable consequence of redevelopment.

A waterfront redevelopment project should help San Diego reduce automobile dependence and greenhouse-gas emissions—not create another large automobile-oriented entertainment destination.

5. Coastal resiliency and long-term suitability of the site

The project is located directly on San Diego Bay, making long-term sea-level rise, flooding, storm events, drainage, and water quality important considerations. The Draft EIR specifically identifies flood hazards, hydrology/water quality, drainage, geology/soils, and sea-level rise as issues requiring analysis.

A large, highly engineered commercial facility with extensive paved areas, artificial turf, tall structures, and associated infrastructure is a poor long-term strategy for a waterfront site facing increasing climate-related risks. The Port should prioritize uses that can adapt to future sea-level rise and provide ecological and public benefits rather than committing this waterfront property to an intensive commercial facility for decades.

6. The waterfront should prioritize public and environmental benefits

The Port describes the project as an effort to increase public access to San Diego Bay. I

support that objective. However, placing approximately 9.8 acres of prime waterfront property into a private commercial entertainment facility substantially limits the opportunity to create a larger, more natural public waterfront.

The Draft EIR reportedly evaluates an alternative that would eliminate Topgolf and instead create approximately 20 acres of parkland. I believe this alternative deserves serious consideration. A larger waterfront park could provide public access, habitat, native landscaping, recreational opportunities, shade, and climate-resilient open space without the environmental impacts associated with the proposed 170-foot netting, extensive artificial turf, lighting, and increased traffic.

San Diego has limited opportunities to create meaningful public waterfront open space. Once this property is committed to a large commercial structure, that opportunity is effectively lost for decades.

7. The environmentally preferable alternative should be selected

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Port to reject the proposed Topgolf-centered redevelopment and instead pursue an alternative that maximizes public waterfront access, habitat value, native landscaping, and climate resilience.

At a minimum, before considering approval, the Port should:

- Fully evaluate the potential for bird collisions, entanglement, displacement, and mortality associated with the proposed netting and lighting.
- Require comprehensive pre- and post-construction bird monitoring and publicly report mortality and entanglement data.
- Evaluate substantially reduced lighting and structural heights.
- Analyze and prevent the release of synthetic turf materials, plastics, and golf balls into San Diego Bay.
- Fully account for operational vehicle trips, air pollution, and greenhouse-gas emissions.
- Analyze cumulative impacts on San Diego Bay's biological resources and coastal environment.
- Give serious consideration to the alternative that eliminates Topgolf and expands the waterfront park.
- Ensure that any redevelopment is designed around long-term sea-level-rise and coastal-resilience considerations.

The East Harbor Island site presents a rare opportunity to create a genuinely public and environmentally responsible waterfront. I urge the Port not to sacrifice that opportunity for a large commercial entertainment facility whose environmental impacts the Draft EIR itself identifies.

Please include this letter in the administrative record for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project and provide substantive responses to these concerns in the Final EIR.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Royer

2710 Ariane Drive #6

San Diego, CA 92117

443-852-2563

From: [Juliette Ardzrooni](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Concerns Regarding East Harbor Island Topgolf Proposal
Date: Sunday, August 23, 2026 1:00:31 PM

You don't often get email from julietteardzrooni@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Juliette Ardzrooni, and I am a resident of Downtown San Diego. I am writing regarding a proposed development project on East Harbor island, which I understand involves a proposed private driving range managed by Topgolf. However, the proposed location for the development falls within California's public tideland trust. Our state laws therefore require this land to be allocated for public use related to the water, and a private driving range fails to meet these provisions. Further, I urge you to consider the ways in which chemical pollution from the turf used in such driving ranges and light pollution from the proposed stadium lighting system will degrade this vulnerable habitat and harm local wildlife. As San Diego's natural spaces are significant to the cultural and recreational activities of locals and a draw for tourists, this project would be detrimental to the public's interests. I encourage you to consider redeveloping the space for public use, as described in the All Park Alternative. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Juliette

From: [Lindsey Herman](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: No to Top Golf
Date: Sunday, August 23, 2026 9:46:33 PM

[You don't often get email from lindseyherman22@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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No one, and I repeat no one, wants to see a GIANT Top Golf net, giant stadium lights, and a giant facility obstructing the San Diego coastline and harbor view.

No x 1 million.

Sent from my iPhone

From: sarasandiego@aol.com
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: sarasandiego@aol.com
Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project comment
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 3:32:20 PM

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

As a concerned member of the San Diego community, I strongly oppose the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project. Upon reading the environmental impact report and reading the informed comments from numerous scientists and leaders of organizations including The San Diego Bird Alliance and San Diego Coastkeeper, among others, it is obvious that this project should not be approved

A spokesperson from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife stated that "The indirect impacts [of this type of project] can lead to reduced overall health of the animals, population declines and even direct mortality of individuals." And article from the Peninsula Beacon reported that "In an email statement, agency officials from the Department said developments like the port's can harm ecosystems in many ways, including over predation, disruption of migratory bird species and entanglement of birds in the nets."

Additionally, this project violates the Public Trust Doctrine, which protects the use of tidelands and other waterways for "the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public," according to the California State Lands Commission. Building a Topgolf facility in this area might please some golfers and developers, but would destroy the benefit of the area for the general public and visiting guests to San Diego.

The environmental impact report makes it very clear that this project should not be built in this location, even if they lower it to one story.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Benignus
Resident of San Diego

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)

From: [Justine Galura](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: No to top golf
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 12:22:13 PM

You don't often get email from buddie.nunez@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello M. Hamilton,

Please accept my public comment to reject and denounce the building of Top Golf over a protective waterfront environment.



JUSTINE GALURA, BS,
RVT
Laboratory Technician |
(She/Her)

Just.galura16@gmail.com

From: [Michael Jacobs](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Environmental Impact of the Top Golf Proposal at East Harbor Island Redevelopment.
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 3:19:24 PM

You don't often get email from isaidhi@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Good Afternoon, Ms Hamilton.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed development of the East Harbor Island Redevelopment Project involving a gold driving range. This area is a critical resource both for people and for wildlife. The high fences required for a gold driving range are really not appropriate for an area that is highly populated with shore birds. The bright lighting proposed is also highly impactful to wildlife, and to the overall light pollution profile of the area. I strongly encourage the port to reject this proposal and look for a less impactful project.

Michael Jacobs, PhD
2732 1st Ave, San Diego, CA 92103

From: [Cathy Johnson](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [Cathy Johnson](#)
Subject: Public comment for East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 4:22:30 PM

You don't often get email from cathleen.johnson99@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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hello

Port of San Diego
Attn: Megan Hamilton, Development Services Department
3165 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101-1128

I would like to add my public comment against an entertainment district anchored by Topgolf. I hope you will consider other commercial anchors that will not take away from the current Harbor and Bay views that would be distracted by light pollution, and large poles inevitably holding up the huge black net.

I am extremely concerned about the negative impacts for the current habitat and native species of birds that would potentially be attracted to the lights and fly into and get tangled in the net.

Migratory Birds could fly into the net, and then it may make it easier for predatory Birds to wreak havoc on birds who nest in the area around the harbor.

Again I hope you will consider other options than Topgolf; even a shorter version will still have a negative impact on our wildlife in the area. Even your own EIR pointed out these concerns.

Very respectfully,

Cathleen Johnson

From: [Roy McMakin](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Opposition to the Top Golf Proposal
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 1:23:42 PM

[You don't often get email from roy@mcmakinstudio.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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Ms Hamilton,

I am very familiar with the location of this project as I live less than 2 miles away in Bankers Hill. The impact the Top Golf proposal will have to the public's waterfront seems massive to me. Either the 170' or 140' massive fence will impact the many birds I experience along the waterfront, and the light pollution is unacceptable for many environmental and aesthetic reasons.

While I agree there is better use of the public's property and car rental storage, Top Golf is not better. It feels like a massive debasement of our waterfront.

Please look for other proposals, and perhaps have a more robust public input phase. I can think of many many better uses that don't harm the environment.

thank you,

Roy McMakin
2732 1st Ave SD 92103

From: [Chip Owen](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Topgolf East Harbor Island Project
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 11:05:46 AM

[You don't often get email from chip.owen@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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I am writing as 30 year plus resident of Point Loma and asking that the [proposed project be rejected for the following reasons

First it is not the best use that would benefit the overall welfare of San Diego County residents. Golf and golf courses are a very limited in numbers of county residents that would use them.

The bright lights would severely negatively impact bird behavior especially during migrations which mainly occur at night. Additionally the netting would lead to bird deaths when the fly into them

Clearly these negative impacts outweigh the benefit to a very small user group and decisions for public lands should not be made predominantly based upon the amount of rent to be collected but on overall benefit to the constituency

Please reject this proposal

Thanks

Chip Owen

From: rpatton@san.rr.com
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: submission of comments on DEIR East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 3:39:50 PM
Attachments: [DEIR E Harbor Is Redevelopment - Topgolf Waterfront Park - RP comments.pdf](#)

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Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the DEIR East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project, UPD#EIR-2023-134, SCH#2023110463. Please see attached letter outlining concerns on potential negative impacts to the adjacent endangered California least tern nesting colony at San Diego International Airport.

Sincerely,
Robert Patton

Patton Biological, LLC
4444 La Cuenta Dr.
San Diego, CA 92124
(619) 806-2831
rpatton@san.rr.com

Port of San Diego
Attn: Megan Hamilton
Development Services Department
3165 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101-1128.
mhamilton@portofsandiego.org

24 August 2024

Re: DEIR East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project

Thank you for the opportunity to review the **Draft EIR for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project**, however I'm concerned that it may not adequately address potential negative impacts from the project on the nearby California least tern breeding colony at San Diego International Airport (SDIA). I have been involved in monitoring and management of California least tern sites since 1981, and under contract at the SDIA colony site since 1997. Since a peak of 7130 pairs in 2009 (Marschalek 2010), the population of this state and federally endangered species has dropped to 2401 pairs in 2025 (CDFW unpublished data). Colony size at SDIA has also become precariously low in recent years and thus development projects in the area have the potential for cumulative effects that could result in the extirpation of the tern as a breeding species from north San Diego Bay.

DEIR section 3.3.3 **Method of Analysis** notes that avian surveys were conducted in January and February for winter, June and July for summer, and October for fall, thus excluding any surveys during the peak of the least tern nesting season in May. Unsurprisingly, no least terns were recorded by the surveys. The DEIR at least acknowledges the high potential for least terns in the project area based on the County Bird Atlas (Unitt 2004) and Port's baywide monthly avian surveys (Tierra Data Inc), but does not appear to have referenced previous EIRs for adjacent projects where local status of and potential impacts to least terns were addressed, such as those for the airport terminal expansion or for Sunroad Marina. Least terns regularly forage adjacent to the proposed project location, specifically off East Harbor Island, in Convair Lagoon, and along the shoreline of the USCG station and North Embarcadero. They also roost on and stage from the old seaplane ramps at the USCG station, and forage along the shorelines of North Island and Shelter Island.

In multiple places in the DEIR, nesting of least terns in the area is brushed off as being “approximately 0.5 miles northeast” at San Diego International Airport, and figure 3.3-3 labels least tern nesting as being in the central airfield. In actuality, the colony is located in the southeast portion of the airfield, and the eastern portion of the proposed project lies within the 1200 ft buffer of concern and limited activity identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Biological Opinion. Measurements plotted on GoogleEarth show that the northeast corner of the project site is only 926 ft from the southwest edge of the main least tern nesting oval 03-S at SDIA, and approximately 1177 ft from this season’s western-most nest. The proposed 170 ft tall poles and netting along the west side of Liberator Wy are 1572 ft from the oval 04-S nesting oval, 1822 ft from oval 03-S, and 2312 ft from the nearest 2026 nest.

Given the proximity of the breeding colony to the proposed Topgolf structures, line-of-sight modeling is needed between the nesting ovals and the 170 ft tall poles and fencing, lighting, and 3-story building in order to adequately assess potential impacts. Potential impacts are posed both during construction, including noise, lighting, and equipment height (predatory corvid/raptor perch potential), and during post-construction daily operations, including lighting, netting entanglement, corvid/raptor perch potential, gull/raptor/corvid nesting potential, and obstruction of flight paths between bay foraging areas and the nesting colony. A project alternative should be included that relocates or reorients the Topgolf structures farther west, farther away from the nesting colony and foraging areas, or at least repositions the tallest and most lighted structures to be on the west side of the complex.

Section 3.3.1.6 **Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Linkages** notes least tern nesting at SDIA and the potential for least tern foraging south of the project, but fails to address the obstacle that the project creates between the colony site and foraging habitat.

Section 3.3.5.1 **Threshold 1: Candidate, Sensitive, or Special-status Species, Impact Analysis, Sensitive Wildlife Species, Direct Impacts** recognizes that shoreline stabilization efforts and barge “implementation ... could directly impact ... California least tern through temporary displacement of individuals and rendering habitat inaccessible during construction of the Project. Direct impacts ... would be potentially significant.” The section on **Indirect Impacts, Structures** recognizes that “structure-related indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife species during construction activities and operation of the Project would be potentially significant.” These include “potential indirect impacts from increased bird strikes on and entanglement in the new structures proposed by the Project could result in behavioral changes and potential mortality for the sensitive bird species”, and “raptors utilizing the barrier netting system poles as perches could negatively impact the colony by predating chicks, fledglings, and adults.” It continues that “Without the use of perch deterrent devices in the Project design, the potential indirect impacts from the new barrier netting system poles could result in mortality by predation of the sensitive bird species”. However, no anti-perch devices are 100 percent effective, and while their implementation may reduce frequency of predation, it will not eliminate raptor or corvid

use of the structures. The proposed mitigation measures to reduce predator perching on the structures are limited to anti-perch devices on the pole tops but need to include the entire length of the top of the netting as well.

The section on **Lighting** recognizes that “The Project would result in new and increased nighttime lighting during construction activities and operation, which could disrupt behaviors and cause mortality (i.e., bird strikes) to the sensitive wildlife species” and that “lighting-related indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife species during construction activities and operation of the Project would be potentially significant.”

The section on **Noise and Vibration** recognizes that “Construction-related noise and vibration in the Project area could result in indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife species ... including through abandonment of foraging habitat ... and nesting habitat ... These sensitive wildlife species may temporarily or permanently leave their foraging or nesting habitats to avoid noise generated from construction activities, which may lead to reduced reproductive success and increased mortality.” Therefore, indirect impacts to sensitive foraging birds from temporary construction noise levels would be potentially significant.” And “if construction begins during the nesting season ... the increased noise levels during construction could result in indirect impacts to nesting ... and impacts would be potentially significant.” (Although applicable to least terns, in the DEIR this last sentence does not specifically include them).

The section on **Trash and Garbage** recognizes that “The increased presence of trash and garbage in the Project area during construction and operation could result in indirect impacts to the sensitive wildlife species”.

Section 3.3.5.4 **Threshold 4: Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Linkages** recognizes that “The new structures and lighting, and the potential for bird strikes and entanglements, could interfere with the ability for this area to continue to function as a wildlife movement corridor and habitat linkage because it could cause a significant impact to the sensitive wildlife species...” Therefore, direct impacts to wildlife corridors, habitat linkages, and movement of migratory and resident bird species would be potentially significant.”

The sections on **Mitigation Measures** state that implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-4 would mitigate potential impacts, and they include efforts to limit operational lighting, perch potential, entanglement, trash, and limiting construction activity to daylight hours. However, they should also include limiting the height of cranes, equipment, and any temporary structures in order to reduce the potential for corvid or raptor perching; lowering cranes and equipment when not in use; and implementation of anti-perch devices on any equipment or temporary structures within line-of-sight of the nesting ovals. As mentioned previously, in addition to the top of the support poles, anti-perch devices should also be installed and maintained along the entire length of the top of the netting and on any lights or other structures in line-of-sight of the SDIA least tern nesting area.

Despite the recognition by the DEIR of potentially significant impacts to least terns and proposed Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-4, the measures listed are only limited to

the project site itself, and fail to include any monitoring of impacts from the project on the least tern nesting colony nor any adaptive management responses if impacts are detected.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Robert T. Patton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Robert T. Patton
Consulting Biologist

From: [Kathryn Stellmacher](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 11:32:31 AM

You don't often get email from katmarstell@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello,

Adding a driving range with the lights and the nets and balls going into the water is not the best for our environment. Can we please start putting the environment first and development second? This is not ok. We do not need to add a driving range along our waters.

Best
Kat

From: [Deborah Suppes](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: mayortoddgloria@sandiego.gov; jennifercampbell@sandiego.gov
Subject: Top Golf Traffic Concern of an increase of 3,000 trips a day on Harbor Drive
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 10:34:25 AM

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Good morning Megan Hamilton,

I have concern about the increase traffic on Harbor Drive. The traffic calculating in the environment report is fiction. It states 110 trips a day. Top Golf is most closely related to a bowling alley as far as traffic is concern. According to San Diego traffic calculation bowling alleys are 30 trips a day per bay, since Top Golf facility will have 100 bays that would calculate out to **3,000 trips a day** not a fictional 110 trips a day.

Please ask for a real traffic calculation/study be redone. Harbor Drive is already a bottle neck, with the airport right there and a turn a left turn to get on W Laurel St to the 5 freeway. I recently got stuck for 15 minutes not moving when I was in Uber heading to a surgery appointment in the middle of the day. I was late for the surgery.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter before giving Top golf a green light.

Regards,
Deborah Suppes

3466 Valemont St
San Diego, CA 92106
650-248-3852

From: [Rhea Webb](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Subject: Public Comment for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 7:19:15 AM

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Hello,

My name is Rhea Webb and I am a resident of the 92116 area code. I heard about the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project and was immediately disappointed by the prospect of it moving forward. I'm writing to express my disapproval of this project and to urge decision-makers to deny its progression. Even its own draft report lists a significant amount of "Issues to be Resolved," including:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems

Beyond the extensive list of environmental harm that would impact native wildlife and vegetation (shown in table ES-1) an alarming fact is that some of the categories needing to be resolved are listed as "not applicable," such as "soil erosion or soil loss," which is completely incongruent with section 2.6: Project Construction of the draft report, which states "Demolition and site preparation would include removal of all structures, buildings, installations, utilities (as needed), vegetation, and/or improvements on both the surface and subsurface of the EHI redevelopment and adjacent parcel area; removal and remediation of hazardous materials; and sediment management for demolition and reconstruction."

Additionally, this project does not align with the City of San Diego's Strategic Plan (especially the focus area of "Champion Sustainability: San Diego offers livable, sustainable communities for all, now and in the future") nor the Port of Authority's own Port Master Plan (especially the Ecology Element, which "establishes policies to enhance, protect, conserve, and restore natural resources and healthy environments on Tidelands").

Again, I urge decision-makers to either deny this project completely or, at minimum, require further impact analysis and a more robust plan for resolving issues be completed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

For the love of San Diego,
Rhea

From: [PublicRecords](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#)
Cc: [Lesley Nishihira](#)
Subject: FW: Please say no to Top Golf
Date: Tuesday, August 25, 2026 12:58:09 PM

Please see Top Golf comment below.

Respectfully
Carrie Ehrhart (she/her)
Executive Assistant I, Office of the District Clerk
3165 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101
Office (619) 686-6200
"Small steps are much easier to maintain than huge changes".

Port administration offices are open Monday- Thursday and every other Friday from 8 am-5 pm.
This email may contain public information and may be viewed by third parties pursuant to the Cal. Public Records Act

-----Original Message-----

From: Christie Dunning <candcdunning@aol.com>
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2026 4:43 PM
To: PublicRecords <publicrecords@portofsandiego.org>
Subject: Please say no to Top Golf

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

This is not a good place for this project, on San Diego Bay. Please create a public park, including areas of native plantings. Golf is not an activity that requires rare bay front property. It is your chance to create a legacy project.

Thank you.

Christie Dunning

August 24, 2026

San Diego Unified Port District
Attention: Megan Hamilton, Senior Planner
Development Services Department
3165 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101-1128

Submitted via email to: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org

**RE: EAST HARBOR ISLAND REDEVELOPMENT/TOPGOLF & WATERFRONT PARK PROJECT DRAFT EIR
(UPD #EIR-2023-134; SCH #2023110463) - COMMENTS BY MARK G. STEPHENS, AICP**

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on this proposed project and Draft Environmental Impact Report! As a long-time professional planner and Downtown San Diego resident, I have strong interest in this proposal. Following are some observations, comments, and recommendations.

- Prior use history of the proposed project area calls out for attention, so attempts to restore and enhance the area are appreciated.
- However, the scale of the Topgolf facility and its proximity of San Diego Bay present substantial concerns. Netting as tall as high-rise buildings and extremely bright artificial lighting extending far into the night (essentially every night) pose substantial adverse environmental impacts that cannot be effectively mitigated. In addition, two very large digital display screens are also part of the proposed project.
- Artificial turf is proposed for a large portion of the project area. Composition of any artificial turf used and its base must be constituted and maintained in a manner that prevents potential pollutants from reaching San Diego Bay and any other receiving waters.
- In lieu of palm trees cited for future landscaping, native species should be used.
- In aerial photos of the proposed project area and the larger Harbor Island vicinity, the amount of land devoted to surface parking is striking. While adequate vehicular parking is certainly needed for any project implemented, substantially reducing the amount of impervious surface involved should be a priority.
- As a frequent walker along the bayfront, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to walk or jog along the South, Central, and North Embarcadero. Between Downtown San Diego and the proposed project area, however, several locations present pedestrian safety conflicts with cyclists, and this has only been exacerbated by what amount to electric motorcycles increasingly used on pedestrian pathways. I've never seen enforcement of rules prohibiting use of motorized wheels (except for those with impaired mobility or if an authorized maintenance vehicle is involved).

- Among alternatives described in the Draft EIR, I encourage serious consideration of them in lieu of the currently proposed project in the following ranked order to reduce potential adverse impacts and maximize public benefits: All-Park Alternative, Other Visitor-Serving Commercial Use Alternative, and Reduced Topgolf Alternative.
- In any case, the proposed project must not compromise Port plans for creation of new replacement Harbor Police Headquarters facilities anticipated in this vicinity.

Thanks again for this opportunity to comment, and I would be happy to respond to any questions. I would also appreciate being informed of any future opportunities to comment on this proposed project.

Sincerely,

Mark G. Stephens

Mark G. Stephens, AICP
500 W. Harbor Dr., Unit 514
San Diego, CA 92101

email: msdesmtnsea@hotmail.com

From: [D Woelke](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#)
Subject: Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report East Harbor Island Redevelopment / TopGolf and Waterfront Park Project
UPD #EIR-2023-134; SCH #2023110463, Volumes 1 & 2
Date: Sunday, July 26, 2026 3:02:35 PM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[East Harbor DEIR TopGolf .pdf](#)

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Apologies, attachment detached itself! Resending.

On Jul 26, 2026, at 2:44 PM, D Woelke <dmwoelke@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Chair A. Moore, Vice Chair Zucchet, Secretary Ungab,
and Commissioners Malcolm, D. Moore, Urtasun and
Voorakkara:

Attached please find our comments regarding the above listed
item.

Beyond the fact that the proposed project site sits atop 2
earthquake fault zones, a liquefaction zone, and that the
project site sits merely 14 feet above the water line, we are
alarmed at the degree of both public and environmental health
threats due to the extensive planned use of petrochemical
plastics that cannot be mitigated. We cannot urge you strongly
enough to deny approval of this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Woelke MSN, Board Member
Safe Healthy Playing Fields, Inc.
<https://www.safehealthyplayingfields.org>
SHPFI is an all-volunteer nonprofit 501-c-3



**SAFE HEALTHY
PLAYING FIELDS**



BEYOND PLASTICS

AFFILIATE



Draft Environmental Impact Report

East Harbor Island Redevelopment / TopGolf and Waterfront Park Project

UPD #EIR-2023-134; SCH #2023110463, Volumes 1 & 2

26 July 2026

To: San Diego Harbor Commission
From: Safe Healthy Playing Fields, Inc.
Submitted via email to: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org

Dear Chair A. Moore, Vice Chair Zucchet, Secretary Ungab, and Commissioners Malcolm, D. Moore, Urtasun and Voorakkara:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the redevelopment project of East Harbor Island.

SHFP is an all-volunteer 501-c-3 nonprofit organization. We are committed to educating communities, policymakers and elected officials about the health, safety and financial realities of plastic fields versus grass fields, and other synthetic surfaces for their parks and schools. Our constituency ranges from concerned individuals to community and civic organizations, legal, healthcare and science professionals, municipal leaders and state legislators.

We are opposed to the use of fossil fuel-based petrochemical plastics, and the excessive height of fencing and lighting poles as outlined in DEIR volumes 1 and 2 for myriad reasons, including:

- The use of plastic turf and plastic nylon fence covers contribute to climate change.
- The plastic turf and nylon fence covers release large amounts of plastics and will continue well beyond the proposed 3 year observation period.
- Micro- and nanoplastics have serious, detrimental effects on both public and environmental health.
- Plastic turf is impervious and creates toxic runoff.
- Undisclosed playground materials.
- Best Management Practices (BMPs) will capture only a small portion of the microplastics, and virtually none of the nanoplastics and toxic leachate.
- Toxic aviation gas (AVgas) and jet fuel will collect on the plastic, adding to the toxic runoff and to further public and environmental health risks.
- Plastics contribute to the loss of biodiversity. Excessive fencing and lightpole heights will further contribute to that loss.
- Plastic turf, plastic nylon fence covering, and clips are not recyclable.

The California Coastal Commission has not allowed use of plastic synthetic turf in the Coastal Permit Zone since 2023.¹ It issued a plastics report in October of 2025 outlining the dangers of plastic as it applies in both the Coastal and Local Permit Zones.²

The use of synthetic turf at the Rady Shell Amphitheater on the harbor is releasing large amounts of plastic blades into the air, water, and soil. The plastic blades, as well as the backing leach toxic chemicals. They also adsorb other chemicals and bacteria, posing significant risk to aquatic organisms and the food chain. The Environmental Analysis for the Los Angeles West Harbor Amphitheater in San Pedro found use of natural grass would not be harmful to the already excessively polluted harbor.³

Climate Change:

The proposed 4.5 acres of polyethylene plastic turf is in conflict with San Diego's Climate Action Plan, which, based on 2022 dollars, is costing the cash strapped city \$30,000,000 annually to reduce climate related risks between 2024 and 2028.⁴ While the proponents would argue the TopGolf venue would provide a much needed cash revenue source to the city, it will add to, not reduce, climate related risks including:

- Extreme heat
- Changing precipitation
- Wildfires
- Rising sea levels
- Climate induced public and environmental health threats

Polyethylene is the most globally produced and discarded plastic. Plastic and plastic turf are the fossil fuel industry's Plan B with the decreasing demand for gasoline and oil.

As a fossil fuel-based, petrochemical plastic product, synthetic turf is a climate change agent, off gassing methane and ethylene day and night, in ever increasing amounts. Methane traps 90% more heat than carbon dioxide and is 21 times more potent. Land based plastics produce two times more methane and 76 times more ethylene than plastics found in waterways and oceans.^{5,6} GHG emissions from plastic turf are estimated to be 527 tons of CO₂e over a ten

¹ <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2023/12/W13.1a/W13.1a-12-2023-report.pdf>

² [CA Coastal Commission Plastic Pollution Prevention Report 24 Oct 2025](#)

³  [West-Harbor-FSEIR-Appendix-K-Natural-Turf-Changes.pdf](#)

⁴ <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-11/cap-implementation-plan-final-04-24-23.pdf>

⁵ Royer, SJ, Ferrón, S, Wilson, ST, Karl, DM (2018). "Production of Methane and Ethylene from Plastic in the Environment." PlosOne 13(8): e0200574.
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0200574&type=printable>

⁶ Royer, SJ (12 Nov 2018). Letter to Mayor M Bowser, Washington DC regarding synthetic turf.
[Letter to Mayor M Bowser](#)

year use period based on a model using a 84,830 sq ft field (1.95 acres).⁷ This does not include the entire life cycle of the plastic turf, from cradle to grave and complete degradation.

The proposed 4.5 acres of synthetic turf would create a heat island readily visible from satellites in space. It would off gas 1,218 tons of CO₂ equivalents over a 10 year use period,⁸ exclusive of extraction by fracking, ethane cracking, refining manufacturing, multiple transports, and ultimate landfilling, where it will take centuries to fully degrade.⁹

The ten year use period of the proposed polyethylene plastic turf would require planting 8,550 trees to offset the GHG emissions, and does not account for the untold square footage of the plastic nylon fencing covers.

Micro- and Nanoplastics:

Plastics, including polyethylene synthetic turf and polypropylene netting, are broken down by environmental factors, including UV radiation, friction, heat and humid areas due to dry to wet climate cycles.^{10,11,12}

It should also be noted that the 4.5 acres of synthetic turf is not inclusive of the synthetic turf in the 180 planned hitting bays (an uptick from the previously stated 120). The untold amount of plastic nylon netting also does not include the netting in the hitting bays, nor the plastics between the open bays, which will add to the micro- and nanoplastic burden, as well as the

⁷ Magnusson, S, Mácsik, J (July 2017). "Analysis of Energy Use and Emissions of Greenhouse Gases, Metals and Organic Substances from Construction Materials Used for Artificial Turf." Resources, Conservation and Recycling Vol. 122, July 2017, Pages 362-372
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2017.03.007>

⁸ Magnusson, S, Mácsik, J (July 2017). "Analysis of Energy Use and Emissions of Greenhouse Gases, Metals and Organic Substances from Construction Materials Used for Artificial Turf." Resources, Conservation and Recycling: (122), Pages 362-372.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2017.03.007>

⁹ Chamas, A, Moon, H, Zheng, J (3 Feb 2020). "Degradation Rates of Plastics in the Environment." ACS Sustainable Chemistry & Engineering;(8)9.b
<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acssuschemeng.9b06635>

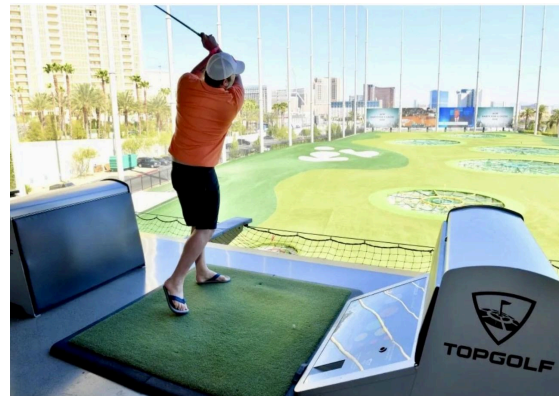
¹⁰ Borthakur, A, Olsen, P, Dooley, GP et al (Nov 2021). "Dry-wet and freeze-thaw cycles enhance PFOA leaching from subsurface soils." Journal of Hazardous Materials Letters; Volume 2, 100029
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666911021000174>

¹¹ Nzimande, MC, Mitbe, A, Tichapondwa, S et al (16 Apr 2024). "A Review of Weathering Studies in Plastics and Biocomposites—Effects on Mechanical Properties and Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)." Polymers (Basel);16(8) 1103.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11054226/>

¹² Borthakur, A, Olsen, P, Dooley, GP et al (Nov 2021). "Dry-wet and freeze-thaw cycles enhance PFOA leaching from subsurface soils." Journal of Hazardous Materials Letters; Volume 2, 100029
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666911021000174>

plastic waste as it all begins to degrade and requires replacement. It also doesn't include other possible uses of plastic turf, such as on golf carts or maintenance equipment.

Additional loss of micro- and nanoplastics, and leaching of toxic chemicals (short/ultrashort chained PFAS^{13,14}) from the planned use of geotextiles.



¹³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0269749126005968>

¹⁴ <https://ifm.deakin.edu.au/2024/06/geotextile-research-reveals-hidden-pfas-contamination-risk/>

Nylon releases more micro- and nanoplastics (MNPs) than most other plastics as it breaks down¹⁵ and is mobile in sand and soil.¹⁶ It also releases volatile organic compounds (VOCs), such as caprolactam¹⁷, aldehydes (i.e. formaldehyde, which may be emitted during the degradation of nylon), aromatic hydrocarbons (toluene; xylene), and amine compounds. Release of VOCs have negative impacts on human and environmental health.¹⁸ Plastics leach chemicals and also adsorb other chemicals and bacteria.¹⁹ Additionally, these plastic products may contain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS; “forever” chemicals), flame retardants, UV stabilizers, antimicrobial agents, or other chemicals of concern.

Whether nylon or HDPE (high density polyethylene) netting is used, they are still petrochemical plastics, typically have a 10-year warranty, and are not recyclable.

In a letter dated 16 January, 2024,²⁰ the California Coastal Commission recommended use of visual stimulators rather than netting to avoid adverse impacts to migratory birds and the endangered California Least Tern. In addition to the netting itself, the micro- and nanoplastics from both the plastic turf and netting pose known risks due to ingestion and inhalation.



¹⁵ Sipe, JM, Bossa, N, Berger, W et al (2022). “From Bottle to Microplastics: Can We Estimate How Our Plastic Products Are Breaking Down? Sci.Total Environ; 814, 152460.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.152460>

¹⁶ Cohen, S, Radian, A (20 Dec 2022). “Microplastic Textile Fibers Accumulate in Sand and Are Potential Sources of Micro(nano) Plastic Pollution.” Environ Sci Technol;56(24), 17635-17642.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36475681/>

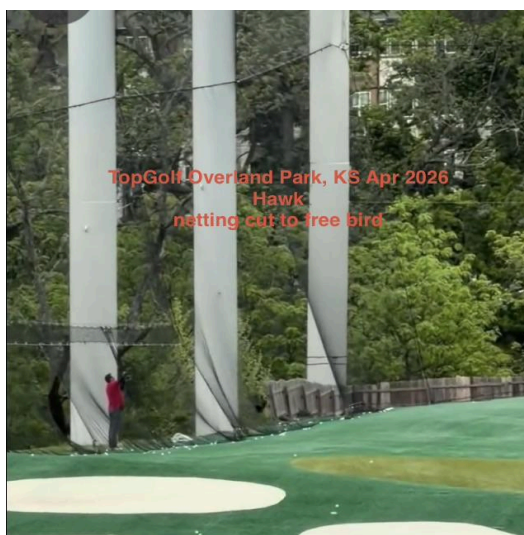
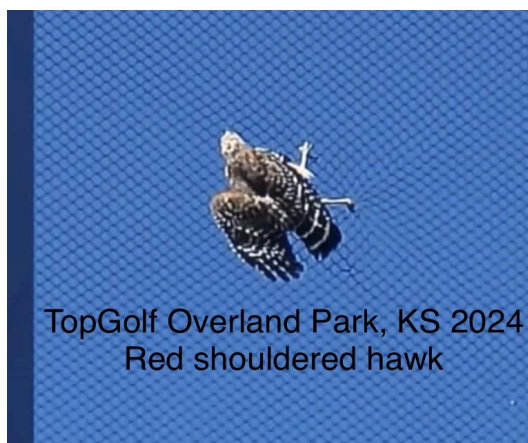
¹⁷ Otzen, M, Palacio, C, Janssen, DB (31 May 2018). “Characterization of the caprolactam degradation pathway in *Pseudomonas jessenii* using mass spectrometry-based proteomics.” Applied Microbiology and Biotechnology;102, 6699–6711
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00253-018-9073-7>

¹⁸ Mangotra, A, Singh, SK (20 Feb 2024). “Volatile organic compounds: A threat to the environment and health hazards to living organisms – A review.” Journal of Biotechnology; 382, 51-69.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0168165623002304>

¹⁹ Yang, K, Xu, F, Xing, X et al (26 May 2025). “Microplastics Pose an Elevated Antimicrobial Resistance Risk Than Natural Surfaces via a Systematic Comparative Study of Surface Biofilms in Rivers.” Environmental Science & Technology.
<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.5c00673>

²⁰ <https://pantheonstorage.blob.core.windows.net/ceqa/2023-134-EHI-Topgolf-Draft-EIR-Appendices.pdf>
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The TopGolf East Harbor project poses a serious threat to raptors, seabirds, songbirds, and pollinators, including Cooper's hawks, Double crested cormorants, California horned lark, California least tern, Great blue herons, crows, hummingbirds, and more.



Synthetic turf and microplastics have caused a decrease in bird populations, accumulation of microplastics on bees, and negative impacts on ocean habitats and biodiversity both above and below ground. Research from 2021 estimated that >1500 species have ingested microplastics.²¹ Found from the peak of Mount Everest, to the depths of the Mariana trench, microplastics have now recently been found in high levels in air exhaled by dolphins via their blowholes,²² Artificial turf in urban parks was found to reduce house sparrow populations by 60%.^{23,24} Microplastics have been found in birds' lungs,²⁵ and in remote islands in high enough volumes in the abdomens of fledgling puffins to cause death.²⁶

It is estimated that roughly one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals are killed annually from plastic in our oceans. In its 2024 Report, the World Wildlife Fund reports a loss of 73% of wildlife populations in the period from 1970 to 2020.²⁷

See microplastic blades at San Diego's Rady Shell Amphitheater on San Diego harbor [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

The amphitheater shell itself is made of teflon, a PFAS chemical,²⁸ and can also shed toxic micro- and nanoplastics.

²¹ Santos, RG, Machovsky-Capuska, GE, Andrades, R (2021). "Plastic Ingestion as an Evolutionary Trap: Toward a Holistic Understanding." *Science*: 373, 56–60.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34210877/>

²² Dziobak, MK, Fahlman, A, Wells, RS (16 Oct 2024). "First evidence of microplastic inhalation among free-ranging small cetaceans." *PlosOne*.
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0309377>

²³ Ponce-Bernat, E, Gil-Delgado, JA, López, GM (20 Feb 2020). "Sharp decrease in sparrows caused by use of artificial grass in city parks." *Phys.org*
<https://phys.org/news/2020-02-sharp-decrease-sparrows-artificial-grass.pdf>

²⁴ Sánchez-Sotomayor, D, Martín-Higuera, A, Gil-Delgado, JA (2023). "Artificial grass in parks as a potential new threat for urban bird communities." *Bird Conservation International*;33, e16, 1–8.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959270922000119>

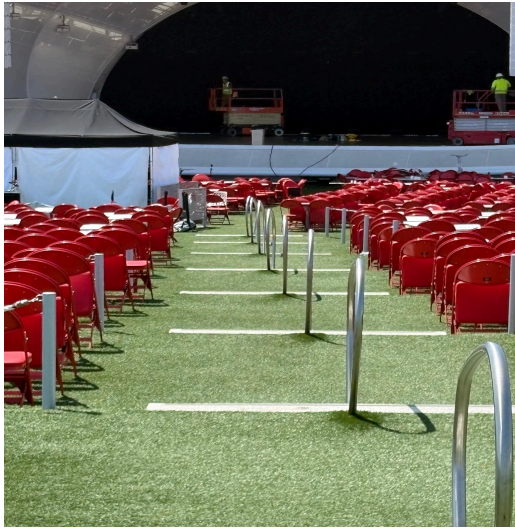
²⁵ Tokunaga, Y, Okochi, H, Tani, Y et al (Apr 2023). "Airborne microplastics detected in the lungs of wild birds in Japan." *Chemosphere*; 321, 138032.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0045653523002990>

²⁶ Lavers, J, Bond, AL, Hutton, I (Apr 2024). "Plastic ingestion by Flesh-footed Shearwaters (*Puffinus carneipes*): Implications for fledgling body condition and the accumulation of plastic-derived chemicals." *Environmental Pollution*; (187) 124–129.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0269749113006532>

²⁷ World Wildlife Federation (2024). "Living Planet Report: 2024. Nature is Disappearing: The Average Size of Wildlife Populations Has Fallen By a Staggering 73%."
<https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-US/>

²⁸  pfas-polymer-fs.pdf

The above videos and images below were taken at the Rady Shell on the San Diego harbor on 18 June, 2025 at 2:30pm; ambient air temperature was 78°F.



Seating area



Plastic blade cluster



Plastic grass carpet 136.2°F



Plastic seat 110.3°F

Human Health Impacts:

Plastic endangers human health throughout its lifecycle.^{29,30}

- Children, other vulnerable populations, and workers are exposed to PFAS, phthalates, UV inhibitors, colorants, antimicrobials, flame retardants, and other chemicals of concern used in the manufacturing of synthetic turf and primary microplastic infill materials.
- Workers involved in fracking, ethane cracker and manufacturing plants, mining sites (silica sand), those who install, remove, and transport synthetic turf, those who work at locations collecting/selling used plastic turf carpets, and landfill workers are all at risk via dermal exposure, inhalation, and ingestion.
- Microplastics have been found in virtually every human organ and fluid. They are able to cross the blood/brain barrier, have been found in bone marrow, carotid arteries, semen, both maternal and fetal sides of the human placenta, in the stool of newborn infants, human breast milk, and more.³¹
- Inhalation of microplastics are associated with asthma, lung fibrosis, and lung cancer.³²
- Microplastics are negatively impacting the cardiac health of those living in the coastal region.³³ Both microplastics and PFAS have been found in sea spray.^{36,37}
- PFAS has been found to act synergistically with microplastics to cause cancer.³⁴
- Research indicates microplastics are linked to cancer.³⁵

²⁹ Landrigan, PJ (6 Mar 2024). “*Plastics, Fossil Carbon, and the Heart.*” N Engl J Med;390(10),948-950. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMe2400683>

³⁰ Landrigan PJ, Raps H, Cropper M et al (2023). “*The Minderoo-Monaco Commission on Plastics and Human Health.*” Annals of Global Health: 89(1): 23, 1–215. <https://doi.org/10.5334/aogh.4056>

³¹ Marfella, R, et al. “*Microplastics and Nanoplastics in Atheromas and Cardiovascular Events.*” The N Engl J Med;390,(1),900–910. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2309822>

³² Thapa, R, Schlesinger, MA, Panth, N et al (Jan 2026). “*Inhaled microplastics and lung health: Immunopathological effects and disease implications.*” Food Bioscience;Vol. 75,108036. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fbio.2025.108036>

³³ Makawana, B, Khadke, S, Kumar, A et al (18 Jun 2025). “*Marine Microplastic Levels and the Prevalence of Cardiometabolic Diseases in US Coastline Counties.*” Journal of the American Heart Association;14(13). <https://doi.org/10.1161/JAHA.124.039891>

³⁴ Sands, M, Sachdeva, A, Bukavina, Irudayara, J (1 Dec 2025). “*Synergistic toxicity of PFAS and microplastic mixtures across five human cell lines.*” Environmental Pollution; (386)127256. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0269749125016306>

³⁵ Cirillo, F, Giani, F, Sergi, V et al (1 Mar 2026). “*The hidden threat: Microplastics and cancer biology.*” Journal of Hazardous Materials; Vol 505, 141332. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0304389426003109>

**In humans, micro-
and nano-plastics
have been found in:**

- Arteries (clots)
- Blood
- Brain
- Breastmilk
- Bone marrow
- Feces adult/newborn
- Heart
- Kidneys
- Liver
- Lungs
- Lymph nodes
- Ovarian follicular fluid
- Penis
- Placenta fetal/maternal
- Semen
- Skeletal muscle
- Spleen
- Stomach
- Testes
- Tonsils- children
- Uterus



The project calls for an undisclosed number of heavy duty poles to suspend the undisclosed amount of nylon netting from, and the use of “galvanized high strength strands.” Galvanized materials add an additional level of toxicity and threat to the bay. Galvanized poles contain zinc.

“Zinc is toxic to aquatic life and has been detected at high levels in many waterways,” said DTSC Director Meredith Williams. “Stormwater agencies make a compelling case for studying ways to control that. The Safer Consumer Products process compels manufacturers to identify alternatives that would control this pollution at the source.”³⁶

“Some California waterways have been classified as impaired under the provisions of section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act due to zinc contamination. In many instances, stormwater runoff, including the [tire wear particles] TWP contained therein, from nearby urban areas represents a major source of zinc contamination. California municipal agencies are responsible for adhering to permit requirements for stormwater discharges to protect local waterways. Many stormwater agencies report challenges staying in compliance with permits due to zinc exceedances.”³⁷

³⁶ East County Magazine (15 Jan 2021). “CALIFORNIA TELLS TIRE MAKERS TO REMOVE HARMFUL CHEMICALS THAT THREATEN OUR AQUATIC LIFE AND WATERWAYS.” <https://eastcountymagazine.org/california-tells-tire-makers-remove-harmful-chemicals-threaten-our-aquatic-life-and-waterways/>

³⁷ https://dtsc.ca.gov/scp/motor_vehicle_tires_containing_zinc/

Inhalation of zinc-oxide particles from crumb rubber (tires, playgrounds), and galvanized steel poles can be harmful to humans.^{38,39}

The toxic runoff, and micro- and nanoplastics pose a significant environmental threat to the bay's California green sea turtle, California halibut, California spiny lobster, Northern anchovy, sea mammals, and others that happen to find their way into the bay. The runoff, plastics, adsorbed toxic chemicals and biofilm pose a risk to the food chain, and to all who fish and consume seafood from our bay, waterways, and the ocean.

Impervious Surfacing:

Despite industry claims, synthetic turf is classified as **impervious** by both the US EPA and the State of California. US EPA has defined [impervious surfaces](#):

*"...areas such as gravel roads...that will be compacted through design or use to reduce their impermeability." It further has defined impervious surfaces as...[a]ny surface that prevents or significantly impedes the infiltration of water into the underlying soil. This can include but is not limited to: roads, driveways, parking areas and other areas created using non porous material; buildings, rooftops, structures, **artificial turf** and compacted gravel or soil."*

Compaction, as well as the impervious plastic surface, result in increased runoff. Despite synthetic turf industry claims, laboratory testing is not the same as reality. Synthetic turf is unable to handle the amount of rain that comes with an atmospheric river or bomb cyclone.

"Pollutants from aerial and terrestrial sources accumulate on impervious surfaces until runoff from a precipitation event carries sediment, nutrients, metals, and pesticides into stormwater drains and directly to local waterbodies. As impervious surfaces increase, stormwater runoff increases in quantity, speed, temperature, and pollutant load. When impervious surfaces reach 10–20% of local watershed area, surface runoff doubles and continues to increase until, at 100% impervious surface coverage, runoff is five times that of a forested watershed. Excessive stormwater runoff also increases the potential for flooding." [US EPA Impervious Surface Fact Sheet](#)

³⁸ Monsé, C, Raulf, M, Jettkant, B et al (Jan 2021). "Health effects after inhalation of micro- and nano-sized zinc oxide particles in human volunteers." Arch Toxicol; (1), 53-65. . 2021 Jan;95(1):53-65. doi: 10.1007/s00204-020-02923-y.Epub 2020 Oct 1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33001223/>

³⁹ American Galvanizers Association (n.d.). "Hot Dip Galvanizing; In the Atmosphere." <https://galvanizeit.org/hot-dip-galvanizing/how-long-does-hdg-last/in-the-atmosphere>

The resulting impact on climate change from plastics and microplastics,⁴⁰ including those from synthetic turf, are contributing factors to increased flood risk, toxic runoff,⁴¹ and landslides.⁴² **Synthetic turf creates 27,000 gallons of toxic runoff for every one inch of rain for every one acre of plastic installed.**⁴³ For the proposed project, that would be 121,500 gallons of toxic runoff for every inch of rain from the 4.5 acres of impervious plastic carpet in the outfield alone.

Best Management Practices (BMPs):

The DEIR indicates that the synthetic turf product chosen will not have the holes punched in the carpet backing that is typical of products used in landscaping and playing fields.

Microplastic blades have been found in waterways and the ocean globally. Synthetic turf blades constitute 12 to 15% of mesoplastics found in waterways and the ocean, and over 50% in near surface waters.¹ Researchers in Australia,⁴⁴ Spain,¹⁵ China,⁴⁵ Japan,⁴⁶ Canada,⁴⁷ the United

⁴⁰ Sunil, S, Bhagwat, G, Vincent, SGT, Palanisami, T (10 Oct 2024). *"Microplastics and climate change: the global impacts of a tiny driver."* Science of The Total Environment; (946),174160.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0048969724043080>

⁴¹ Simpson, TJ, Francis, RA (Aug 2021). *"Artificial lawns exhibit increased runoff and decreased water retention compared to living lawns following controlled rainfall experiments."* Urban Forestry & Urban Greening; (63), 127232
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1618866721002570>

⁴² Vogt, E (26 Oct 2021). *"NJ prep school's turf field blamed for rockslide that displaced 45 families."* NJ 1015. (link next page?)
<https://nj1015.com/nj-prep-schools-turf-field-blamed-for-rockslide-that-displaced-45-families/>

⁴³ Cotrone, V (undated). *"The Role of Trees and Forests in Healthy Watersheds: Managing stormwater, reducing flooding, and improving water quality."* Penn State Extension.
<https://extension.psu.edu/the-role-of-trees-and-forests-in-healthy-watersheds>

⁴⁴ Mylius, K (11 July 2024). *"Keep the Fake Plants and Turf Out of the Surf: A call to action to reduce the use of artificial grass and plants in our cities, preserving natural greenery and its benefits, and cleaning the Ocean."* SeaBin Foundation, Australia.
<https://seabinfoundation.org/keep-the-fake-plants-and-turf-out-of-the-surf/>

⁴⁵ Wang, T, Li, B, Zou, X (1 Oct 2019). *"Emission of primary microplastics in mainland China: Invisible but not negligible."* Water Research; Vol. 162, Pages 214-224.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S004313541930555X>

⁴⁶ Harusato, A, Kato, M ("Mechanisms of Generation and Ecological Impacts of Nano- and Microplastics from Artificial Turf Systems in Sports Facilities." Environments; Vol 12 Issue 4 1.
<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3298/12/4/109>

⁴⁷ Klasios, N (Aug 2025). *"Understanding and Managing Artificial Turf Impacts on Rainwater, Urban Heat, and Biodiversity for the City of Vancouver."* Sustainability Scholar Project 2025-042.
https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2025-042_Understanding%20and%20Managing%20Artificial%20Turf_Klasios.pdf

Kingdom,⁴⁸ and the US^{49,50} have all found microplastic blade contamination from synthetic turf. If all of these countries have been unable to successfully contain, or reduce, microplastic loss from synthetic turf, it goes without saying that TopGolf will not be successful, even if they were to have the motivation to stop using these plastic products. An internet search indicates TopGolf has never used natural grass in any of its 110 projects.

The BMPs developed to contain micro- and nanoplastics from synthetic turf stand to add additional unretrievable microplastics. They capture only a small amount of microplastics, and virtually none of the nanoplastics and chemical leachate or adherent bacteria. Even multimillion dollar stormwater treatment plants contain more microplastics in effluent than in influent.

Read about the BMPs developed for containment of synthetic turf [HERE](#).



AVgas and Jet Fuel:

The collection of leaded AVgas and kerosene-based jet fuel from planes taking off and landing at San Diego International Airport brings a heightened level of concern for anyone nearby. It will also collect on the plastic synthetic turf, netting, and buildings. The lead in AVgas is neurotoxic, as are the phthalates in the synthetic turf.

⁴⁸ [FIDRA.org "Defra report states artificial pitches are the main source of intentionally added microplastic pollution in the UK."](https://www.fidra.org/Defra-report-states-artificial-pitches-are-the-main-source-of-intentionally-added-microplastic-pollution-in-the-UK/)

⁴⁹ [SFEI. 2024. The Pulse of the Bay: Contaminants of Emerging Concern. SFEI Contribution #1219. San Francisco Estuary Institute. Richmond, CA.](https://www.sfei.org/2024/The-Pulse-of-the-Bay-Contaminants-of-Emerging-Concern-SFEI-Contribution-#1219)

⁵⁰ Shahariar, NK, Haque, A, Holsen, T, Baki, ABM (14 Oct 2025). "Land Use and Rainfall as Drivers of Microplastic Transport in Canal Systems: A Case Study from Upstate New York." https://www.preprints.org/frontend/manuscript/ca46e83151c4edefa27979d272ea4561/download_pub

The risks of exposure to jet fuel are well known.^{51,52,53}

Recent comments regarding avgas, used by small engine aircraft, have recently been made by:

- [CA Dept. Of Public Health](#)
- [The Attorneys General of CA, CT, DC, MD, MA, MN, NJ, NY, OR, PA, VT, AND WI](#)
- [Legal Counsel for Sierra Club](#)
- [CA Air Resources Board](#)

Playground(s):

The proposed project calls for a playground or playgrounds, though no details are found. The California Coastal Commission does not allow for used tire crumb, known as poured-in-place (PIP), EPDM, or other synthetic playground surfacing, all of which have significant risk to the environment and public health.

In addition to creating more impervious surfacing, such surfaces pose significant risk for thermal burns, microplastics formation and exposures to humans, wild, avian, and aquatic life, and toxic runoff of the chemical leachate and microplastics.

We question TopGolf's commitment to environmental stewardship, and what they have barely given a nod to...Nature Based Solutions.

Not Recyclable:

The proposed project will create well in excess of 100,000 pounds of forever plastic pollution that will continue to leach forever chemicals, and off gas GHGs from the synthetic turf, and nylon fence covering, every time it needs replacement. For the 4 sections of nylon attached to the 170' sections of fencing, it appears that this alone constitutes 150,000 or more square feet of plastic. This weight of discarded synthetic turf does not include the plastic bird netting, netting and plastics in hitting bays, playground surfacing and equipment, or single use plastics in the entertainment venue.

⁵¹ US Department of Veterans Affairs (n.d.). "Public Health: Jet Fuel." https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/petroleum/jet_fuels.asp

⁵² Vincent-Hall, TD, Bergeron, JG, Eftim, SE et al (Feb 2025). "Health effects of occupational exposure to jet fuels used in the military: A systematic review of the epidemiologic literature." *Health effects of occupational exposure to jet fuels used in the military: A systematic review of the epidemiologic literature.* Environment International; (196), 109278. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412025000297>

⁵³ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (2017). "Public Health Statement for JP-5, JP-8, and Jet A fuels." US Centers for Disease Control. <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/tsp/PHS/PHS.aspx?phsid=771&toxid=150>

Less than 6% of plastics are recycled.⁵⁴ Made of mixed plastics, synthetic turf is not recyclable, not sustainable and is a linear, not a circular product. It does not meet any definition of sustainability. The synthetic turf industry misrepresents its products when they make claims related to sustainability and environmental friendliness. It is not enough to use the vernacular of the day, and is reportable greenwashing.

Circular products⁵⁵ are “...*those products that have reduced or completely no need for virgin resources and are designed with the end of their life in mind.*”

The United Nations defines sustainable development⁵⁶ as “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*”

The UCLA Sustainability Committee⁵⁷ notes: “*In simplest terms, sustainability is about our children and our grandchildren, and the world we will leave them*”.

The Rutgers Center for Sustainable Materials⁵⁸ definition:

*“Sustainable materials are materials used throughout our consumer and industrial economy that can be produced in required volumes **without depleting non-renewable resources and without disrupting the established steady-state equilibrium of the environment and key natural resource systems.**”*

⁵⁴ Dell, J, Enck, J (May 2022). “*The Real Truth about the US Plastic Recycling Rate.*” Beyond Plastics. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eda91260bbb7e7a4bf528d8/t/62b2238152acae761414d698/1655841666913/The-Real-Truth-about-the-US-Plastic-Recycling-Rate-2021-Facts-and-Figures-_5-4-22.pdf

⁵⁵ “*What is a circular product?*” Circular Tayside, United Kingdom. <https://circulartayside.co.uk/what-is-a-circular-product-and-business-model/>

⁵⁶ United Nations (2024). “*Sustainable Development Agenda: What is sustainable development?*” <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/#1b1981a30bdd8fde2>

⁵⁷ UCLA Sustainability Committee, quoting UN World Commission on Environment and Development <https://www.sustain.ucla.edu/what-is-sustainability/>

⁵⁸ Rutgers University. “*What are Sustainable Materials?*” Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Center for Sustainable Materials. Accessed 26 Jan 2025. <https://mse.rutgers.edu/center-sustainable-materials>



One illegal dump site on agricultural land in wetlands in southern California was reported in February this year and was elevated to HazMat status, and remains under investigation.

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control is moving forward with regulation of synthetic turf and has begun the process of regulating microplastics as a chemical of concern.^{59,60}

Alternatives Exist:

Avoidance of microplastics, toxic chemical exposure to people and planet, reduction of greenhouse gasses, and plastic pollution, and in support of a cooler environment, improved human health,⁶¹ and biodiversity lies in nature-based solutions.

Natural grass actively sequesters carbon dioxide and provides a cooling function that is especially dramatic when compared to the heat generated by synthetic turf. Grass naturally filters toxins, performs important eco-services for the soil beneath, and provides widely

⁵⁹ [DTSC Technical Document for Artificial Turf Containing Perfluoroalkyl or Polyfluoroalkyl Substances](#)

⁶⁰ [California finalizes regulation adding microplastics to candidate chemicals list](#)

⁶¹ Braun, RC, Mandai, P, Nwachukwu, E, Stanton, A (17 Oct 2024). "The role of turfgrasses in environmental protection and their benefits to humans: Thirty years later." Crop Science; (64)2, pp2909-3618.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/csc2.21383>

dispersed rainwater infiltration allowing absorption and recharging of the water table.⁶² Research suggests that:

- Natural grasses can accumulate and deposit carbon into the soil by approximately one-half ton of carbon per acre per year for 30 to 40 years.
- 5,000 square feet of natural grass lawns can provide enough oxygen for approximately 28 residents - something sorely needed in our overbuilt environment.⁶³
- Desert and drought tolerant Bermuda hybrid grasses can save water.
- **Regenerative / organic management, and zero emission maintenance equipment mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, reduce costs over time, and increase carbon sequestration.**⁶⁴

Newer drought and desert tolerant Bermuda grass hybrids have been developed for high use playing fields, and can also be used in residential and commercial properties. One such natural grass hybrid, Tahoma31,⁶⁵ uses 60% less water and can stay green for six weeks, potentially reducing water usage to two to three waterings per summer. It has sterile seeds and is non-invasive. Other drought tolerant varieties, grown in the Coachella and Fernando Valleys, Ramona, as well as Stockton and other locations, include Coachella, Bandera, Legion and other Bermuda hybrids.

Miscellaneous:

There is an indication the scope of the project has grown, including an increase in the number of golf hitting bays from 120 to 180.

The proposed project would not increase coastal access as claimed. It will create a pay for play entertainment venue with admission ranging from \$30 to \$80 per hour, plus potential for additional parking fees. It will create social inequity, shutting out those with an inability to pay.

The proposed facility is not a golf course, but rather an entertainment venue that requires standing in place and hitting a golf ball into the distance, repeatedly. We question how this qualifies as enhancing public health and safety (WLU Objective 1.3).

The proposed TopGolf project does not meet criteria for WLU Policy 1.16 for 5 of the 6 allowable land use designations:

- Environmental Stewardship
- Fisheries

⁶² The Lawn Institute. "Carbon Sequestration." Accessed 2 Feb 2025.
<https://www.thelawninstitute.org/environmental-benefits/carbon-sequestration/>

⁶³ The Lawn Institute. "Fresh Oxygen Production by Natural Grass Lawns in the United States."
https://www.thelawninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/TLI-FreshO2production_US-Final.pdf

⁶⁴ [Beyond Pesticides, organic management cost comparison](#)

⁶⁵ [Tahoma31 Project List](#)

- Navigation
- Recreation
- Government Facilities

The social cost of plastics:

As of July 2025, the annual social costs of plastic to the United States are conservatively estimated to be between \$436 billion and \$1.109 trillion across the entire plastics life cycle, from cradle to grave: from fossil fuel extraction, production, use, disposal, and mismanagement.

Greenhouse gas emissions (\$6.4 billion–\$15.9 billion annually): *“contribute to climate-related harms, rising healthcare costs, and reduced agricultural productivity.”*

Increased disease and mortality from oil and gas extraction (\$2.9 billion–\$31.9 billion annually): fracking emits toxic pollutants (i.e. nitrogen dioxide and PM2.5) *“contributing to asthma and mortality, in nearby low-income and marginalized communities.”*

Increased disease and mortality from plastics use (\$410 billion–\$930 billion annually): *“Exposure to toxic chemicals in plastics—such as phthalates, PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), BPA (bisphenol A), and flame retardants—is linked to adverse health outcomes, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, reproductive disorders, and neurological harm. These exposures are associated with healthcare expenses, lost productivity, and premature mortality...likely a significant underestimate of the full cost.”*

Landfilling (\$2.9 billion annually): Most plastic waste in the United States is disposed of in landfills. direct costs (i.e. tipping fees) *“Broader harms, such as lowered property values and environmental degradation near landfills, remain unquantified in the literature reviewed.”*

Plastic litter clean-up (\$9.8 billion–\$13.3 billion annually): *“Removing plastic litter from roadsides, waterways, and public spaces poses costs to state and local governments, nonprofits, and businesses who are largely responsible for cleaning up mismanaged waste in support of public health and community aesthetics.”*

Damage to fisheries, marine shipping hazards, loss of tourism (\$3.0 billion annually): *“Mismanaged plastic waste in the marine environment damages boats, deters visitors from polluted beaches, and reduces fishery yields. Estimated losses to marine industries from these harms include \$2.0 billion to tourism, \$88 million to fisheries, and \$909 million to marine shipping.”*

Loss of marine ecosystem services (\$1.4 billion–\$112 billion annually): *“Marine plastic pollution degrades ecosystem services.”*⁶⁶

The proposed project is a strictly commercial venue that will worsen traffic along the coastal corridor, which is already highly congested due to airport traffic. The single point in ingress and egress to Harbor Island on N. Harbor Drive is contiguous with the entrance to Terminal 2 of San Diego International Airport. We would argue that this congestion will increase GHGs and pose

⁶⁶ Lauer, N, Vegh, T, Nowlin, M et al (July 2025). ‘The Social Cost of Plastic to the United States.’ Duke University, Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability.
<https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/the-social-cost-of-plastic-united-states.pdf>

additional safety risks related to inhalation of petrochemical fumes and particulate matter, as well as increase other public health and safety risks associated with increased traffic.

With research showing 600 quadrillion (6 plus 17 zeros) microplastics are released annually from land based plastics, and an additional 26 quadrillion released from ocean based plastics, do we need a commercial entertainment facility that will be a major contributor of microplastics and environmental degradation?⁶⁷

We seriously question whether this project provides greater benefits to San Diego than risks in light of the multitude of public and environmental health, and fiscal risks. We are thankful that the California Coastal Commission is the final decision maker for this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Conway, President
Dianne Woelke MSN, Board Member
Safe Healthy Playing Fields, Inc.
<https://www.safehealthyplayingfields.org>
SHPFI is an all-volunteer nonprofit 501-c-3



⁶⁷ Callaway, KR (22 Jan 2026). "Scientists just calculated how many microplastics are in our atmosphere. The number is shocking: A new estimate suggests land sources eject 600 quadrillion pieces of microplastic into the atmosphere every year." Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/scientists-just-calculated-how-many-microplastics-are-in-our-atmosphere-the/>

From: [Charles Rilli](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#); EHITopgolf@portofsandiego.org
Subject: TopGolf DEIR response from Sierra Club San Diego
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2026 10:07:31 AM
Attachments: [Sierra Club SD TopGolf DEIR response.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Megan,

I am submitting this letter on behalf of the San Diego chapter of the Sierra Club.

Thanks,
Charles Rilli
Deputy Chapter Director
Sierra Club San Diego Chapter
(He/Him/His)
(973)-865-3306



Sierra Club San Diego response to TopGolf DEIR

EAST HARBOR ISLAND REDEVELOPMENT/TOPGOLF AND WATERFRONT PARK PROJECT

Megan Hamilton
Development Services Department
3165 Pacific Highway, San Diego, California 92101

Via Email

Dear Megan Hamilton,

Sierra Club strongly opposes the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Top Golf and Waterfront Park Project (hereafter Top Golf).

The DEIR states that Top Golf involves the “redevelopment of approximately 9.8 acres for the Topgolf visitor-serving attraction, and development of a new, approximately 10.1-acre waterfront park and promenade. The Topgolf visitor-serving attraction would include a three-story, 46-foot-high, 67,030-gross-square-foot building that would include 108 hitting bays, as well as restaurants, bars, lounges, a rooftop entertainment area, and retail uses. A 4.5-acre turf outfield would be enclosed by netting supported by poles ranging from 90 to 170 feet high. A Topgolf parking lot would provide 289 parking spaces.”

Hitting bays would include high-top and lounge seating with television screens and include overhead speakers providing amplified music that would be audible outside the project. The project includes approximately 17 stories of netting surrounding the driving range.

Sierra Club Opposes Top Golf because:

1. it would damage the visual aesthetics of the waterfront by walling off the airport and the city from San Diego Bay;
2. it violates the mandate of public trust agencies;
3. it presents a danger to cars, trucks, planes, and boats;
4. it increases energy consumption from polluting energy sources.

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5. it uses artificial turf that releases toxins into San Diego Bay and the air;
6. it is vulnerable to sea rise and tsunamis.
7. Top Golf would be located on geologically unstable soils,
8. it provides inadequate tidelands and parkland;
9. the project would produce unwelcome noise;
10. bright lights would have negative environmental impacts;
11. the project would increase traffic congestion;
12. it may pose a risk to air travel;
13. Top Golf increases GHG emissions and decreases air quality;
14. Top Golf would produce adverse biological impacts;
15. it would have negative cumulative impacts;
16. the All Park Alternative to the project is superior; and
17. the permitting process for the project is incomplete.

1. Visual Impact/Aesthetics

The EIR is inadequate and misleading because it states that there are no impacts to scenic vistas or scenic resources and that the project would not degrade the visual character of the area. This is an invalid conclusion because the DEIR states: “A 4.5-acre turf outfield would be enclosed by netting supported by poles ranging from 90 to 170 feet high.” Clearly a 17-story net with lights on the poles would have substantial visual impacts on downtown, the Embarcadero, the airport, and Harbor Island. There would be considerable visual impacts on hotels, marine vessels, restaurants, and particularly East Harbor Island.

Top Golf would wall off the airport and city from the bay. Instead of a view of downtown and the bay from the airport and Harbor Island, San Diegans would view a 170-foot-high net with airplane warning lights atop each pole.

Moreover, the DEIR is contradictory (check this out). The Notice of Preparation for Top Golf said it would have a potentially significant impact on a scenic vista and degrade the quality of scenic views

2. Violates Public Trust Agency Mandates

California’s **Public Trust agencies** are tasked with protecting and managing the state’s sovereign tidelands, submerged lands, and navigable waterways for the benefit of all Californians. Public Trust agencies have a significant responsibility to ensure that their decisions and actions conform to Public Trust guidance.

The DEIR states that Top Golf will “Provide a new visitor-serving development that promotes the public’s enjoyment of public trust lands consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine’s commerce and recreation uses.”

According to the California State Lands Commission: “Agencies must ensure that Public Trust lands are held in trust for public purposes such as navigation, commerce, fishing, boating, water recreation, public access, and environmental preservation. They prioritize public uses over private ones, especially when private development or activities threaten public access or ecological values

Sierra Club believes that Top Golf promotes virtually none of those values, including fishing, boating, water recreation, public access, and environmental protection. An expensive, elite, profit-making venture like Top Golf is inconsistent with the Port’s charge to “benefit all Californians.”

Public Trust Doctrine and Sea Level Rise

The Draft EIR does not adequately evaluate the project's consistency with California's Public Trust Doctrine in light of sea level rise and the long-term protection of San Diego Bay's public trust resources. California has long recognized that tidelands are held in trust for the benefit of all people for purposes including navigation, commerce, fisheries, environmental protection, recreation, and public access. As climate change accelerates sea level rise, these public trust responsibilities become even more important.

The California Coastal Commission has recognized that **public trust lands are not static and will migrate landward as sea levels rise**. As the mean high tide line moves inland, publicly owned tidelands will likewise shift landward over time. Consequently, development decisions made today must account not only for existing public trust lands, but also for the future location of those lands during the anticipated life of a project. The Draft EIR fails to meaningfully evaluate how a large, permanent commercial entertainment facility, extensive netting structures, shoreline improvements, and associated infrastructure could constrain the natural landward migration of public trust resources or limit future restoration opportunities.

The Coastal Commission has further recognized that **development decisions directly influence whether public trust lands, wetlands, beaches, recreation areas, and other coastal resources can persist as sea levels rise**. The physical loss or confinement of these resources results in the loss of ecological functions, flood protection, recreation, wildlife habitat, and public access. Yet the Draft EIR largely evaluates the project based on existing shoreline conditions without analyzing how the project could contribute to long-term coastal squeeze, reduce the resilience of shoreline habitats, or diminish the ability of public trust resources to adapt to future sea level rise.

Importantly, the California Coastal Act is itself an exercise of the Legislature's authority under the Public Trust Doctrine. The Coastal Act requires the protection of public access, coastal recreation, environmentally sensitive habitat, and coastal-dependent uses, all of which are fundamental public trust values. The Coastal Commission has expressly stated that **the Public Trust Doctrine should guide the interpretation and implementation of the Coastal Act** to ensure that public trust lands, waters, and resources remain protected as sea levels continue to rise. The Draft EIR does not demonstrate how replacing a publicly accessible shoreline area with an intensive commercial entertainment use advances these public trust purposes over the long term.

The Coastal Commission also recommends using the **best available science** to identify the area between the current mean high tide line and the projected future location of public trust tidelands over the expected life of a development project. This forward-looking analysis is essential because decisions made today will determine whether future generations retain access to resilient shorelines and functioning coastal ecosystems. The Draft EIR does not appear to evaluate the project's effects on the future migration of public trust tidelands or analyze how the proposed development may constrain future shoreline adaptation as sea levels rise.

Because the project occupies valuable waterfront property held in trust for the public, the Port must demonstrate not only that the project avoids significant environmental impacts under CEQA, but also that it is consistent with California's continuing obligation to protect public trust lands, resources, and public access for present and future generations. The Draft EIR should be revised to include a comprehensive Public Trust Doctrine analysis that evaluates the project's long-term effects on future public trust tidelands, shoreline migration, coastal resilience, habitat adaptation, and public access under projected sea level rise scenarios.

3. Danger to Vehicles

Top Golf presents a danger from golf balls to cars, trucks, planes, and boats with potentially serious consequences. The DEIR states: “Patrons would hit golf balls from the hitting bays eastward toward 10 target areas in the outfield area.” Go near any driving range or golf course and you will find wayward golf balls outside the facility.

Indeed, the technical report of the DEIR clearly describes this hazard. It states: “Errant golf balls that escape the Topgolf facility over, through, and/or around the safety netting will occur. Not only do these golf balls introduce plastics into the environment, they present a serious safety issue as the Project is proposed immediately adjacent to the Bay and the extremely high-traffic North Harbor Drive. This stretch of road is the primary point of access to and from the San Diego International Airport, the busiest single runway airport in the world.”

4. Top Golf uses polluting energy sources.

Top Golf would contribute air pollution from fossil fuels during construction and operation. According to the DEIR: “Implementation of the Project would result in energy consumption during construction and operation.” Not only would the project be a net energy user, but the DEIR also fails to state whether this energy would be renewable, such as that which can be purchased from San Diego Community Power.

The Draft EIR understates the project’s energy impacts by focusing primarily on whether its energy consumption is “wasteful” compared with similar commercial uses rather than whether the project has minimized reliance on fossil fuels and other polluting energy sources.

The project’s annual electricity consumption would increase from approximately 557,532 kilowatt-hours under existing conditions to 2,284,671 kilowatt-hours, more than four times the existing electricity demand. Nevertheless, the Draft EIR erroneously concludes that this increase would be less than significant without requiring energy mitigation. (Draft EIR, Table 3.4-5, pp. 3.4-10–3.4-11.)

Electricity supplied through the regional grid is not presently generated primarily from renewable or zero-carbon sources. Thus, the DEIR should quantify the portion of Topgolf’s electricity demand that would be served by fossil-fuel generation rather than treating electricity consumption as inherently clean. The DEIR fails to comply with CEQA by not reporting and quantifying the environmental impact of carbon on the local environment.

Moreover, the project would continue to use natural gas for commercial cooking. Although the Draft EIR says the building would be “all-electric ready,” it does not require Topgolf to install electric kitchen equipment when the project opens or by a specific date. A promise to electrify when equipment is eventually replaced is uncertain and unenforceable. (Draft EIR, pp. 3.4-11–3.4-12.). Thus, the DEIR fails to use the most sustainable technology and fails to disclose the impact of the fossil fuel that will be burned.

The DEIR provides window dressing on sustainability rather than substance. The proposed solar parking canopy is repeatedly cited as evidence of project sustainability, yet the Draft EIR admits that the system’s energy capacity is currently unknown. A project feature with no specified generating capacity, construction deadline, performance standard, or enforceable maintenance requirement cannot support a less-than-significant conclusion. (Draft EIR, p. 3.2-18; pp. 3.4-10–3.4-12.)

The project would consume approximately 925,588 gallons of diesel fuel and 72,506 gallons of gasoline during construction. These are substantial one-time fossil-fuel demands that should be reduced through mandatory use of zero-emission or near-zero-emission construction equipment, renewable diesel, anti-idling measures, and electric equipment where feasible. (Draft EIR, Table 3.4-4, p. 3.4-9.)

The Draft EIR analyzes the energy intensity of Topgolf largely by comparing it with similar facilities. That approach risks normalizing an inherently energy-intensive use. The proper question is whether a massive, brightly illuminated nighttime entertainment complex on public tidelands has eliminated unnecessary energy use and adopted all feasible renewable-energy measures.

Instead, Sierra Club recommends that the project require an all-electric project at opening, including commercial kitchens; prohibit fossil-gas infrastructure; establish a minimum on-site solar generation capacity; require battery storage; procure 100 percent renewable electricity (which is available locally from San Diego Community Power); impose measurable energy-use intensity standards; and require annual public reporting of actual electricity, gas, and renewable-energy performance.

5. Artificial Turf Poses Environmental and Health Risks

Top Golf uses 4.5 acres of artificial turf for the driving range, creating a significant and unmitigated environmental risk. As stated in the EIR “The Project would have the potential to result in the use of long-term operational pollutants associated with commercial and recreational uses that would introduce potential pollutants, such as chemicals from household cleaners, pathogens from pet waste, nutrients from fertilizers, pesticides and sediments from landscaping, trash and debris, and oil and grease from vehicles. These pollutants could potentially discharge into surface waters and result in degradation of water quality. The Project would drain into two proposed RCPs (48-inch and 42-inch) that directly discharge into the San Diego Bay. The San Diego Bay is listed as an impaired water body on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s CWA Section 303(d) list. (SWRCB 2022; Appendix J2). Therefore, operation of the Project could increase the discharge of identified pollutants to an already impaired water body, which would result in a water quality impact.” This is a clear admission that the Top Golf proposal is in a hazardous and inappropriate location.

The DEIR’s technical appendices acknowledge the dangers of artificial turf. The DEIR states: “Topgolf’s outfields are commonly artificial turf. Recent scientific studies of artificial turf have found that it has significant impacts, including release of toxic chemicals including lead, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (the forever chemicals known as ‘PFAS’), and microplastics. Due to the location of the Project, during every rain event, these chemicals and others are extremely likely to enter San Diego Bay. These molecules then enter the food chains in the ocean, “and they’re in our system, they’re in our blood, they’re in our muscles.” This is a significant impact that should exclude this project from its current location.

Artificial turf is a poor fit for shoreline property where protecting water quality and marine habitat is a priority. Installation of artificial turf would substantially degrade water quality of San Diego Bay by contaminating it with PFAS (a class of forever chemicals that never break down), UV stabilizers, heavy metals, plasticizers, and microplastics. Synthetic turf fibers, made of polyethylene and polypropylene, continuously break off through UV exposure, weathering, and foot traffic, and studies of coastal areas elsewhere have found these fibers can make up over 15% of the plastic debris in nearshore waters. A 4.5-acre synthetic turf driving range would shed 700 to 10,500 pounds of plastic annually. There are no cost-effective methods to remove PFAS and other harmful chemicals from storm runoff or to capture microplastics and nanoplastics. Thus, Top Golf would permanently pollute San Diego Bay.

Because the bay is a marine and estuarine habitat, ingestion of these plastic fragments by filter feeders and other aquatic life is a particular concern, as researchers have documented that swallowed plastic fragments can block digestive tracts and reduce growth and reproduction in marine organisms. Artificial turf has the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, and reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal. The endangered East Pacific Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Southern California Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus*

mykiss), and Tidewater Goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*) are of special concern. The nearby Sweetwater Marsh, part of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge, provides habitat for multiple endangered or threatened species, including light-footed rail, the Belding's savannah sparrow and the California least tern, as well as endangered plants such as the salt marsh bird's beak.

Moreover, the DEIR suggests that Top Golf will be a heat island, impacting the facility and the surrounding area. The DEIR acknowledges that synthetic turf is hot. "Synthetic turf is one of the hottest possible surface materials, can be hotter than asphalt, and thus adds to the urban heat effect. This will only worsen with climate change. Research by the National Toxicology Program shows that high heat can cause chemicals to leach out of the crumb rubber base of synthetic turf, thereby exacerbating the chemical pollutant impact of artificial turf. These leached chemicals are known to cause cell death in humans." Heat will exacerbate all of the problematic issues with synthetic turf.

The DEIR also states: "Therefore, the DEIR must assess the impacts of the chemical and heat pollution caused by the completed project and identify mitigation measures to minimize these impacts." It is concerning that the DEIR did not analyze these impacts or assess the aforementioned risks prior to its release. It appears that the DEIR is incomplete and we have to await the results on toxic waste impacts. Thus, any approval of the DEIR would be premature and in violation of CEQA.

After an exhaustive search of both the Top Golf EIR and the appendices, there is no plan for the mitigation of toxic runoff from the artificial turf. The lack of toxic mitigation is true for routine runoff and for catastrophic runoff from inundation or an earthquake.

6. Top Golf is vulnerable to sea-level rise and tsunamis

Sierra Club opposes this location for a Top Golf project because it is vulnerable to flood from future sea-level rise and to tsunamis. Top Golf will be located on the shore of San Diego Bay and the DEIR reveals that Top Golf is just 13 feet above sea level obviously in an area that is vulnerable to tsunamis. The DEIR clearly states: "The site is mapped within a tsunami inundation hazard zone."

The Port Authority ECO policy 1.1.18 states "Coastal flooding adaptation strategies or other natural resource management practices shall be implemented to protect coastal habitats and ecosystem function under a range of future sea level rise and climate change scenarios." It appears that the Port Authority is ignoring its own coastal strategies by proposing a project adjacent to the shore of San Diego Bay.

The DEIR states that "the southern boundary of the Project area is within a mapped tsunami inundation area. During construction, if the site were hit by a tsunami, there would be risk for the release of pollutants from the EHI redevelopment area. Therefore, further discussion is warranted in the DEIR." The technical report for the DEIR checks the box that inundation due to Tsunami is a risk.

Some estimates predict that by the turn of century the Pacific Ocean could rise by more than 5 feet. Tides in San Diego Bay are often 8 feet and king tides are even higher. Combined with sea rise, king tides, and storm waves there is a potential for inundation of the Top Golf site. What would be the consequences of inundation for Top Golf? Not only would Top Golf be destroyed, but considerable toxic waste would be washed into the bay including substantial plastic pollution from the artificial turf as discussed above. While incremental microplastic pollution from Top Golf's artificial turf would occur continuously, inundation from sea rise, king tides, or a Tsunami would create a disastrous amount of toxic plastic pollution. If an entire artificial turf field were to wash into San Diego Bay, the environmental consequences could be severe due to the combination of plastic debris, toxic chemicals, and microplastics that would enter the bay and remain there. These particles are persistent in the environment, are ingested by marine life, and bioaccumulate in the food chain. Artificial

turf contains PFAS (forever chemicals) that do not degrade and can cause illness, cancer, developmental issues, and other chronic diseases. Once in the bay, they could persist for decades, degrading gradually, continuing to harm the ecosystem of San Diego Bay.

After an exhaustive search of the DEIR and the related appendices for Top Golf there is no mitigation measure for the toxins entering the bay from artificial turf. There is no mitigation plan for routine toxic runoff nor catastrophic toxic runoff from earthquakes or inundation.

7. Unstable Geology and Soils

In numerous sections the EIR reports that the proposed area under the proposed Top Golf facility is unstable, hydraulic, and susceptible to earthquakes, liquefaction, and subsidence. This is an additional reason that the proposed site is unsuitable for a Top Golf facility and that the Sierra Club recommends that such a facility be proposed for a more geologically stable inland area

The DEIR clearly states: “The site is located on land built up by hydraulic fills that are anticipated to be underlain by bay deposits (offshore marine deposits) and old paralic deposits based on soils adjacent to the Project area.” Elsewhere the DEIR reveals that: “The site is located on land built up by hydraulic fills,” and that: “The Project area is underlain by fill materials. These fill materials were generally sourced from dredging operations in the bay and placed at the site from the 1920s to 1960s as hydraulic fills.”

Sierra Club opposes the proposal to locate Top Golf for a location in close proximity to major earthquake fault lines. The DEIR clearly states: “The Rose Canyon Fault Zone, the nearest active fault system to the Project area, is located approximately a mile east of the Project area. The Spanish Bight fault, a strand of the Rose Canyon Fault Zone, runs north to south through the central portion of the Project area. Another strand of the Rose Canyon Fault Zone, East Bay fault strand, is located east of the Project area. The fault is capable of producing a maximum moment magnitude of 6.9.”

According to the DEIR: “Based on the presence of relatively loose fill material and bay deposits and shallow groundwater at the site, soils underlying the Project area could be susceptible to liquefaction and seismic settlement hazards. Liquefaction impacts would be potentially significant.”

According to the DEIR: “The Project area is mapped as Geologic Category 31, High Potential, under “Liquefaction.” The geology of Shoreline is unstable. The area along Harbor Drive adjacent to the site is a geologically active area with seismic hazards and active faults. In the event of an earthquake significant loss of life could occur and there is a need for medical first responders, police response, and evacuation plans.

Remarkably, the DEIR states: “The Project area would be susceptible to ground shaking produced by local faults during earthquakes. There is potential for ground surface rupture due to active faulting at the site due to the presence of splays of the Rose Canyon Fault Zone. Spanish Bight Fault Zone, a strand of the Rose Canyon Fault Zone, traverses the eastern portion of the Project area. The probability of ground rupture in the general Project area is considered high.” Clearly this is in violation of CEQA and raises the question as to why the Port Authority persisted in proposing Top Golf in this location when their own EIR calls the land “unstable” and “subject to liquefaction”

Moreover the DEIR suggests that the soil may not support the Top Golf facility under the best of circumstances. “According to the Geotechnical and Fault Hazard Report (Appendix G2), the fill, marine bay deposits, and old paralic deposits within the top approximately 50 feet of the Topgolf site within the Project area are considered to be compressible under the proposed Topgolf building and new fill loads and are susceptible to liquefaction. Therefore, soils within the upper 50 feet are unsuitable for support of structural or fill loads.”

In the DEIR, GEO 1 reports a partial mitigation: The DEIR states: “Recommendations provided in the Geotechnical and Fault Rupture Hazard Investigation, prepared by NOVA on October 1, 2024, for the Topgolf site within the Project area include earthwork, foundations, interior slabs-on-grade, hardscape, conventional retaining walls, pavement section, pipelines, working platforms, and corrosivity recommendations.” But nowhere in the DEIR nor the technical reports does it say that these mitigations would be sufficient to withstand the impacts of an earthquake.

Again, as we detailed above, an artificial turf field is guaranteed to emit toxic chemicals and microplastics under the best of conditions. These risks are compounded when artificial turf is installed in an area prone to subsidence, liquefaction, and seismic risks.

In conclusion, Sierra Club believes that Top Golf should be located inland in a more geologically stable area with less chance for subsidence and rupture. Moreover, a less crowded, inland location would greatly facilitate medical personnel and other first responders in reaching the site in the event of an emergency. Locating Top Golf next to downtown, the airport, and numerous hotels and tourist locations would not facilitate a rapid first response.

The DEIR is incomplete and not ready for approval. As the DEIR states: “Based on the geologic and geotechnical considerations at the project site presented in the previous sections, we recommend further geotechnical evaluation of the project site, including the performance of a subsurface evaluation and laboratory testing program. Specific recommendations to be addressed prior to issuance of grading and building permits.” Sierra Club recommends that a revised EIR include subsurface and geological evaluations and that they be reported fully and transparently.

8. Parkland/Wetlands

Instead of the Top Golf project, Sierra Club believes that the site should include expanded parkland and natural tideline habitat. Expanded parkland would be a great public asset, while natural tideline habitat would provide some mitigation for the huge losses of historical wetlands within the bay/public trust lands that have occurred over the years. The Top Golf proposal would offer only token parkland and access to the bay, as that is not the primary purpose of the project. We support the All Park Alternative or some similar proposal.

Sierra Club recommends adoption of a modified All Park Alternative. The DEIR states that “Similar to the Project, the All Park Alternative would be required to comply with the California Building Code to minimize potential safety risks caused by seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, for improvements associated with Liberator Way. However, no new structures would be constructed under the All Park Alternative.” Top Golf requires substantial development and use of synthetic turf making the project hazardous and precarious. An All Park Alternative without artificial turf would be much less environmentally destructive and much less vulnerable to the consequences of a tsunami, earthquake or liquefaction.

The All Park Alternative is comparatively advantageous in several respects: It has considerably less environmental risk, it turns the site into parkland for all visitors and residents rather than a costly, elite facility for golfers, it provides a great opportunity to restore wetlands in San Diego Bay, and it minimizes traffic and congestion. Finally, a park would have considerably less VMT and GHG. As the DEIR states: “Compared to the Project, the All Park Alternative would result in reduced construction and operational GHG emissions due to the reduction in development intensity.”

9. Top Golf Would Produce Unwelcome Noise

Topgolf is not a conventional office or retail use. Its noise would include repeated golf-ball impacts, amplified music, crowd noise, cheering, alcohol-related patron activity, mechanical equipment, parking-lot activity, vehicle doors, horns, loading activity and late-night arrivals and departures. The DEIR acknowledges that: “Hitting bays would include high-top and lounge seating with television screens and overhead speakers providing amplified music.”

The Draft EIR’s modeled operational noise levels reportedly reach approximately 65 dBA within about 250 feet of the facility, with levels remaining around 55 dBA or more within approximately 160 feet in some directions. Even where these levels do not exceed a numerical ordinance standard, the repetitive and explosive nature of ball strikes and crowd noise may be particularly disruptive. (Draft EIR, Noise section, approximately pp. 3.10-20–3.10-22.)

The analysis appears to emphasize average or hourly noise levels. Averaging can conceal short-duration but frequent maximum noise events, including golf-ball strikes, cheering, amplified music peaks and parking-lot noise.

Additionally, noise occurring at night has a different community effect than the same noise during daytime hours. The Draft EIR should identify the proposed closing time, last tee time, amplified-music schedule, outdoor event schedule, loading hours and parking-lot clearing time.

Top Golf is incompatible with the proposed parkland. The waterfront park and promenade are themselves places where visitors may seek outdoor recreation, conversation and enjoyment of the bay. The Draft EIR should treat users of these public spaces as affected receptors rather than assuming that only residences and conventional noise-sensitive buildings matter. Locating Top Golf next to parkland is fundamentally incompatible with the quiet character expected of parkland.

The Draft EIR identifies a significant cumulative traffic-noise impact on Harbor Island Drive, where noise is projected to increase from approximately 66.2 to 69.2 dBA CNEL. It dismisses Topgolf’s contribution as minor, but the project would still add traffic and noise to a roadway already experiencing a significant cumulative increase. (Draft EIR, Table 3.10-12 and pp. 3.10-25–3.10-26.)

The conclusion that operational noise requires no mitigation is not sufficiently conservative for a high-intensity entertainment facility operating near public waterfront spaces, hotels, marine uses, airport facilities and Harbor Police operations.

10. Bright Light Impacts

Bright lights would have significant impacts on the aesthetics of the Embarcadero, on birds and other wildlife, on human receptors and on motorists on Harbor Drive. According to the DEIR: “Two 50-foot by 30-foot LED high-definition digital screens would be mounted to the netting and poles at the far eastern end of the outfield facing back toward the building.” The DEIR also states that: “the glare is expected to exceed the threshold at Measurement Point 3 with a near direct view of the lighting, which would create a new source of glare that would impact nighttime views.” “The project would introduce sports lighting, large display screens, illuminated building façades, parking-lot lights, park and promenade lighting, and FAA-required red obstruction lights. These sources would operate in combination rather than independently. (Draft EIR, p. 3.1-23.)” In short, multiple sources of light would emanate concurrently from the Top Golf facility.

Aesthetics. Light from the Top Golf project would deleteriously affect the aesthetics of the downtown area. According to the DEIR, “The Topgolf entertainment complex’s proposed nighttime operation hours and lights could create a new source of substantial light or glare that would affect day and nighttime views in the area.

Birds and other wildlife could be affected by the bright lights emanating from the Top Golf facility. Light spill into San Diego Bay may affect aquatic organisms, fish behavior, and bird foraging. A revised EIR should explain whether those light thresholds protect all affected species and whether it accounts for spectral composition, duration and reflected light.

Humans would also be impacted by Top Golf's bright lights. The DEIR acknowledges that, from the Airport Terminal Road viewpoint, project lighting would be more intense than existing ambient nighttime lighting but dismisses the effect because the viewpoint is not designated as a scenic vista. That does not answer whether the new lighting would create substantial glare, distraction, sky glow or visual discomfort. (DEIR, approximately p. 3.1-18.) A revised EIR should document the effect of increased bright lights on people in the vicinity of Top Golf.

Top Golf would represent a hazard to motorists on Harbor Drive. According to the DEIR: "Therefore, implementation of the Project would have the potential to result in increased hazards due to a design feature from light spillage onto North Harbor Drive that would exceed the analysis threshold. Impacts would be potentially significant."

Any attempt to mitigate the bright lighting would be unsuccessful. The project's sports lighting would illuminate an open outfield next to San Diego Bay. Light reflected from turf, balls, netting, structural poles, façades and atmospheric moisture may produce effects that are not captured by modeling only direct fixture output.

Mitigation Measure AES-1 relies on a minimum nine-foot-tall berm or fence behind the outfield to reduce light spill, which appears to be inadequate. The Draft EIR should demonstrate, through revised photometric modeling, that such a comparatively low barrier would effectively screen elevated sports lights and light reflected from a large outfield.

The mitigation specifies numerical performance outcomes, but in a revised EIR the final lighting design must undergo independent nighttime field verification before operations begin. A revised analysis should also thoroughly address potential degraded fixture performance, fixture replacement, changes in aiming, additional advertising screens, temporary events and future modifications. A one-time review of construction drawings is insufficient to ensure long-term compliance. Light measurements based primarily on horizontal illuminance may not adequately evaluate vertical illuminance and glare experienced by pilots, motorists, birds and people looking in the direction of the facility. This analysis should be presented in a revised EIR.

A revised EIR should separately evaluate the combined effect of the Topgolf sports lights and FAA obstruction lights rather than treating the red aviation lights as visually acceptable simply because similar lights exist elsewhere.

11. Traffic Congestion

Sierra Club does not believe that locating a Top Golf recreational facility in a highly congested area of the city, near downtown and adjacent to the airport is a good idea. There is already major traffic congestion on all the arteries in and around the airport. This is the type of major environmental impact CEQA is designed to evaluate and avoid.

The Topgolf component is estimated to generate approximately 1,944 average daily vehicle trips before crediting existing uses. After subtracting approximately 1,473 existing rental-car trips, the EIR estimates a net increase of approximately 471 daily trips. This subtraction may understate the real-world change because rental-car trips and Topgolf patron trips may occur at different hours and have different circulation patterns. (Draft EIR, pp. 3.13-11–3.13-14.) Moreover the DEIR needs to analyze current rental car trips since almost all rental car activity has been transferred to the Transit Center on the northeast side of the airport. At San Diego

International Airport all airport rental car pickups and drop-offs occur at the airport's Rental Car Center, located at 3355 Admiral Boland Way. So the aforementioned math may be inaccurate.

The Draft EIR expressly acknowledges that Topgolf is intended to be a regional attraction and would produce a potentially significant increase in vehicle miles traveled. The proposed transportation-demand-management program is expected to reduce employee VMT but generally would not reduce patron VMT, which constitutes the central transportation impact of a regional entertainment use.

Despite the aforementioned shortcoming, the Draft EIR concludes that the project's VMT impact would remain significant and unavoidable after mitigation. This supports the conclusion that the project is fundamentally automobile-dependent. (Draft EIR, approximately pp. 3.13-14–3.13-21.) Top Golf should be required to mitigate ALL of the increased GHG that is a function of VMT (see section 13 of the letter). Maybe move 13 to last.

The DEIR's report of average daily trips does not show whether the project would cause congestion during airport departure and arrival peaks, Friday evenings, weekends, special events, holidays or periods when airport traffic is already unusually high. Topgolf locations frequently accommodate groups, corporate events and alcohol service. A revised EIR should evaluate concentrated arrivals and departures, rideshare pickup and drop-off activity, charter buses and late-night traffic rather than relying predominantly on daily averages.

A revised EIR analysis should examine queues at the project driveway, Harbor Island Drive, Liberator Way and North Harbor Drive and determine whether those queues could spill into through lanes or interfere with airport-bound traffic. A revised EIR should carefully study the cumulative impact of Top Golf and airport traffic and focus on peak impact at busy hours.

Topgolf traffic would overlay with airport passengers, rental-car customers, Harbor Island hotel guests, bicyclists, pedestrians, transit vehicles, taxis, rideshare vehicles and Harbor Police operations. All of these cumulative impacts should be assessed.

are cumulative impacts of traffic assessed in the EIR?

The project's additional traffic would also increase pedestrian and bicycle conflict points in an area the project proposes to make more walkable. These potential conflicts are not analyzed in the EIR.

The patron VMT cannot be meaningfully reduced through the proposed TDM program. Thus the Draft EIR should evaluate and support a reduced-intensity alternative or the All Park Alternative more thoroughly before concluding that Top Golf is the preferred alternative for this site.

The proposed Top Golf project includes 293 parking spaces. First the DEIR should acknowledge the increased traffic in the area as a result of Top Golf. Second the DEIR needs to analyze whether Top Golf would generate car trips that exceed the amount of available parking. If additional cars attempt to access the facility but no parking is available, they may circulate and create more traffic, which needs to be analyzed for traffic impacts. Finally, there is no mention of public transit to the Top Golf facility. The project should provide for public transit as part of the project to increase accessibility and decrease traffic.

12. Risks to Air Travel

Top Golf poses a risk to airplanes and potentially impedes air traffic. The project would include netting poles reaching approximately 170 feet, a large netting system, sports lights, electronic displays, reflective surfaces and required red obstruction lights near active airport operations. The FAA has given preliminary approval to the Top Golf project. The San Diego airport is surrounded by hills at higher elevations, elevated parking garages and downtown skyscrapers. Top Golf further boxes in the airport with 10- and 17-story net poles on the south and east of the runways. The DEIR recognizes the problem when it states: "the FAA has determined that four to

sixteen poles supporting the safety netting be topped with red lights due to the Project's proximity to the nearby airport (FAA 2024)." Though there is preliminary approval from the FAA, the need for warning lights atop the netting poles is implicit acknowledgment that airplanes will be near and that there is a risk to air travel.

FAA clearance of structure height does not necessarily resolve every CEQA concern involving glare, pilot distraction, lighting confusion, visual clutter, equipment failure, golf ball encounters, netting failure or emergency conditions.

The Draft EIR states that between four and 16 net poles may require red aviation lights. The range of proposed aviation lights indicates that the final aviation-lighting configuration may not yet be settled. A revised EIR should analyze the final design rather than defer important details until after approval.

The nighttime visual simulation from Airport Terminal Road reportedly does not depict the required red lights. Omitting a required project feature from the simulation understates the project's actual nighttime appearance. (Draft EIR, Aesthetics section, approximately pp. 3.1-15–3.1-18.). This would result in aesthetic impairment, as discussed in section 1, as well as potential visual confusion for incoming aircraft. The project would produce bright, concentrated nighttime lighting in an area where pilots are approaching or departing an airport. A revised EIR should directly evaluate whether sports lighting, screens, reflected glare or moving images could distract pilots or be confused with aviation signals.

Solar panels and large areas of glazing can generate glare at elevated observation angles. The statement that solar panels generally face upward and are unlikely to affect land uses "on the ground" does not adequately address pilots observing the site from above. These potential distractions to pilots need to be examined in a revised EIR.

Additionally a revised EIR should evaluate the consequences of netting damage, a fallen pole, loose material, bird entanglement, fire, high winds and emergency evacuation in proximity to airport operations.

The project may alter bird behavior by introducing extensive nighttime lighting, landscaping, food waste and a tall net structure. Any increase or redistribution of birds near aircraft flight paths warrants specific analysis.

The analysis should identify and disclose all conditions imposed by the FAA, Airport Land Use Commission, and the Airport Authority and incorporate those requirements directly into the project's monitoring program. Reliance on future compliance with aviation regulations is not a substitute for disclosing the environmental and safety consequences of the actual final design.

13. Air Quality and GHG

Top Golf would add emissions to an already impacted area with emissions from planes, cars, trains, and stationary pollution sources. The San Diego Air Basin remains challenged by substantial GHG, ozone, and particulate pollution. The Draft EIR should not rely solely on whether project emissions fall just below generalized screening thresholds without examining the project's contribution to existing regional nonattainment conditions.

The DEIR states: "The District adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2013. The CAP represents a roadmap by which the District can reduce its contributions of GHG emissions, including a targeted set of GHG emissions reduction policies and measures in support of the state's climate change efforts."

The project increases VMT and corresponding GHG. The technical appendices in the DEIR reveal that would be a significant and unavoidable increase in VMT not reduced by TDM. It states: "Therefore, the TDM measures are not anticipated to reduce the total VMT of the Proposed Project due to the unique characteristic of the project's land use as a regional entertainment center. Since the TDM measures would not reduce the Proposed Project's total VMT to less than significant levels, the impact would not be mitigated, and the

Proposed Project is considered to result in a significant and unavoidable impact. The DEIR also states that: “The VMT analysis for the Project determined that the Project would result in a net increase in VMT based on guidance provided by the Governor’s LCI Technical Advisory (Appendix O1). The Project would be inconsistent with this strategy.” Top Golf is inconsistent with the State’s, City’s or the Port’s climate action goals.

The DEIR acknowledges the importance of GHG reduction when it states that : “Reductions in GHG emissions, particularly from mobile sources, would have a co-benefit of reducing criteria air pollutant emissions.”

The DEIR states: “The Project would generate GHG emissions during construction and operation. An inventory of Project GHG emissions is provided below for informational purposes.” Additionally, the DEIR reveals that construction would produce over 5,000 metric tons of CO₂ per year. “Construction is estimated to result in maximum annual construction emissions of 5,311 MT CO₂e per year between 2025 and 2027.” The project would generate construction emissions from nearly one million gallons of diesel fuel, substantial gasoline use, heavy equipment, haul trucks, worker trips, and material deliveries. These need to be reported and plans for mitigation need to be developed.

Likewise, GHG would be generated during operation. Operational emissions would come from patron and employee vehicles, electricity consumption, natural-gas cooking, landscaping equipment, consumer products, deliveries, food service and waste generation. See EIR for how much. The DEIR reveals that Top Golf would be built in a VMT priority area. The DEIR admits that: “Threshold 2: Conflict with Applicable Plan, for the VMT priority area, the Project would be inconsistent with GHG reduction strategies outlined in Scoping Plan Appendix D. Impacts would therefore be potentially significant.” Moreover the DEIR states that the, “Implementation of the Project may generate GHG emissions such that there could be significant impacts on the environment. Impacts are potentially significant.” Find this again in the EIR

Mitigation would not help substantially. The DEIR states that “Mitigation Measure TRA-1, Transportation Demand Management Plan, is listed in Section 3.6.5.2. As discussed in Section 3.6.5.2, Mitigation Measure TRA-1 would reduce GHG related impacts, but not to a less than significant level. As such, impacts related to generation of GHG emissions would be significant and unavoidable.” The DEIR discusses measures to reduce employee VMT and GHG but not patrons. As stated in the technical appendices of the DEIR, “The VMT Assessment determined that although the Project would provide TDM measures, implementation of the TDM Program would only reduce VMT associated with Topgolf employees and not VMT associated with patrons, who also contribute to the total actual VMT of the Project. Additionally, there are no additional feasible mitigation measures to be implemented. Measures aimed primarily at employee commuting cannot cure emissions caused by thousands of patron trips.” Sierra Club opposes a project that produces GHG that is significant and unavoidable and suggests they must be mitigated to a net-zero level by Top Golf. Mitigation could occur through contributions to a public or private fund that reduces GHG in the Port or in the County. Such a mitigation fund should be proposed and established in a revised EIR.

Unfortunately, the DEIR reveals that the use of natural gas in the Top Golf project is planned with weak assurance of conversion. The DEIR states: “The Project area is currently served by natural gas, and it is anticipated that new commercial kitchen appliances may use natural gas. However, the Project is proposed to be operational prior to the 2029 commercial appliance target. As new technologies become available and local natural gas infrastructure is decommissioned, future replacement appliances would likely be electric appliances.” There is no reason to continue to use gas for cooking or to wait for 2029 for conversion to electric. The DEIR reports that Top Golf would be electric ready. “All-electric ready” is not equivalent to all-electric. Sierra Club strongly opposes the use of natural gas on the project site which is wholly inconsistent with GHG reductions. The Port of San Diego violates its own 2013 Climate Action Plan which states that, “Energy Conservation and Efficiency Employing energy strategies in buildings and exterior spaces that save money on utility costs, reduce GHG emissions and provide other community benefits.” Permitting gas in Top Golf

directly contradicts the Port's own CAP since it is not an efficient energy strategy and permits GHG to be emitted in a new building.

The DEIR provides no parking pricing or other demand management. The Sierra Club does not support free parking for golfers nor does it believe that the project's proximity to transit is of any benefit.

Many golfers want to use their own clubs and they are most likely to travel to Top Golf by car rather than transit. So transit is unlikely to reduce GHG if few patrons use it. Overall, the mitigation for Top Golf is mostly bogus and of little benefit. While we applaud the new EV infrastructure, it is not an inherent part of the project. We would applaud more EV infrastructure that could be constructed without Top Golf. Moreover, the unknown capacity of the proposed solar canopy means the DEIR cannot take meaningful credit for renewable generation. Similarly, the pedestrian walkways are not inherent to the project and could be built without Top Golf.

The bike and pedestrian lanes to Top Golf are largely window dressing and of no real benefit. Golfers do not walk or bicycle with their golf clubs to a driving range. Similarly, we know of no golfers that take buses or trolleys to golf. Moreover, the DEIR states that "However, these bus stops do not operate during the Topgolf visitor-serving attraction's anticipated peak operating hours and would not be able to service patrons during late nighttime hours. Additionally, transit stops are relatively spread out in the area and are not easily accessible from the Project area." The DEIR concludes that the project is inconsistent with the Port's and the City's public transit strategy.

The project would increase VMT and attract visitors from throughout the region. The DEIR's use of trip lengths drawn from other Topgolf facilities may not accurately represent the project's unique airport, waterfront, and tourism location. In a revised EIR a consulting firm should be hired to accurately assess the amount of VMT from patrons. The revised EIR should clearly disclose the amount of operational GHG emissions remaining after mitigation, the percentage reduction achieved, and the share attributable to patron vehicles.

This project increases GHG at a time when all levels of government are trying to reduce GHG. The Draft EIR identifies the project's greenhouse-gas impact as significant and unavoidable, even after proposed mitigation. This is a major impact, not a technicality.

The DEIR fails to include many sources of GHG. For example, the analysis in an EIR should include refrigerant leakage from commercial refrigeration and cooling systems, particularly because high-global-warming-potential refrigerants can be a material emissions source.

The EIR should analyze the project against California's 2045 carbon-neutrality objective and the Port's need to realign its climate targets with state law, rather than relying on older or less stringent climate benchmarks.

Because the project has significant VMT and GHG impacts, approval would require findings of overriding considerations. The availability of the All Park Alternative, which the EIR identifies as environmentally superior, weighs heavily against concluding that these impacts are unavoidable in any broader sense.

14. Biological and Wildlife Impacts

The proposed Topgolf facility would introduce a large, illuminated driving range, approximately 170-foot-tall poles, extensive mesh netting, increased nighttime activity, and shoreline development immediately adjacent to San Diego Bay. These features could affect nesting birds, migratory species, marine wildlife, intertidal organisms, and wildlife movement. Although the Draft EIR recognizes potentially significant impacts to special-status species and wildlife movement, its proposed mitigation does not fully address the risks created by the project's netting, lighting, operations, and shoreline activity.

Nesting Birds and Special-Status Species

The Draft EIR appropriately acknowledges the need to protect nesting birds through preconstruction surveys and avoidance buffers. However, the analysis focuses heavily on temporary construction impacts while giving insufficient attention to the long-term biological effects of operating the facility.

San Diego Bay supports a wide variety of resident and migratory birds, including pelicans, gulls, seabirds, shorebirds, raptors, and federally or state-protected species such as the California least tern. The bay also functions as an important coastal migration corridor and component of the Pacific Flyway.

The Draft EIR should provide a complete inventory of bird species that use the project area and surrounding bay, including threatened, endangered, sensitive, migratory, and common species. Common birds should not be excluded from the analysis simply because they lack special-status designation. Large numbers of injured or killed common birds could still represent a substantial ecological impact.

The Draft EIR should also clearly disclose the results of the project's Biological Technical Report and explain how the analysis addresses both upland and aquatic biological resources. General statements that future reports, permits, or monitoring will address impacts are not sufficient unless the requirements are specific, enforceable, and incorporated into the mitigation monitoring program.

The Topgolf netting system itself presents a serious collision and entanglement hazard. Driving ranges use large mesh nets to catch golf balls, but birds may not be able to detect the netting, particularly when flying at night, during fog, in poor weather, or while distracted by artificial lighting and tall local buildings.

Birds may become trapped after flying into the net, landing on it, or attempting to perch or roost nearby. Once entangled, birds may panic and become more tightly caught, resulting in broken wings, exhaustion, injury, or death. There have been documented incidents of birds becoming caught in netting at Topgolf and similar facilities. Reports from other Top Golf facilities document numerous, repeated bird entrapments and death include an osprey in South Carolina who was stuck upside down for 12 hours before dying. In some cases birds have been stuck for days with rescue efforts delayed. These risks should be treated as a foreseeable operational impact rather than a speculative concern.

The approximately 170-foot-tall poles and extensive netting would be located within an active bird migration and coastal foraging area. The structure could affect migratory birds, seabirds, shorebirds, pelicans, gulls, raptors, bats, and other flying wildlife.

The proposed use of bird diverters spaced approximately 15 to 30 feet apart should be supported by species-specific evidence. The Draft EIR should demonstrate that the selected devices, spacing, color, reflectivity, visibility, and placement would be effective for the range of species using San Diego Bay.

Markers such as FireFlies or BirdMark devices may deteriorate, detach, become dirty, or lose visibility over time. FireFlies is a system that uses motion, reflectivity, and visible light to deter bird impacts. If this system is employed a revised DEIR should demonstrate its effectiveness and FireFlies' impact on aesthetics and light pollution should also be assessed. BirdMark largely entails bird identification rather than entanglement prevention or rescue. Check if BirdMark and FireFlies is in the EIR. A revised EIR should provide detailed mitigation including mandatory inspection, maintenance, replacement, and effectiveness standards. Installation alone does not establish that the measure will successfully prevent collisions. Finally, an EIR should report if TopGolf activities would be temporarily suspended while rescuing trapped birds.

A revised EIR should investigate and report the combined effects of lighting, netting, fog and nearby tall structures on bird impacts and entanglement. The biological impact of the project cannot be evaluated by considering netting, lighting, weather and structural height separately. Artificial lighting may attract, confuse, or disorient birds and bats, increasing the likelihood that they will collide with netting or poles.

Lighting can alter migration, feeding, roosting, navigation, predator avoidance, and predator-prey relationships even when illumination remains below a generalized foot-candle threshold. A revised EIR should evaluate vertical light, reflected light, sky glow, fixture color, duration of illumination, and the effect of fog, marine layer, and cloud cover.

Foggy and overcast conditions are particularly important near San Diego Bay because artificial light can become amplified by moisture in the air and may cause birds to circle illuminated structures or lose their normal orientation. A revised EIR should evaluate collision risks during migration periods, poor weather, nighttime operations, and other conditions when wildlife may be especially vulnerable.

The cumulative effect of transparent netting, tall poles, sports lighting, electronic displays, and nighttime activity may be substantially greater than the effect of any individual project feature.

The increased project impacts would likely negatively affect wildlife. The project would substantially increase human activity, vehicle traffic, noise, food service, litter, landscaping, and nighttime use near the shoreline. These activities could disturb feeding, resting, nesting, and migrating wildlife.

Food waste, outdoor dining, and trash facilities may attract gulls and other birds. This could create additional biological impacts and increase aviation concerns because the project is located near San Diego International Airport flight paths.

A revised EIR should evaluate whether the proposed landscaping, food service areas, outdoor seating, and waste-management systems could increase bird concentrations. Wildlife-resistant trash containers, frequent waste collection, restrictions on outdoor food waste, and prohibitions on landscaping that attracts large concentrations of birds should be required.

Of particular concern is aquatic and intertidal wildlife.

The biological analysis should separately address aquatic and intertidal resources rather than treating shoreline habitat as a generalized category.

Intertidal wildlife may be affected by increased nighttime lighting, noise, shoreline activity, runoff, and human disturbance. Species living, feeding, and sheltering in the intertidal zone include shorebirds, fish, crabs, mollusks, worms, and other invertebrates. These organisms depend on natural tidal cycles, natural light conditions, water quality, and relatively undisturbed shoreline habitat.

Light spilling onto the water and shoreline could alter feeding, movement, reproduction, predator avoidance, and habitat use. Increased nighttime activity could also disturb birds using exposed mudflats, rocks, and shoreline areas during low tide.

The Draft EIR should evaluate intertidal habitat during both high- and low-tide conditions. Surveys conducted only during one tidal condition may fail to identify species or habitat use that occurs when shoreline areas are exposed.

Construction sediment, turbidity, runoff, litter, food waste, accidental spills, vessel activity, and shoreline disturbance could affect eelgrass, fish habitat, marine organisms, and intertidal species. Compliance with regulatory permits does not, by itself, demonstrate that these impacts would be less than significant.

Because many intertidal species are small, seasonal, buried in sediment, or difficult to observe, the absence of visible mortality should not be treated as proof that ecological impacts are nonsignificant.

The DEIR does not demonstrate that biological impacts can be reduced to less than significant. The Draft EIR concludes that biological impacts can be mitigated through a combination of construction buffers, bird diverters, lighting controls, and regulatory compliance. However, the evidence presented does not demonstrate that these measures would reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

The proposed mitigation relies on assumptions that birds will consistently detect and avoid the netting, that lighting controls will prevent disorientation, and that bird diverters will remain effective over the life of the project. The Draft EIR provides little site-specific evidence demonstrating that these measures have successfully prevented bird collisions and entanglement at comparable Topgolf facilities located adjacent to major coastal migration corridors.

Given the project's location immediately adjacent to San Diego Bay, within the Pacific Flyway and near important coastal habitat, the burden is on the applicant to demonstrate that the proposed mitigation will be effective for the full range of species using the area. General references to bird diverters or compliance with existing permit requirements do not constitute substantial evidence that significant impacts have been avoided.

The Draft EIR also fails to adequately evaluate reasonable project alternatives that could substantially reduce biological impacts, including a shorter netting system, a reduced-intensity facility, enclosed driving-range technologies, virtual golf, reduced nighttime operations, relocation farther from sensitive shoreline habitat, or the environmentally superior All Park Alternative identified in the Draft EIR.

Without substantial evidence demonstrating that the proposed mitigation will effectively avoid or substantially lessen impacts to migratory birds, seabirds, bats, intertidal wildlife, and other biological resources, the Draft EIR has not met its burden under CEQA to support a finding of less-than-significant biological impacts.

Finally, the cumulative biological impacts should be assessed in a revised EIR. The DEIR should evaluate the project in combination with airport activity, waterfront redevelopment, Harbor Island development, existing lighting, vessel traffic, and other foreseeable projects around San Diego Bay.

Cumulative lighting and development impacts may progressively reduce the availability and quality of dark, quiet, and undisturbed habitat. Even where individual projects affect relatively small areas, the combined loss of nighttime refuge, shoreline habitat, migratory pathways, and foraging areas may be significant.

The cumulative analysis should specifically address impacts on the Pacific Flyway, plus migratory shorebirds, seabirds, pelicans, California least terns, gulls, raptors, bats, fish, eelgrass, and intertidal wildlife.

The proposed Topgolf facility would occupy approximately 4.5 acres of prime coastal tidelands immediately adjacent to one of the least developed and least constrained shorelines remaining on Harbor Island. The installation of approximately 170-foot-tall support poles and expansive overhead netting would introduce a substantial new obstacle within an important movement corridor for birds traveling between the San Diego River, Famosa Slough, Mission Bay, Liberty Station Channel, and San Diego Bay. These wetlands and coastal habitats function as an interconnected ecological network, with many species moving between them daily to forage, roost, and breed. The DEIR does not adequately evaluate how the proposed netting structure could interrupt these established flight paths or affect birds migrating through the Pacific Flyway, one of North America's most important migratory bird corridors.

The height and scale of the proposed netting present a significant collision and Given the ecological importance of this shoreline and the presence of sensitive bird species, the Draft EIR has not demonstrated with substantial evidence that the proposed netting and lighting system can avoid or reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. The location, height, and operational characteristics of the project warrant a more rigorous evaluation of avian movement patterns and collision risks, particularly for migratory birds and protected species that depend on San Diego Bay and its connected coastal habitats.

15. Cumulative Impacts.

The Top Golf project must be considered together with airport expansion and modernization, Port Master Plan development, Harbor Island redevelopment, hotel and marina activity, roadway projects, waterfront visitation, and other reasonably foreseeable development.

The Draft EIR identifies cumulative projects in a general list, but each technical section should explain how those projects would interact with Topgolf's specific impacts.

Cumulative nighttime lighting around the airport and bay may increase sky glow, glare and wildlife disorientation even where each individual project claims compliance with a separate project-level threshold.

Cumulative traffic growth would increase congestion, air pollution, GHG emissions, pedestrian conflicts and emergency-response challenges along the constrained Harbor Island and North Harbor Drive circulation system.

The Draft EIR itself identifies a significant cumulative traffic-noise increase on Harbor Island Drive. Topgolf would add trips to that already worsening condition.

The project's VMT and GHG impacts remain significant and unavoidable. Those impacts must be understood as contributions to an existing regional climate crisis, not solely as isolated project emissions.

Multiple waterfront developments may progressively reduce dim, quiet, and relatively unobstructed areas used by birds and other wildlife. The cumulative effect may be substantial even where each project's individual footprint is characterized as disturbed.

Airport operations, Topgolf lighting and other waterfront lighting would create overlapping sources of visual clutter and illumination. A revised EIR should analyze their combined effect on pilots, motorists, wildlife and public enjoyment of the bay.

The cumulative analysis relies too heavily on the assumption that other projects will comply with existing regulations. Regulatory compliance does not necessarily prevent significant combined impacts.

The EIR should evaluate cumulative peak conditions rather than average conditions—for example, an airport holiday travel period occurring simultaneously with a Topgolf event and other Harbor Island activities.

The analysis should account for climate change, sea-level rise and extreme weather, which may compound evacuation, circulation, shoreline and habitat impacts over the project's operating life.

The Draft EIR identifies the All Park Alternative as environmentally superior because it would avoid or substantially reduce several of the project's significant impacts, including VMT and GHG emissions, lighting impacts, and threats to wildlife. That alternative demonstrates that the cumulative environmental burden is not unavoidable if the Port selects a lower-intensity use.

16. The All Park Alternative is superior

The No Project Alternative lacks credibility. The Draft EIR incorrectly states:

"Under the No Project/No Build Alternative, the existing 38-acre site would not be redeveloped. The three rental car facilities would continue to operate."

This statement is factually inaccurate. The airport's rental car agencies were relocated in 2016 to the Consolidated Rental Car Center on the east side of San Diego International Airport. The DEIR's reliance on a decade-old site condition raises serious questions about the accuracy of its baseline assumptions and the

reliability of the environmental analysis throughout the document. If the DEIR cannot accurately describe the site's existing conditions, it calls into question the validity of the rest of its conclusions.

The first meaningful alternative is the Visitor-Serving Alternative, which would eliminate the towering netting and poles associated with Topgolf. Instead, it would provide a 10.1-acre waterfront park, a public promenade, and expanded coastal access. The DEIR acknowledges that this alternative:

"...would meet most basic project objectives, is potentially feasible, and would reduce the following significant impacts identified for the Project: aesthetics (light and glare), greenhouse gas emissions, and transportation (VMT)."

This demonstrates that a viable, visitor-oriented project can achieve many of the City's objectives while substantially reducing environmental impacts and providing significantly greater public access to the waterfront.

The Reduced Topgolf Alternative makes only minor modifications by lowering the netting from 150 feet to 140 feet. According to the DEIR, this alternative:

"...would meet most of the basic project objectives, is potentially feasible, and would reduce the following potentially significant impacts identified for the Project: aesthetics (light and glare), greenhouse gas emissions, and transportation (VMT)."

While this alternative offers modest improvements, it retains the defining features of the project—including massive netting, intensive commercial recreation, and many of the associated environmental impacts.

The All Park Alternative provides by far the greatest environmental and public benefits. Rather than constructing a Topgolf facility, it would create an approximately 20-acre waterfront park—nearly doubling the park space proposed under the project—while still improving Liberator Way with a redesigned two-lane roadway and multimodal transportation enhancements.

The DEIR concludes that this alternative:

"...would eliminate the following significant impacts identified for the Project: aesthetics (lighting and glare), biological resources (wildlife movement), geology and soils (seismic hazards), greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, and transportation (VMT)."

Most importantly, the DEIR identifies the All Park Alternative as the Environmentally Superior Alternative, explaining that:

"The environmentally superior alternative is generally defined as the alternative that would result in the least adverse environmental impact on a project site and affected environment."

The DEIR further concludes:

"The All Park Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative because it would reduce the significant and unavoidable impacts identified for the Project related to Transportation (VMT) and greenhouse gases. The All Park Alternative would also reduce a majority of the potentially significant impacts with mitigation from the Project."

The only project objective it does not satisfy is the goal of constructing a golf entertainment facility.

This finding is significant. CEQA requires agencies to meaningfully consider feasible alternatives that would lessen environmental impacts while achieving most project objectives. Here, the DEIR itself acknowledges that the All Park Alternative accomplishes that goal. It would provide substantially more public open space, expand coastal access, eliminate many of the project's most significant environmental impacts, and still satisfy most of the project's stated objectives. The Port's own environmental analysis demonstrates

that a superior alternative exists—one that prioritizes public access, recreation, habitat protection, and environmental stewardship over an intensive commercial entertainment use.

17. The EIR is incomplete because Permits Are Still Needed

The Project would require a PMPA to change the land use designations from Industrial Business Park, Open Space, and Harbor Services to Commercial Recreation and Park/Plaza (Figure 2) to allow for overnight accommodation uses including hotels, restaurants, retail, entertainment attractions, a convention center, recreational vehicle parks, specialty shopping, pleasure craft marinas, water-dependent educational and recreational program facilities and activities, dock and dine facilities, and sportfishing, as well as an array of active and passive recreational uses, including a shoreline promenade,

Sincerely,

Peter Andersen

Vice-Chair, Conservation Committee

Sierra Club San Diego

Charles Rilli

Deputy Chapter Director

Sierra Club San Diego

From: [Bill Tippetts](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#)
Cc: [Pam Heatherington](#); [M. Dan McKirnan](#); [Janet Rogers](#); [Susan Simon](#); [Muriel Spooner](#); [Jim Peugh](#); [scott andrews](#); [Diane Coombs](#); [Lesley Nishihira](#); [Ali Martin](#); [Courtney Brown](#); [Patrick McDonough](#); [Charles Rilli](#); [Peter Andersen](#); [Andrew Meyer](#); [Lesley Handa](#); [Bill Tippetts](#); [Kim Tolles](#)
Subject: Comments on the East Harbor Island/Topgolf DEIR
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 12:07:24 PM
Attachments: [DEIR 2026 Comments Final-BT.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms. Hamilton,

On behalf of a coalition of organizations, I am submitting the attached letter, which provides comments regarding this project. We identify many flaws, omissions, and misrepresentations of the potential impacts by the project, the policies and regulations as well as methods/data used to evaluate those impacts, and absence of or inability of the project to identify and commit to measures that would avoid, minimize and mitigate many of those impacts.

We are available to meet with the Port District to discuss our comments.

Regards,

Bill Tippetts
619-822-4323

"I prefer peace. But if trouble must come, let it come in my time, so that my children can live in peace."
Thomas Paine



**Embarcadero
Coalition**

SDWC

Environmental Center of San Diego
2251 Erie Street
San Diego, CA 92110

24 August 2026

San Diego Unified Port District, Development Services Department
Attn: Megan Hamilton, Senior Planner
3165 Pacific Hwy
San Diego, CA 92101

(submitted 24 August 2026 via email to mhamilton@portofsandiego.org.)

Subject: DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT for the EAST HARBOR ISLAND REDEVELOPMENT/TOPGOLF AND WATERFRONT PARK PROJECT (UPD #EIR-2023-134; SCH #2023110463) and NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY/COMPLETION OF DRAFT PORT MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

Our organizations have extensive histories working on coastal issues, including participation in the review and processing of Port District of San Diego (Port District) planning documents and individual projects. When considering development proposals on public tidelands (and waters), the Port District must strike a reasonable balance between development and conservation of tideland habitats. The proposed project fails to do that. In addition, the DEIR fails to appropriately identify potentially significant impacts and propose effective mitigation measures.

We identify numerous sections in the DEIR with inadequate or missing impact assessments or inadequate or missing mitigation measures. We describe potential ways to address certain of those deficiencies but that does not suggest our endorsement of the proposed project; it only highlights problems with the DEIR. Our comments support similar and related concerns about the inadequacy of the DEIR and rejection of the proposed project in letters submitted by other environmental organizations, including the San Diego Bird Alliance, SD Coastkeeper, and SD Sierra Club.

We strongly recommend that the Port District reject the proposed project and select an alternative, such as the All Park Alternative or Other Visitor-Serving Commercial Use Alternative – each revised to include a commitment to add natural habitat – as the preferred project.

Comments on the Executive Summary

Page ES-1. The summary project description identifies a total of 22.4 acres that will be impacted by proposed development, but this description only lists the Topgolf entertainment center (9.8 acres) and park area (10.1 acres). This section must identify all of the uses on the project site and their acreages. Table 2-1 shows that Liberator Way will use 2.5 acres, so include that information in this description. The description of the park, even in the main body of the DEIR, is too vague for a project level EIR. It must describe its key features, such as how much and where will permanent infrastructure be located, the percentage of hardscape versus softscape, how will it accommodate sea level rise/storm surge, what will be the shoreline protection, etc. for infrastructure and other facilities? That level of detail should be provided, as it is for the Topgolf component of the project.

Also, the project description on Page 2-1 identifies the project area as the entire 38 acres, of which 22.4 acres are to be redeveloped, with the remaining 15.6 acres re-designated from Industrial to Commercial Recreation. The PMPU also shows that designation change, but the PMPU has not been fully approved by the Coastal Commission. DEIR Pages 1-5 and 1-6 describe that some of that information will be included in this DEIR. Because the PMPU has not been fully approved, this DEIR must include the analysis of that use redesignation, summarizing all of the relevant the PMPU CEQA analyses and findings, and incorporate the full analysis by reference.

Page ES-2. Objective 1. We disagree with the premise that a Topgolf facility qualifies as a visitor-serving commercial recreation use, which is intended to be a **use designed to enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation** (emphasis added) within the coastal zone. The Topgolf practice facility is not coastal recreation; the San Diego area has numerous existing golf facilities outside of the coastal zone, including a planned conversion of a driving range in Sorrento Valley to a Topgolf facility and a very similar multi-story hitting bay driving range in Murphy Canyon.

This description of the project states that parking spaces will be along the realigned Liberator Way, but there is no enumeration of how many parking spaces that would entail. Later in the DEIR, the document states that 180 parking spaces will be created along both sides of the entire roadway. The specific number of parking spaces must be stated in this objective.

Objective 3. We disagree with how this objective is framed because the action is essentially a mitigation measure for the project's induced additional traffic volume. The project does not "enhance traffic flow." Reconfiguring Liberator Way to "enhance traffic flow and improve non-automobile linkages through multi-modal improvements" presumably refers to diverting vehicles off North Harbor Drive and bicycles off the adjacent bike path on the south side of that road. However, Liberator Way is a side street that parallels North Harbor Drive and requires vehicle and bikes to turn off North Harbor Drive to access it, and then return to North Harbor Drive. While an improved Liberator Way would facilitate the additional vehicle traffic volume created by the project, it is unclear how it would enhance traffic flow that is not associated with the project. Currently, bicyclists use Liberator Way, and an improved street (depending on the induced vehicle traffic) may redirect some bicyclists off the Harbor Drive section of bike way that is adjacent to the project site. If the intention of this objective is to reduce impacts from additional vehicle traffic that the project would create, that is a mitigation issue that the project must address. And as described, it would not seem to substantially enhance non-project related traffic flow and improve non-automobile linkages.

Objective 4. The Port District's requirement that the project "Provide redevelopment that maximizes economic benefits with commercial uses to assist in funding the expansion and enhancement of public access and road improvements" places too much emphasis on revenue over all other purposes/uses of these tidelands. We acknowledge the Port District's independent fiscal and financial standing and the need to ensure that its development and use/activities leases do not compromise its fiscal solvency. However, we question the assumption that the Topgolf project will produce the financial/economic benefits that are expected. In a letter dated 27JUL2026 that was submitted to the Port District by many of us, substantial evidence is presented that raises concerns about the financial status of Topgolf and revenue benefits from a Topgolf facility. In light of that information, we believe that there are legitimate reasons to question if the Topgolf project can meet this objective and the Port District's long term revenue expectations.

Page ES-4: Other Visitor-Serving Commercial Use Alternative. This alternative would address and reduce to less than significant most of the impacts compared to the Topgolf project and Reduced Topgolf alternative. If the Port District would not approve the All Park alternative because it fails to meet Objective 4, then this alternative could be revised to be an acceptable project (specific recommendations are provided in our comments on the Alternatives later in this letter).

Page ES-5, Reduced Topgolf Alternative. This alternative, which would reduce the golf bays from 108 to 34 and limit the bays to one-level (presumably at or near ground level), would reduce light/glare, transportation/VMT, and GHG emissions effects compared to the proposed project. It would result in only a slight reduction in the maximum height of the poles and in the netting. It is not a significant change from the proposed project because the overall project footprint (22.4 acres, with 9.8 acres for Topgolf) and all of the potential uses remain. The relatively small reduction in use associated with a reduced Topgolf facility would require comparable infrastructure and would not produce significant reductions in project effects that we describe in our letter (e.g., visual/scenic resources, biological resources, and land use/conflicts with Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act). This is not an acceptable alternative because it is too similar in design, operations, and impacts to the proposed project.

Pages ES 5/6. All Park Alternative. This alternative would reduce most of the significant impacts associated with any redevelopment of the project site and is our preferred project. We concur that this is the Environmentally Superior Alternative— especially if it is modified to add a commitment to dedicate a significant portion to natural habitats. The DEIR rejects this alternative in the Alternatives section of the DEIR on the basis that it fails to meet Objective 4. However, based on the Port District's annual fiscal (revenue and expense) summaries for FY 24 (\$95 M net income) and FY 25 (\$71M net income), the Port District has substantial "excess" revenues that could be applied to make this alternative viable.

Page ES-7, et seq. (Table ES-1) Comments. Our comments on the table's text focus on issues that find to be inadequately addressed or mitigation measures that we believe are inadequate. We address these in greater detail in our comments on the main text of the DEIR.

Aesthetics

Threshold 1 (Scenic Vistas). We strongly disagree with the DEIR, which does not identify significant impacts (substantial adverse effects) to scenic vistas. The proposed project site is located at one of the most visible parts of San Diego Bay, from the I-5 to the Embarcadero to Pt. Loma/Cabrillo peninsula. A 140-170 foot tall set of poles and netting would be a significant degradation to the site's currently

open vistas during daytime. And night lighting of the 4.5 acre turf area and three-story building would extend the impacts to up to 1-2 AM. Those are significant impacts for which no or ineffective mitigation is proposed, which is a serious deficiency in the CEQA analysis. Also, the DEIR fails to include several critical viewpoints such as along North Harbor Drive/West Laurel Street and on the Sunroad Marina/restaurant peninsula.

2. Threshold 3 (Degradation of Existing Visual Character...). Related to the impacts to scenic vistas, we disagree with the DEIR, which does not identify substantial adverse effects to the site's visual character. Currently the site has no multistory structures, so anyone driving, walking, and cycling along the bay has relatively unobstructed views of the area and bay. While there is a masonry wall that obscures street-level views (and access) to the shoreline of East Harbor Island, that is a temporary restriction. The proposed project would permanently degrade the existing visual character of the site, for which no mitigation is proposed; again, that is a serious deficiency in the CEQA analysis.

3. Threshold 4 (Light and Glare). The DEIR identifies Potentially Significant (PS) impacts and proposes mitigation (AES-1): "Obstruction Barrier. Topgolf shall construct a minimum 9-foot-tall obstruction in the form of a berm or fence screening, measured from the ground level at 14 feet above mean sea level at the back of the outfield to reduce the light and glare from the Topgolf visitor serving attraction to below 0.93 fc and to reduce the light spill east of the Project site at the inlet near the Coast Guard to below 0.08 foot-candle. The berm or fence shall stretch the entire length of the outfield and shall be constructed behind the net poles." This mitigation measure may reduce light and glare to the immediately adjacent sensitive areas (e.g., the recreational public park and shoreline) from ground-level facilities, but not light and glare from the night lighting (FAA required) on the poles surrounding the 4.5 acre turf/hitting area or upper level golf bays and entertainment facilities. In addition, the DEIR fails to adequately analyze the project's impacts of the glare from 389 vehicle parking lot and 180 parking spaces along realigned Liberator Way (adjacent to the public park) and lighting beyond Measurement Point 3.

Biological Resources

Threshold 1 (Candidate, Sensitive, or Special-Status Species). To avoid impacts during the general avian breeding season (January 15-September 15), BIO 1.2.b limits construction to daylight hours and eliminates night lighting, which is reasonable and necessary. However, once operational, the proposed project would have night lighting every night: if eliminating night lighting during construction is the effective mitigation during the construction phase, then the same mitigation to avoid impacts should be imposed on the project's operations.

BIO-1.4. This mitigation measure is unclear. It should be revised for clarity (**this and subsequent recommended changes are in red highlight**). If the removal or demolition of structures or trees in the Project area (particularly any ornamental trees) is necessary, during the nesting season, **then a qualified biologist shall conduct clearance surveys prior to removal**. And consistent with BIO-1....removal of habitat that supports active nests in the Project area shall occur outside the general breeding season for these species (January 15 to September 15)..."). If wildlife species are encountered in any of the structures or trees **outside of the breeding season** during other biological surveys, the qualified biologist shall allow the species to disperse. If tree- and/or structure-roosting bats are suspected, structure

clearance surveys followed by slow removal by gently pushing the structure or tree over with heavy equipment; **if bats are known to occur, then removal would occur once the bats have left the structure or tree** to provide bats with further opportunity to disperse, shall be required.”

BIO-1.6. The wildlife agencies must be notified immediately if T&E species are impacted: **“6.iii. Any impacts to threatened and endangered species must be reported to the wildlife agencies and Port’s project manager immediately. Work will be halted until the project manager and wildlife agencies’ representatives agree on how/when to resume that work.”**

BIO-4.1.b. Netting that extends up to 170 feet above ground and surrounding (on three sides) a 4.5 acre turf hitting area poses a potentially substantial adverse effect (significant impact) to birds. The DEIR does not provide conclusive evidence to support the assumptions that adding FireFlys HWs or BirdMark BM-AG deterrents onto the netting would be eliminate/significantly reduce bird impacts given the extensive area of netting. Bright night lighting, combined with the massive amount of black netting, could significantly reduce the deterrents’ usefulness.

BIO-4.1.c. The proposed mitigation measures do not sufficiently address the open hitting bays and associated entertainment spaces which will be highly lighted throughout the three-stories.

BIO-4.2.e. This mitigation measure should add that **If bird strikes and nettings are continuing at the end of the initial three-year monitoring period, then additional monitoring and adaptive measures will be implemented until the wildlife agencies agree that impacts have been sufficiently minimized.**

Greenhouse Gasses (comments on transportation section)

Hydrology and Water Quality

We concur with the statement that impacts to hydrology and water quality, specifically Threshold 3 (e.g., provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; otherwise substantially degrade water quality) are Potentially Significant (PS) before mitigation. We do not agree that they would be effectively mitigated to Less Than Significant (LS) after applying the proposed mitigation measures. Our detailed comments are provided later in this letter regarding Pages 3.8-11/23 of the DEIR.

Land Use Planning

The table fails to identify potentially significant conflicts with the Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act. The CEQA Checklist (Appendix G) specifically includes text that requires these issues to be addressed: “Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?”

The DEIR fails to adequately address potentially serious conflicts with the Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act. Specifically, the proposed project would locate a golf practice facility, which can be located anywhere and has no coastal/tidelands relevance, on coastal public trust lands. Also, it fails adequately address the fundamental issue as to whether the proposed project should be permitted to proceed. We provide extensive documentation in the specific comments later in this letter.

Recreation

1. Threshold 2 (Construction or expansion of recreational facilities). CEQA Guidelines Appendix G Checklist for this issue focuses on whether the project would “have an adverse physical effect on the environment”. The DEIR incorrectly identifies the level of significance before mitigation as Less than Significant (LS), but for multiple reasons that we describe in our letter, we disagree that the potential impacts are LS. They are potentially significant (PS), and the DEIR must be revised to fully address and identify mitigation measures for those impacts.

Transportation

1. Threshold 2 (Induction of substantial vehicle miles traveled). TRA-1 (Transportation Demand Management Plan. T 2 (Increased job density). Though higher density may result in lower per capita VMT, much of the relevant studies focus on housing density and mixed use projects, not recreational development projects. Density alone doesn’t necessarily determine (e.g., reduce) project VMT. The DEIR must provide data and analyses for similar commercial recreation businesses within the Port District or nearby that demonstrate how higher employment densities are resulting in work site reductions in VMT.
2. T-7 (Implement commute trip reduction marketing). Hiring a TDM coordinator and proposing to develop TDM strategies with SANDAG would be essential, but do not constitute a quantitative, measurable mitigation measure.
3. T-10 (Provide end of trip bike facilities for employee use). What applicable/relevant evidence is presented by the project to validate the level of employee participation and resulting VMT reduction this measure is anticipated to produce?
4. T-18 (Provide pedestrian network improvement). How does improving a pedestrian walkway to North Harbor Drive produce any appreciable reduction in VMT? The project site is essentially adjacent to North Harbor Drive which has relatively little pedestrian use (exercising joggers and some tourists do use it), so improving the existing pedestrian access to the site seems unlikely to have any VMT reducing effect.
5. T-19A (Construct or improve bike facility). There is an existing bike path along North Harbor Drive and bikes (and pedestrians) currently use Liberator Way; it is unclear why improving/creating a waterfront promenade (additional bike and walking path) on the south side of a reconstructed Liberator Way would induce a mode shift (from vehicles to bikes).

Comments on DEIR Chapters 1-5

Pages 1-5 and 1-6. The text states that some of PMPU EIR analysis of the project area’s changed use designation will be included in this DEIR. Because the PMPU has not been fully approved, this DEIR must provide all of the relevant analyses of that use redesignation for the project-level approval action. Citing some of that analysis is not sufficient.

Page 2-3. As described in our preceding comments, we do not believe that the project would meet several of the Objectives and that Objective 3 appears to be a project mitigation for the presumed increase in vehicle use that the project will create. It is not an enhancement.

Pages 2-9/10. The project’s specifically precludes public access along the entire shoreline, and would place/replace revetments, groins, and other hardscape along the shoreline. The public has minimal access to the bay/intertidal shoreline throughout North and Central San Diego Bay, which this project could partially compensate. The peninsula that supports the marina and restaurants provides protection from the open bay to this part of the East Harbor Island shoreline (DEIR Figures 2-2 and 2-3), except at

the easternmost part of the project area. The project description mentions that nature-based solutions may be utilized, but apparently those too would preclude access to the shoreline and bay waters. [Page 2-10 states: “However, direct physical access to the water through step-down areas and non-motorized watercraft launch areas are not considered under this Project.”] This is a serious deficiency in the project, which could be redesigned to allow for much of the shoreline to be softscaped, sandy intertidal that would provide significant benefits to the public and bay wildlife. And while not part of this project, so would similar improvements along the shoreline of Convair Lagoon (Seaplane Cove) immediately east of the project area. Much of the shoreline appears to be protected from significant wave action and could be designed with sandy intertidal beach, similar to what exists nearby at Spanish Landing Park (see specific comments addressing this issue referenced to DEIR Page 3.3-23).

Page 2-13 (Section 2.7). This description of the PMPU’s status should add this statement from Page 3.13-6 of the DEIR: “...the PMPU is not formally certified by the California Coastal Commission and is, therefore, not yet the governing land use document of the District.”

Page 2-43. The landscape site plan identifies a landscape (planted) buffer with “vertical” evergreen trees to mitigate the fencing. A narrow (10-15 feet?) planted area with trees would be dwarfed by a 170 foot tall fence, which from near and far would be highly visible and out-of-scale with the character of the site. Including those features may partly reduce the visual and physical impacts from the fencing for visitors, but they would not effectively mitigate them.

Page 3-1. As we stated previously, the PMPU has not been approved by the Coastal Commission, which could require changes to the PMPU. Though we agree that the Final EIR for the PMPU provided a programmatic analysis of the changes that are proposed in this DEIR, merely incorporating the PMPU FEIR by reference is not sufficient. This project EIR must analyze the full project impacts at the project level, and we request that the DEIR’s environmental analysis explicitly compare the project-level and programmatic level analyses and explain any differences.

Page 3.1-1. Section 3.1.1.1. We agree that the visual character and quality of the project site are compromised by the remnant car rental facilities, older one-story buildings, car maintenance/parking lots and carports with chain link fencing, and poorly surfaced Liberator Way. Also, the Port District or its tenants have installed a 6-8 foot masonry wall with K-rail on the south side of Liberator Way that nearly totally hides expansive bay views from anyone traveling along the entire roadway. That wall appears to have only one function – to screen the current uses on the site from the marina and restaurants on the peninsula. A more accurate characterization is that this portion of the bay shoreline has low-rise, minimal development and a short wall that blocks views of the bay from a publicly accessible roadway. Both of those constraints could be easily enhanced by removing the old buildings and fencing and landscaping the site to convert the entire area to a public park with spectacular visual character and quality that also provides direct access to the bay.

Page 3.1-2. Section 3.1.1.2. The document cites two scenic vistas within the East Harbor area at the end of the marina peninsula and at the foot of the entry to Harbor Island Drive. The document fails to comment that, but for a masonry wall along the south side of Liberator Way, the entire southern side of the project site would provide expansive scenic vistas of the bay, downtown, and Embarcadero. The marina peninsula partially blocks views from the project site to the southwest toward the Point Loma Peninsula. Removing that masonry wall, which serves no obvious purpose other than to benefit the marina, would open those scenic vistas. The baseline condition should acknowledge that a scenic vista exists along the entire south and east sides of the project site, but for that wall.

Page 3.1-2. Section 3.1.1.4. We disagree with the statement that the overall light and glare baseline environmental condition can be classified as “Moderately High”. That conclusion conflicts with statements in the text that immediately precede it: “overall nighttime lighting environment is considered low to moderate because the area does not require substantial amounts of night lighting; the glare environment is considered low”. Misrepresenting the baseline light and glare condition creates a misleading existing condition when evaluating the impacts from the proposed project.

Pages 3.1-10, et seq (Views/Light and Glare). As the introduction to the analysis of project impacts to these resources states: “Aesthetic experiences can be highly subjective and vary from person to person...”. We agree, which places significant onus on the project to identify and analyze the most appropriate means and locations to represent viewers who could be affected by the project. We do not agree with the “proposed condition” daytime renderings, which appear to use a light colored netting, not the black netting as specified in the project description. How did the Port and project determine that the nighttime baseline photographic renderings accurately portray current light conditions? The renderings do not appear to show the FAA-required lighting on the netting poles or the two 50’ x 30’ lighted screens that would be attached to the back of the netting. It is difficult to determine if the Topgolf building and its lighting are adequately depicted. The renderings appear to under represent the project’s overall visual and lighting effects.

The analysis presents five key viewpoints, several of which are questionably useful.

Viewpoint 1 (East Shelter Island) is about two miles distance from the project site. That said, the renderings illustrate that the project would be easily visible from that vantage and that it would add cumulatively to the visual impacts from tall infrastructures along the bay.

Viewpoint 2 (Harbor Drive at Harbor Island Drive) is a very busy intersection that has its view of the project site partly hidden by the road overpass. Despite that partial obstruction, the netting and night lighting would be an obvious, significant visual impact to anyone stopped at the intersection.

A more relevant “key viewpoint” is near the intersection of Harbor Drive and West Laurel Street, looking west toward the project site [Photos attached]. This area, especially for west and northbound drivers, and all the viewers who walk and bike along the bike way/promenade, have clear line-of-sight to the project area. And presumably the third floor (at a minimum) would add to the nighttime visual impacts. Everyone driving, cycling, or walking along Harbor Drive from that intersection to the project site will see a 170 foot tall structure that significantly impacts their currently minimally obstructed views of/around the bay. This viewpoint should have been included; we request that it be added to the viewpoint analysis.

Additional Key Viewpoints that should be included in the analysis are at the promenade/walkways at the end of the Sunroad Marina (Costerra Restaurant) and at the Sunroad Marina [Photos attached]; both looking north across the inlet to the project site. These are highly visited areas with direct views to the project site.

Viewpoint 3 (Embarcadero/Maritime Museum) is relevant to the visual analysis, and the renderings clearly depict a highly visible project. In the nighttime rendering, what are the facilities with the bright lights to the right (east) of the project site and when are their lights on? Does this represent the normal nighttime lighting; how representative of the existing nighttime condition is the photographic rendering?

Viewpoint 4 (Coronado Bayview Park) is fairly distant (about two miles) from the project area, but it is relevant to the visual analysis. The renderings clearly depict a highly visible project. The nighttime rendering does not show the bright lights to the right (east) of the project that appear in the Viewpoint 3 nighttime rendering. Why is there such a difference in night lighting for that area to the east of the project site in Viewpoints 3 and 4?

Viewpoint 5 (Airport Terminal Exit Ramp) clearly depicts a highly visible project with significant impacts to the viewshed, in both the daytime and nighttime renderings.

The DEIR fails to include at least three Key Viewpoints (described above) that provide much more relevant perspectives of the potential visual/scenic impacts. Absent these viewpoints, the DEIR misrepresents and underestimates those impacts, which is a serious flaw in the analysis.

Page 3.1-19. For the reasons stated above, we disagree that the approach and selected viewpoints are adequate to analyze visual impacts, which are significant for most of the viewpoints. We disagree with the statements that “...the Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas. Impacts would be less than significant.” and with the conclusion that “No mitigation measures are required.” The 170 foot tall netting of a 4.5 acre area would have significant impacts to scenic vistas and the DEIR must present mitigation measures that would reduce the impacts to less than significant.

Pages 3.1-20 to 23. We disagree with the statement (Page 3.1-21) “...redevelopment of the Project area would enhance the visual character and quality of the area consistent with the PMPU bay wide development standards...” and the descriptions of how the development would not have significant impacts compared to the current condition. Erecting a nine foot barrier to enclose the backfield of the 4.5 acre driving range, combined with the 170 foot netting structure within 50 feet of the proposed park area, would seriously degrade the visual character and quality of the area, regardless of the building height allowed under the PMPU – which has not been approved by the Coastal Commission. The development would create a de facto massive walled-off infrastructure that conflicts with and has no relevance to the bay shoreline character and visual quality. It also conflicts with PMP Goal VIII (The port district will enhance and maintain the bay and tidelands as an attractive physical and biological entity.): “Views should be enhanced through view corridors, the preservation of panoramas, accentuation of vistas, and shielding of the incongruous and inconsistent.”

Pages 3.1-24 to 29. Direct beam illumination is significant for Measurement Point 3 (Table 3.1-3) and for light spill at the Coast Guard inlet (bay water). MP 3 is very close to the outside perimeter of the driving range, but it does not appear to represent the lighting/glare impacts along North Harbor Drive and toward the Embarcadero. By limiting the distance of MP3 from the project to just beyond the barrier/berm, it appears to minimize the effects/impacts to the larger “glare-shed” further east. The project must re-analyze light glare for the potential impacts further east of MP 3 for impacts to the North Harbor Drive/Embarcadero areas.

Also, the DEIR does not analyze the potential illumination/glare impacts from the proposed 289 vehicle parking lot or from parking along Liberator Way, the 180 vehicle parking spaces along both sides of the renovated Liberator Way, and any onsite parking within the proposed park. Overall, it appears that the number of vehicles associated with the project will be greater and could have a significant impact compared to the existing conditions.

Pages 3.1-29 to 31. As we have described above, we disagree with the DEIR’s analyses and conclusions about the significance of impacts and proposed effectiveness of the proposed mitigations.

The proposed project's impacts are also cumulatively considerable for Thresholds 1 (scenic vistas), 3 (visual character), and 4 (light and glare).

Page 3.3-9: The San Diego Bay shoreline, which is primarily concrete and rip rap lined in the southern portion of the (project) survey area, does not provide suitable nesting habitat for shorebirds due to the lack of undisturbed, long, sandy stretches of beach without vegetation. We agree with this statement regarding the lack of wildlife supporting habitats along much of northern San Diego Bay. The lack of foraging and resting (and nesting) habitat throughout the north bay is a compelling reason to require that this site's redevelopment must include a commitment to implement nature-based, living shoreline features that would allow for sandy intertidal habitat suitable to function as foraging/loafing, possibly nesting, areas for birds. For example, a sub tidal barrier like the one that protects the Sunroad Marina shoreline could be installed along with artificial reefs to hold sand and protect the shoreline from most wave and storm surge damage [Photo attached].

Page 3.3-12: The section on wildlife corridors/flyways is an inadequate evaluation of potential adverse effects on avian daily and seasonal flyway use. Several bird species (*Sterna spp*) identified as 2024 USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern, including the endangered California Least Tern *Sternula antillarum browni*, the IUCN Red list Near-threatened Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans*, California Species of Special Concern Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger*, and California Bird Species of Special Concern and Special Animal list for the State of California, Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica vanrossemi* (breeds in only two places in the US, the Salton Sea and San Diego National Wildlife Refuge), forage in the bay and nearshore waters. The San Diego Bird Alliance letter describes in detail sensitive birds that are present near the project site, their movement/flight activities, and potential impacts from the proposed project's netting and lighting.

Page 3.3-23: The proposed project makes no commitments to implement nor prioritizes any of the following actions that would result from implementing the following policies from the PMPU. As we have stated, we disagree with the proposed Topgolf project, and the "park" component fails to incorporate functional in-ground enhancements that these policies clearly identify as priorities. For example, DEIR Page 2-9 states that "...direct physical access to the water through step-down areas and non-motorized watercraft launch areas are not considered under this Project." This position is not justified or supported in the DEIR, and it conflicts with the actual suitability of the site; the DEIR states (Page 2-2): "Topographically, the Project area is relatively level with a gentle gradient down to San Diego Bay." In combination with shoreline protection from waves that is provided by the marina peninsula that protects this site from the open bay, the project could/should incorporate reasonable and feasible shoreline improvements that would allow direct shoreline/water access and benefit wildlife as called for in ECO Policies 1.1.17-23.

ECO Policy 1.1.17: The District shall prioritize the use of nature-based solutions composed of natural or sustainable materials that increase shoreline biodiversity and coastal resiliency, including but not limited to living shorelines and wetland and coastal habitat restoration, where feasible and applicable.

ECO Policy 1.1.18: Coastal flooding adaptation strategies or other natural resource management practices shall be implemented to protect coastal habitats and ecosystem function under a range of future sea level rise and climate change scenarios.

ECO Policy 1.1.19: Support creative and innovative solutions to improve the resiliency of the Bay's marine ecosystems and the biodiversity within Tidelands.

ECO Policy 1.1.21: The District shall maximize habitat connectivity and continuity for intertidal and subtidal habitats within the Bay particularly for those areas that provide habitat and nursery areas for estuarine and marine species.

ECO Policy 1.1.22: The District shall strive to conserve and enhance intertidal and subtidal habitat in an effort to reduce fragmentation, improve habitat functionality and create a connected network of intertidal and subtidal habitat throughout tidelands.

ECO Policy 1.1.23: The District shall pursue opportunities to create, preserve, enhance or restore intertidal and subtidal habitats in areas that have historically been impacted by development.

Page 3.3-27. Threshold 4: Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites. Bird populations have declined by 30% in North America since the 1970s. Worldwide and locally, past impacts from developments, accelerated by climate change and increased recreational uses, have reduced wetland habitats. San Diego County supports one of the highest number of bird species among all counties in the United States. This is a poor location for Topgolf because the Point Loma/Mission Bay/ San Diego Bay area is a heavily used thoroughfare year-round for resident and migratory birds. Many birds use the coastline to navigate for migration and wetland birds use multiple local wetlands with birds traversing back and forth from areas in Mission Bay to San Diego Bay (e.g., Comment regarding DEIR Page 3.3-12).

Pages 3.3-35/36 state that light spillage onto nearby marine waters will be mitigated, but concludes that lighting related indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife species during construction activities and operation of the Project would be potentially significant. We concur and the impacts would be Significant and Unmitigatable.

Pages 3.3-48 et seq. (Wildlife and the Building, Netting, and Lighting): We agree with the conclusion in the DEIR (Page 3.3-61): Significant indirect impacts to wildlife movement corridors and habitat linkages, specifically migratory birds, could result during Project implementation from increased lighting and bird strikes on the new buildings and the barrier netting system.

However, we disagree that “Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-4, described in Section 3.3.5.1, would reduce potential direct impacts to migratory birds through incorporating wildlife-safe building features, installing net marking devices to increase the visibility of the barrier netting system, and incorporating lighting features with the lowest possible color temperature and directed downward and shielded away from the waterfront into the Project design and developing and implementing a performance monitoring and adaptive management plan, including a bird entanglement response procedure. The DEIR does not provide sufficient evidence that implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-4 would mitigate potential direct impacts to wildlife movement corridors and habitat linkages, specifically migratory birds, to below a level of significance.

Pages 3.8-11 (Section 3.8.4 Hydrology and Water Quality): Threshold 3: Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would: ...Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems **or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff** (emphasis added).

The EIR does not identify and discuss in sufficient detail the potential for plastics and other project pollutants entering the bay, particularly from the netting and artificial turf. All plastics degrade and the netting and turf will be exposed 24/7 to full sunlight, wind, and rain. The proposed monitoring and mitigation (BMP) measures do not address these pollution sources (airborne micro plastics and possibly micro/nano plastics and soluble chemicals that leach into project runoff), which may have significant adverse effects on adjacent bay waters. The DEIR must evaluate this source of potential

water pollution and provide documentation that the proposed BMPs would effectively mitigate its potential impacts.

The following studies on airborne micro/nano plastics document the seriousness of these as a significant source of global pollution:

(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S001282521930621X>;
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405665024000738>; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36356750/>)

Current BMPs can capture and retain a substantial fraction of microplastics from buildings, parking lots, and landscape runoff. However, they are not very effective in capturing/retaining nano (plastic) particles and PFAS/other soluble chemicals (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41108971/>). The addition of nano plastic particles and soluble chemicals from the project's runoff would add to the existing pollutant burden in San Diego Bay. The receiving water, which is a nearly half-mile dead-end embayment created by the Harbor Island peninsula/breakwater where hundreds of boats moor at the Sunroad Marina, would amplify the effects from additional pollutants. Embayments like this one have less tidal flushing than open bay waters. The additional pollutants can negatively affect humans and marine and estuarine species because lower trophic level filter feeders bioconcentrate pollutants and may be consumed by humans (i.e., oysters, mussels) and comprise an important food base for many bay species including sensitive and endangered species (e.g., <https://www.earth.com/news/filter-feeders-transform-microplastics-into-a-bigger-threat/>; <https://www.explorationpub.com/Journals/eff/Article/101062>). For these reasons, we believe that the project poses risks to marine organisms and humans from significant, unmitigatable impacts to water quality.

Page 3.8-23 (Cumulative Impacts, Threshold 3): Based on the above information, and absent more details on the proposed project's BMPs, we believe the project's impacts to water quality would be cumulatively considerable.

Page 3.9-1, et seq. (Land Use) As many of our groups have stated in prior communications to the Port District, we have numerous issues, concerns, and recommendations regarding the project's conflicts with the Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act.

The DEIR includes these statements: Page 3.9-3 (Public Trust Doctrine) "The Public Trust Doctrine is an evolving doctrine, but generally limits the uses of sovereign lands to waterborne commerce, navigation, fisheries, open space, water-oriented recreation, ecological habitat protection, or other recognized Public Trust purposes." and "Trust lands may be devoted to purposes unrelated to the trust if such purposes are **incidental to and accommodate** trust uses." (emphasis added) and Page 3.9-4 "In administering the trust, the District is not burdened with an outmoded classification favoring one mode of utilization over another".

We completely disagree with the Port District's position that the Topgolf facility, which is the primary driver of the commercial recreation element and funding mechanism for the redevelopment and park element, "qualifies" as incidental to and accommodating trust uses. Because it does not meet that basic test, the project would have a significant and unmitigatable impact on public trust tidelands.

While the Port District may not be "burdened with outmoded classification favoring one mode of utilization over another", the Port District has a long history of favoring development of waterborne commerce, hotels, and commercial recreation over open space and ecological habitat protection. The

most recent examples are the completed Gaylord Pacific project, in-process Seaport Village (1HWY1) project, and this project - none of which include or propose any significant new habitat.

Regarding whether the proposed project conforms to the intent of the Coastal Act, we cite excerpts from a Coastal Commission document on its website

(<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/coastalvoices/IntroductionToCoastalAct.pdf>)

“The Coastal Act begins with a section (30001) on the importance of the California coast and its ecological balance: The Legislature hereby finds and declares: (a) That the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people and exists as a delicately balanced ecosystem. (b) That the permanent protection of the state’s natural and scenic resources is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation. (c) That to promote the public safety, health, and welfare, and to protect public and private property, wildlife, marine fisheries, and other ocean resources, and the natural environment, it is necessary to protect the ecological balance of the coastal zone and prevent its deterioration and destruction. (d) That existing developed uses, and future developments that are carefully planned and developed consistent with the policies of this division, are essential to the economic and social well-being of the people of this state and especially to working persons employed within the coastal zone.”

“The Coastal Act prioritizes the public’s right to access the shoreline (30210 to 30214): “[M]aximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse. Coastal development should not impede existing rights of access: Development shall not interfere with the public’s right of access to the sea where acquired through use or legislative authorization...”

Topgolf fails to meet a fundamental test for visitor-serving commercial recreation use, which is intended to be a **use designed to enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation** (emphasis added) within the coastal zone. “The Coastal Act (Section 30221) calls for lower cost visitor and recreational facilities, addressing the concern that coastal recreational opportunities be available to all Californians regardless of income level. In addition, “Developments providing public recreational opportunities are preferred.” Topgolf, while open to the paying public (and it is not inexpensive), is not a public recreational opportunity; it is a private commercial recreational business that caters to a limited subset of the public.

Also: “Oceanfront land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development **unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreational activities that could be accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area**” (emphasis added). We agree that oceanfront land suitable for recreational use must be protected for those uses/activities, and support the Port District’s reclassification of this part of tidelands from industrial to commercial (and public) recreation. However, that does NOT justify locating Topgolf at the site; as we describe throughout our letter, the project conflicts with fundamental elements of the Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act requirements. Plus, many Topgolf facilities are located outside coastal lands – a coastal location is not an essential component of Topgolf facilities.

Coastal Act Protection of Public Access (Section 30211): “Development shall not interfere with the public’s right of access to the sea where acquired through use or legislative authorization, including, but not limited to, the use of dry sand and rocky coastal beaches to the first line of terrestrial vegetation.” The proposed project specifically states that will not provide direct access to the shoreline/bay water

because of shoreline protections. It does not attempt to identify opportunities to restore the shoreline in ways to allow direct access, which we know the Port has allowed and maintains at the nearby Spanish Landing Park sandy beach.

Page 3.9-12 et seq. More specifically, the DEIR analysis fails to appropriately evaluate Threshold 2: “The impact analysis under Threshold 2 discusses any environmental impacts caused by the Project due to conflicts with any land use plans, policies, and regulations that apply to the District and were adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental impact. The Project would not be considered to conflict with the provisions of the identified regional and local plans if it meets the general intent of the applicable plans.” The proposed project, specifically the Topgolf component, poses significant conflicts with the Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act. As described in the preceding excerpts from the Public Trust and Coastal Act and our comments, Topgolf fails to meet the requisite features to qualify as an allowable (land) use on coastal tidelands. This is a substantial adverse effect with significant and unmitigatable impacts.

The DEIR allocates a large amount of text and tables that detail “consistency justifications” with the Port Master Plan (Table 3.9-2) and PMPU (Table 3.9-3) and Coastal Act (Table 3.9-4). As we described above, we strongly disagree that the proposed project is consistent with fundamental policies embedded in the Public Trust Doctrine (Pages 3.9-68 and 69) and policies and regulations in the Coastal Act.

Page 3.9-73/74. We disagree that the project would be consistent with the INRMP because there is no affirmative commitment to implement nature-based solutions including but not limited to living shorelines, sandy intertidal buffer and other elements that would meet a key INRMP biological principle cited by the DEIR: “Maintain and improve the sustainability and native biodiversity of ecosystems”.

Pages 3.9-75/76. We disagree that the project would be consistent with the CA Coastal Conservancy’s Sea Level Rise document (Table 3.9-5), particularly in regard to the objectives: “Identify project alternatives to both avoid resource impacts and minimize risks to the project.” and “Adaptation strategies should prioritize protection of coastal habitats and public access.” The project contemplates a park that will be inundated periodically by sea level rise/storm surge, but it does not provide any assessment of the levels/duration of impact or what park facilities (and Liberator Way?) would be impacted. The DEIR analysis and conclusions (no significant impacts) are flawed because there is no adequate description of the park and facilities, the potential impacts/damage, and any commitment to implement nature-based solutions that effectively accommodate those impacts.

Page 3.9-78/79. For the reasons we have described regarding obvious conflicts with the Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act, as well as flawed analyses regarding potential impacts, we disagree with the conclusion that there would be no Cumulative Impacts to Land Use and Planning.

Page 565 et seq. (Recreation). Page 3.12-5. The term “Coastal-enhancing” was created by the Port; it is not a term in the Coastal Act (<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/coastact.pdf>), which only has definitions for Coastal-dependent (Section 30101) and Coastal-related (Section 30101.3) actions. Though the Port has applied the term “coastal-enhancing” in previous projects, it does not appear to be appropriate for this project. Topgolf does not have any inherent “coastal-enhancing” value, it does not meet the basic test for commercial recreation that it would “enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation” (Topgolf can be located – and many of its facilities are – outside the coastal zone), nor does it “qualify” for an acceptable non-trust use on trust lands, which must be **incidental to and** accommodating trust uses. Topgolf is the primary use, so it cannot be incidental to and accommodating other legitimate trust uses).

Page 3.12-5. WLU Objective 3.1: “Protect and provide physical access to the water and the public realm.” This objective is specifically precluded by text on DEIR Page 2-10 that states that the project will not provide direct physical access to the water (“However, direct physical access to the water through step-down areas and non-motorized watercraft launch areas are not considered under this Project.”). Creating a shoreline that prioritizes natural solutions/living shorelines could allow access to the water/intertidal area, reduce future storm/flooding effects, as well as create habitat for wildlife. All of which benefit the public realm.

Page 3.12-7. WLU Policy 4.1.4: “Public accessways and recreation facilities provided as part of development shall be maintained for public use over the anticipated life of the development with which they are associated.” The DEIR does not provide sufficient details about the park infrastructure and layout to determine how often it would be affected by storm surge and flooding, exacerbated by sea level rise.

Page 3.12-8/9. WLU Policy 6.1.2: “Recreation Open Space areas shall support programming and a variety of recreational activities, with a wide range of affordability and price points to ensure all visitors are able and encouraged to experience the waterfront.” The project does not clearly demonstrate how it meets this objective. As noted in the July 27, 2026 Topgolf Financial Review letter provided to the Port District, Topgolf is not an inexpensive activity. And though the project states that some discounted opportunities would be provided, on the whole it is not going to offer a wide range of affordability and price points. The public park component would likely meet that test.

Page 3.12-11/13. Section 3.12.4: Threshold 2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. As we have described in previous comments, the project will have significant, unmitigatable effects on the environment. The project’s primary recreational feature – the Topgolf building and driving range – will have visual and scenic view impacts, light/glare impacts, biological impacts, water quality, and GHG/transportation impacts that we believe cannot be effectively mitigated. We disagree with the conclusions (Page 3.12-13) that these impacts are not significant and would not require mitigation.

Page 3.13-4. Is the DEIR analysis presuming that the EHITopgolf/Waterfront Park project meets the SB 743 criterion “Under the VMT standard, projects within 0.25 mile of either an existing major transit stop or a stop along an existing high-quality transit corridor should generally be presumed to cause a less than significant transportation impact”? As the DEIR states, only two public transit routes run along North Harbor Drive (MTS Route 922 – Airport/Downtown Shuttle and MTS Bus Route 923 – Ocean Beach–Downtown). The former is essentially an airport shuttle and the latter doesn’t operate on weekends. Neither appears to provide the service levels that are presumed under SB 743 to meet the standard of an “existing high-quality transit corridor.”

Pages 3.13-7/9. Several Mobility objectives include statements such as: “Specific transit improvements included in this Plan are outlined in Chapter 5, Planning Districts (of the PMPU/ EIR), including any planned improvements within the applicable planning district or subdistrict.” “...coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to ...explore and expand public transit points and provide a range of affordable transit options for people..” Planned improvements by the Port and possible coordination with other jurisdictions to improve transit/parking and mitigate project impacts cannot be evaluated as project implementation actions unless they are incorporated as specific, implementable and funded elements of this project.

Page 3.13-16/22. The PMPU EIR, Volume II, Table 3-4 (VMT Planning District 2) shows VMT growth for new retail, restaurant, boating build out of +25,497; but this DEIR calculates new VMT growth for the park and retail/restaurant of +31,318. In both documents, the potential impacts are deemed significant. Both documents rely on Transportation Demand Measures (TDM) to mitigate (reduce) VMT, for which there is little actual documentation/evidence to validate the calculated VMT reductions. That said, we fully agree that the impacts would remain significant and unavoidable (unmitigatable) after applying the measures. For the same reasons, we also agree with the DEIR's conclusion that Greenhouse Gas Emissions are potentially significant and that they would remain Significant and Unmitigatable after applying the proposed mitigation measures.

More specifically, we question the presumed effectiveness of most of the TDM measures regarding Threshold 2 (Induction of substantial vehicle miles traveled). TRA-1 (Transportation Demand Management Plan:

1. T-2 (Increased job density). Though higher density may result in lower per capita VMT, much of the relevant studies focus on housing density and mixed use projects, not recreational development projects. A search of density/VMT literature identifies four key factors associated with development density that affect VMT: Density, Diversity/mixed-use, Design/walkability, and Destination accessibility. Density alone doesn't necessarily determine (e.g., reduce) project VMT (<https://www.planetizen.com/features/106433-three-studies-show-density-doesnt-determine-car-travel>). Also, while higher job density may reduce per capita worker VMT, it can increase the overall total VMT at the project site. When you concentrate many jobs into a smaller geographic footprint, you create an employment node. While individual employees are incentivized to drive less, the sheer volume of workers concentrated in one place raises the absolute number of vehicle miles generated by that specific development. This is also affected by the availability/efficiency of public transit options, parking costs, etc. The DEIR must provide data and analyses for similar commercial recreation businesses within the Port District or nearby that demonstrate how higher employment densities are resulting in work site reductions in VMT.
2. T-7 (Implement commute trip reduction marketing). Hiring a TDM coordinator and proposing to develop TDM strategies with SANDAG would be essential, but do not constitute a quantitative, measurable mitigation measure. The DEIR does not present applicable/relevant evidence to validate how and to what level of VMT reduction this would produce.
3. T-10 (Provide end of trip bike facilities for employee use). The DEIR does not provide applicable/relevant evidence to validate the level of VMT reduction this would produce.
4. T-18 (Provide pedestrian network improvement). How does improving a pedestrian walkway to North Harbor Drive produce any appreciable reduction in VMT? What is the level of existing pedestrian use along North Harbor Drive, how much additional pedestrian use would the project induce, and how much of existing and projected pedestrian use would be reduced by the project? The project site is essentially adjacent to North Harbor Drive, so improving the existing pedestrian access to the site seems unlikely to have any VMT reducing effect.
5. T-19A (Construct or improve bike facility). There is an existing bike path along North Harbor Drive and bikes (and pedestrians) currently use Liberator Way, which has very little vehicle traffic because the primary business activities by rental car companies have been relocated offsite. What evidence does the project provide that improving/creating a waterfront promenade (additional bike and walking path) on the south side of a reconstructed Liberator Way would induce a mode shift (from vehicles to bikes) that currently use North Harbor Drive?

Pages 3.13-22/25 (Threshold 3: Hazardous Design Features). As we described in the comments on visual/scenic/light/glare concerns (Comments for Pages 3.1-24 to 29), we believe that Measurement Point 3 does not appropriately address potential light spill onto North Harbor Drive. At night, light

spill could affect west/northbound drivers approaching from the North Harbor Drive/West Laurel Street area, which Measurement Point 3 does not adequately represent. The DEIR should evaluate the potential for this additional light spill.

6. Threshold 5 (Inadequate Parking Access) The project would create 289 vehicle spaces at the Topgolf facility and 180 spaces along Liberator Way, which exceeds the calculated demand. To ensure spaces serve their intended users, the project (Topgolf and Port District?) proposes to implement and enforce parking time restrictions for both Topgolf and the public right-of-way along Liberator Way. Neither the project description section nor this section addresses whether some of the parking will be paid (the lot) or metered (along Liberator Way).

Pages 3.13-28/30. For the reasons described above, we believe that the project's contributions will be cumulatively considerable for Threshold 2 and 3.

Page 5-1, et seq. (Alternatives). For the reasons that we have presented in this letter, we strongly disagree with the Port District's DEIR analyses and oppose a recommendation for its approval by the Port District. The DEIR fails to appropriately identify and address significant potential impacts, particularly with regard to Aesthetics (visual/scenic/light-glare), Biological Resources (avian impacts), and Land Use (conflicts with Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act), and water quality (nanoplastics and soluble chemicals). We believe that those impacts would remain significant and unmitigatable – in addition to the significant and unmitigatable impacts from GHGs and VMT that the DEIR acknowledges (Table 5-2). The Reduced Topgolf Alternative has essentially the same impacts and is unacceptable.

We concur with the DEIR's conclusion that the All Park Alternative – especially with a commitment to dedicate a significant portion to natural habitats – is the Environmentally Superior Alternative and recommend that it be selected by the Port District as the preferred project. However, the DEIR concludes that the All Park Alternative does not meet Project Objective #4, and presumably it would not be approved for that reason. To reiterate our previous comments: The DEIR rejects this alternative in the Alternatives section of the DEIR on the basis that it fails to meet Objective 4. However, based on the Port District's annual fiscal (revenue and expense) summaries for FY 24 (\$95 M net income) and FY 25 (\$71M net income), the Port District has substantial "excess" revenues that could be applied to make this alternative viable.

The DEIR states that the Other Visitor-Serving Commercial Use Alternative "...would meet most basic Project objectives, is potentially feasible, and would reduce the following potentially significant impacts identified for the Project: aesthetics (light and glare), greenhouse gas emissions, and transportation (vehicle miles traveled [VMT] associated with the Project)." We believe that this alternative, depending on project-level details that have not been provided and with the 4.5 acres that would have been driving range added to park/open space, could be an acceptable project. While the types and intensities of the activities are not specified, containing them within a single-level building would reduce many of the impacts caused by the proposed project and that the Reduced Topgolf Alternative would not substantively reduce. And, it could include a virtual golf simulation business that requires no outdoor driving range, netting, and extensive outdoor lighting (e.g., <https://screengolfers.com/blog/golf-simulator-business-profitability>; <https://golfoclock.com/blog/golf-simulator-profitability>). The description of this alternative should provide more specific details about the types of planned commercial recreation activities and clarify the allocation of land uses. In particular, what is the designation of the 4.5 acres formerly designated as Topgolf turf area? Because those 4.5 acres are only required by Topgolf, this alternative should designate those 4.5 acres as

park/open space, adding them to the 10.1 acres that are currently designated for park in the proposed project.

In conclusion, we strongly oppose the proposed project and Reduced Topgolf Alternative as being acceptable on these public trust tidelands. In addition to the impacts the DEIR identified as significant and unmitigatable, we believe that the DEIR failed to identify and appropriately analyze other potentially substantial adverse effects (impacts), particularly regarding Aesthetics (visual/scenic/light-glare), Biological Resources (avian impacts), Land Use (conflicts with Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act), and Water Quality (uncaptured chemicals in runoff from netting and artificial turf).

We recommend that the Port District select an alternative – the All Park Alternative or Other Visitor-Serving Commercial Use Alternative – as the project. If necessary, that may involve the preparation and circulation of a Supplemental or Subsequent DEIR providing a detailed project description and new analysis.

Our contacts regarding this letter are Bill Tippetts (billtippetts@gmail.com) and Pam Heatherington (contactecosd@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Bill Tippetts

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Muriel Spooner, Jim Peugh
SDBA

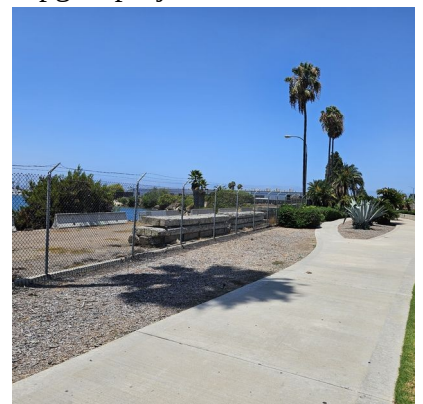
Janet Rogers, Susan Simon
Embarcadero Coalition

Diane Coombs
SD Waterfront Coalition

Scott Andrews
Save Our Access

Photographs

New Viewpoints from North Harbor Drive/West Laurel St looking West to Topgolf project area



New Viewpoint from Sunroad Marina and Restaurant Promenade



Subtidal Barrier for Shoreline (Sunroad Marina)



From: [Muriel Spooner](#)
To: [Megan Hamilton](#)
Cc: [Jim Peugh](#); [Lesley Handa](#); [Padmapriya Jagannathan](#); [Andrew Meyer](#); [Alexander Rubenstein](#); [Carlos Callado](#)
Subject: : East Harbor Island Redevelopment / Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project EIR #2023-134; SCH #2023110463
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 11:04:08 AM
Attachments: [2026-08-24_Topgolf_DEIR-2023-134_SDBA_comments.pdf](#)

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Dear Megan,
Attached are the San Diego Bird Alliance comments on the Topgolf/Waterfront Park Project DEIR.

Regards,

Muriel Spooner
Conservation Committee Co-chair
San Diego Bird Alliance



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August 24, 2026

District, Development Services Department
Attn: Megan Hamilton, Senior Planner
3165 Pacific Hwy San Diego, CA 92101
mhamilton@portofsandiego.org.

Subject: East Harbor Island Redevelopment / Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project EIR #2023-134; SCH #2023110463

The San Diego Bird Alliance is a 3,000+ member non-profit organization with a mission to foster the protection and appreciation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats through education and study, and to advocate for a cleaner, healthier environment. We have been involved in conserving, restoring, managing, and advocating for wildlife and their habitats in the San Diego region since 1948. We strongly object to the selection of this location for Topgolf as it threatens San Diego's unique bird biodiversity as a central thoroughfare for birds and project potential to exacerbate harmful pollution to the environment. Our previous concerns raised in a letter dated Dec 4, 2023 and meetings with the Port of San Diego in 2025, have not been adequately addressed by the DEIR.

1. The poorly selected project location in North San Diego Bay, a central thoroughfare for birds, ignores bird use in surrounding protected areas and threatens San Diego's unique bird biodiversity.

We reiterate our concerns that North San Diego Bay is an inappropriate location for a Topgolf facility due to the bird use in surrounding areas, which was not addressed in the DEIR. This project area connects surrounding areas where birds congregate and poses a significant risk to birds. Overall, the local area inclusive of the Point Loma Peninsula, San Diego Bay, and Mission Bay Complex (Mission Bay, San Diego River, Famosa Slough) is a hotspot for birds and is a well documented thoroughfare for birds year-round according to ebird, historic data, and USGS Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) data, and studies conducted by the Port of San Diego, such as the San Diego Bay Avian Species Surveys 2016-2017. Many species using the local area have been identified having conservation concerns from global, federal and state agencies, have exhibited marked population declines, and some are facing extinction, like the California Least Tern. This area is of special interest to researchers worldwide through ongoing monitoring projects that inform bird population trends, which is a testament of San Diego Bay's contributions to local and worldwide bird biodiversity. The annual Pacific Flyway Shorebird Survey facilitated by Point Blue Conservation Science contributes to shorebird population monitoring across 13 countries of the Pacific coast of the Americas and National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC), organized by SDBA and the San Diego Natural History Museum, is the longest running annual community science project in the United States, with 2026 the 127th year of this project. The 2024 125th San Diego Christmas Bird Count provides proof of the high bird biodiversity in winter as the San Diego circle set a new state record by recording a remarkable 230 native and introduced bird species, achieving



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the highest species count in California. The San Diego CBC data which documents changes in population trends was included in the groundbreaking 2019 Rosenberg et al. study reporting severe declines of 30% reduction in North America's bird populations since the 1970's. If this project moves forward, the Port of San Diego risks our County's irreplaceable rich bird biodiversity as San Diego is one of the birdiest counties in the United States and hosts a unique assemblage of bird species found nowhere else in the world. To protect declines in bird biodiversity for the life of this project, we ask for third party nocturnal and diurnal monitoring efforts year-round in the project area and nearby local high density bird areas. Furthermore, to provide public accountability that this project is not harming bird biodiversity, this data should be released on a regular basis to the public to show bird biodiversity has not declined in the area. Comprehensive monitoring data should demonstrate that Topgolf is not altering existing nocturnal or diurnal bird behavior in the area, or in the surrounding areas. Further if biodiversity declines or if behavioral changes occur, stopgaps should be in place to mitigate biodiversity declines and the harmful netting should be immediately removed to protect this well-documented bird thoroughfare.

Birds travelling through the area will be vulnerable to direct harm by net collisions at the Topgolf facility from the attraction to the bright lights. Waterbirds are dependent on a network of wetlands as each wetland presents unique resources, two wetlands close together may be used by the same individuals (Weller 1999). SDBA's own analysis of ebird records as of September 14, 2025 concludes the 230 species of birds recorded year-round in the Mission Bay Complex (Kendall Frost Marsh, San Diego mudflats, Famosa Slough) and San Diego Bay (San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, San Diego Bay, Liberty Station Channel, and the Sweetwater River) - may be at risk with special concern for more than 100 waterbird species dependent coastal resources in wetland, riparian and open water areas and a dozen raptors. Existing ebird data and our own observations confirm the same species use of these other areas to the proposed project location and it is likely birds are moving back and forth between these areas, using the project area as a thoroughfare, year-round. Millions of birds using the coastline to navigate migration in spring and fall with numbers confirmed by Cornell's Birdcast, are also vulnerable to net collisions. North San Diego Bay is a poor location for a Topgolf facility as San Diego Bay is central to a heavily used thoroughfare year-round for resident and migratory birds travelling from these nearby areas or other other areas along the coastline. How will this project impact local bird populations on a local, regional and worldwide level? How will this project mitigate impacts on local bird populations affected by this project at each geographic scale? For each neighboring high density area where birds congregate, species analysis for all birds using the area should be provided to the public for the entire life of the infrastructure in San Diego Bay. Furthermore, analysis of ongoing monitoring data compared to baseline pre-project use should provide detail for all local bird species and be disclosed to the public regularly for accountability to demonstrate that this project is not harming local bird species where birds congregate. If local population declines occur, stopgaps should be in place to shut down this operation immediately to protect the birds that use the local area.

The DEIR does not address impacts on birds travelling from the surrounding globally recognized and local protected areas that are connected to the project area. This is a major concern as this Topgolf project has the potential to harm the biodiversity in nearby protected areas. As protected areas attract and support



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high bird biodiversity and large numbers of individuals, it may be the source of birds using North San Diego Bay as a thoroughfare. Nearby areas of concern include the globally recognized Important Bird Areas (IBAs) which are sites identified as being internationally significant for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity, the Mission Bay - San Diego River Estuary to the north, San Diego Bay - South and State Important Bird Area to the south the Tijuana River Reserve. Local Green IUCN globally recognized Marine Protected Areas which is a high-profile international certification that belong to California's system of MPAs are identified as the most successful examples of biodiversity conservation worldwide. We are concerned about Famosa Slough to the north, Cabrillo State Marine Reserve to the west, and Tijuana River Mouth SMCA to the South that all support high bird biodiversity and large numbers of individuals. Multi-Habitat Planning Areas (MHPAs) in San Diego, the planned preserve system mapped out under the city's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) to protect core biological resource areas, native vegetation communities, and wildlife corridors are also a concern as these areas surround the project area and support high bird biodiversity and large numbers of individuals at the San Diego River, Point Loma, and canyon areas nearby. The South San Diego Bay Unit of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge, our Crown Jewel for birds in the San Diego Region is a major concern as it supports high bird biodiversity and large numbers of individuals, with the numbers from the Port of San Diego's commissioned San Diego Bay Avian Species Surveys 2016-2017, supporting our concerns. This area is also designated a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) site of Regional Importance as of March 1999 and hosts more than 20,000 shorebirds a year. These are only a few mentioned protected areas nearby that may provide a source of birds flying through the project area and using it as a thoroughfare, in addition to other birds travelling from other protected areas along the entire coastline. No assessment was provided on how this project may impact birds from these protected areas that are travelling through the area. We request individual species assessments that account for nocturnal and diurnal use year-round and ongoing monitoring for each of these protected areas are provided and released to the public to provide transparency of the impact of this project. If declines occur in any of these protected areas, stopgaps should be in place to shut down this operation immediately to safeguard the bird biodiversity in these important protected areas.

San Diego Bay's unique assemblage of tern species must be protected as this combination of species occurs nowhere else in the world. With the California Least Tern population facing dramatic declines and San Diego significantly contributing to the larger statewide population in some years, it is crucial that every pair is conserved. Furthermore, as municipal, state, federal, and NGOs efforts are heavily invested in the recovery of this species, the poor selection of location for Topgolf that may harm California Least Tern, work against these efforts. Our greatest concern due to project proximity is for the Federal and State Endangered California Least Tern at the San Diego International Airport. The poor project placement puts the nesting California Least Terns at southeast end at the San Diego International Airport at risk due to the project obstructing the flight path of the birds to obtain coastal resources. Daily multiple trips are required for adults to provision chicks, with further concern about excess energy expenditure and food resource availability challenges due to Climate Change. If this project moves forward, the establishment of proposed infrastructure will dramatically alter the landscape and influence how urban adapted animals use the area. Fine scale factors must be carefully considered as poor design has the potential to create



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significant challenges for the California Least Tern at this location. We support the statements from the California Least Tern expert biologist who has been monitoring this site for decades with major concerns cited that are not addressed by the DEIR. The nesting colony at the adjacent San Diego International Airport is identified as “approximately 0.5 miles away”, but the edge of the project is less than 1000 feet away from the edge of the nesting site and the proposed 170 foot tall poles and driving range fencing are within 1600 feet, which is unacceptable. The impact analysis is deficient as it only focuses on on-site and no line-of-site modeling or impact analysis was provided. Additionally, appropriate mitigation measures addressing raptor/corvid perch potential on the proposed structures and potential predation on the colony were absent, the obstacle that the structures create between the nesting site and foraging areas on the bay raise the potential for entanglement in the netting, disturbance and/or increased predation from increased lighting, increased trash resulting in increased predatory scavengers in the area, screening trees providing corvid & raptor habitat, and noise and disturbance to foraging habitat during construction are all problems that have not been addressed by the DEIR. How will this project mitigate population impacts to the local California Least Tern population if the San Diego Airport colony is impacted by this project? If this project causes harm to the local California Least Terns how will this project mitigate losses to the local, regional and worldwide population? If local population declines occur from this project, stopgaps should be in place to shut down this operation immediately to avoid more harm to birds.

As Mission Bay and South San Diego on some years support the entire worldwide population of the Elegant Tern, near-threatened IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and USFWS 2024 Bird of Conservation Concern, the Port should take this stewardship responsibility seriously by taking preventative measures to reduce collision risks and reduce man-made disturbances to protect this species. A population with a high concentration to a geographic location is vulnerable to a single catastrophe putting species at risk to population declines or worse, extinction. Per our observations, Elegant Tern fly in large groups of individuals, fly at night, and have been observed flying south from Famosa Slough towards San Diego Bay after dark, making them vulnerable to net collisions in this specific area of San Diego Bay. How will this project mitigate population impacts to the Elegant Tern population if the birds from local colonies in South San Diego Bay and Mission Bay are impacted by this project? If this project causes harm to the Elegant Terns, how will this project mitigate losses to the population? If local population declines occur which may affect the worldwide population, stopgaps should be in place to shut down this operation immediately.

Bird populations are declining in North America as a result of multiple human causes and the future for species survival in San Diego is uncertain due to existential threats from Climate Change. Birds are migratory with seasonal variation among species in San Diego and to plan for their future we must also consider the challenges for species survival that are exacerbated by Climate Change. Seasonal conditions in San Diego and other locations worldwide, resource availability which may shift, degradation of habitat quality, and shrinking wetland habitat lost to Sea Level Rise are all factors to consider. Direct impacts from human activities should be avoided as development projects destroy natural habitat, contribute to pollution, recreational activity and other human disturbances are detrimental to wildlife that depend on existing habitat for survival. As the climate is changing rapidly, the Port of San Diego as responsible



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stewards to these irreplaceable resources, should prioritize climate resiliency in consideration of wildlife. We urge the Port to take meaningful action to help mitigate bird species' future survival, not create more challenges by putting dangerous obstacles in the flight path of birds. Again, we ask, how does this project plan to mitigate impacts and harm on local, regional and worldwide bird populations? As climate change will pose challenges for bird species survival, alongside the individual species assessments of bird use to local areas, we ask for a third party assessment of future population scenarios that consider climate change impacts to be provided for each species. We also ask that monitoring data be incorporated to show trends in relation to future population scenarios under climate change and that these are shared with the public. If local population declines occur due to the compounding effect from climate change and this project, stopgaps should be in place to shut down this operation immediately.

2. Hazard of 170-foot Netting and Bird Collisions and Lack of Reporting

This remains a serious concern for the SDBA given the poorly selected location, sensitive nature of the habitat surrounding this location, and importance to the birds of this region. We had asked for a complete list of bird related injuries and deaths due to Topgolf netting across its various locations which has not yet been made public or shared with us. The following list of collisions were compiled from news and citizen reports:

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

- **Osprey (August 2019):** An Osprey became entangled approximately 150 feet up in the netting at 3:00 p.m. and remained trapped for nearly 11 hours in extreme heat. It was eventually rescued by a crane at 2:00 a.m. the following morning but **died during transport** to a sanctuary due to "capture/exertional myopathy" caused by the stress of being trapped.¹
- **Barred Owl (March 2019):** A Barred Owl was trapped in the netting for over 12 hours. 6 witnesses reported that the owl eventually freed itself after being "tortured all day," during which time some patrons allegedly attempted to hit the bird with golf balls².

Orlando, Florida (Universal Blvd. Location)

- **Red-tailed Hawk (November 2019):** A Red-tailed Hawk was spotted entangled 50 feet up in the netting before opening hours. It was rescued by Orlando County Fire Rescue³ and SeaWorld teams using a scissor lift. The bird was treated for minor injuries and successfully released the next day.
- **Red-tailed Hawk (February 2023):** A Red-Railed Hawk became entangled and was rescued by fire crews. It was reported as "tired and scared" but survived and was taken to the Audubon Center for recovery⁴.

Jacksonville, Florida

- **Red-tailed Hawk (February 2023):** In the same week as the second Orlando incident, a hawk was trapped in the Jacksonville Topgolf netting. This bird suffered a **fractured clavicle**, dehydration, and parasites, requiring a longer journey to recovery⁴.

Overland Park, Kansas



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- **Red-shouldered Hawk:** A hawk became stuck in a 120-foot net. Animal control officers had to rent a large bucket truck to reach the bird. It was eventually rescued and treated for potential sprains ⁵.

Other Noted Locations

- **Bridgeville, Pennsylvania:** A bystander reported seeing a **dead bird** in the netting while driving by the facility.
- **Virginia Beach (2016):** News reports indicate a bird entanglement incident occurred at a Virginia location in 2016, leading Topgolf to suggest they would install "squawk boxes" to deter wildlife ⁶.

Pictures from the news reports show the harsh reality of entanglement and difficult rescue operations. Officer Emily Riddle who conducted the rescue operation in Overland Park, Kansas, highlighted the difficulty of performing a rescue operation 120-170 feet in the air and stated, "I don't know if I ever want to do that again as it had so many moving parts."⁵

The above list of injuries and deaths to birds do not instill confidence that 170 feet tall poles with netting and with lighting operations running well past midnight is going to be safe for the birds using this area as a thoroughfare. Further, San Diego's local wildlife rehabilitation responders at the Humane Society may not have the capacity to provide immediate response to frequent calls from Topgolf as response time varies and is dependent on the amount of calls at any given time. Resources for emergency services are limited and responding to requests from Topgolf will deprive resources from other wildlife emergencies and contribute to longer response times, which may increase wildlife mortality. Further, Humane Society rescue operations do not have immediate access to equipment to retrieve injured birds trapped in 170 foot nets. Anecdotal past experience with birds needing immediate wildlife rescue from the Humane Society in 2026 and previous years, responses ranged from two hours for an American Crow injured from a suspected window collision to as long as 17 hours to help free the foot of an American Crow wedged upside down in between a palm frond. The longer response time was due to the Humane Society not having appropriate equipment to retrieve a bird from a 40 foot Palm Tree, which required the fire department's participation to use the Fire Truck with a hook & ladder.

Additional wildlife response requests from the Topgolf facility and increase in patient load will also place undue pressure on the already stretched thin resources at Project Wildlife, especially during the busiest time of the year during bird breeding season in the spring. Again, the Port of San Diego should prioritize climate resilience for wildlife by helping to alleviate severe operational stress on wildlife rehabilitation facilities that may see increases in patient volume during extreme weather events like heatwaves, droughts, and severe storms. As wildlife rehabilitation facilities are responsible for immediate response to imperiled wildlife where survival is solely dependent on immediate response, selection for the Topgolf location is unconscionable as it will generate problems for wildlife and additional strain on wildlife facilities.



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Per our previous statements showcase the high bird biodiversity in the project location and connection to protected areas which surpasses the San Francisco Bay Area, the San Diego location is therefore not comparable to the frequently cited Burlingame County location in the DEIR as a proxy for bird monitoring and deterrents. Moreover, the Burlingame location has only been in operation since 2025 and we have no access to the monitoring protocols or reports. It is unacceptable that the public is asked to accept that the deterrents implemented in Burlingame worked without proof and evidence should be provided. Furthermore, no protocols have been provided in the DEIR to address injured birds at the San Diego location and no attempt has been made to coordinate a response with the Humane Society or with Project Wildlife to plan for capacity in case mitigation measures are needed in the case of bird collisions.

As fireworks on the 4th of July that are harmful to birds persist across the coastal areas in San Diego with the Big Bay Boom, Imperial Beach, and Mission Bay and the widespread unregulated excessive illegal fireworks, we are concerned about the increased collision risks with the Topgolf nets on the 4th of July. Per SDBA's past three years of bird monitoring on the 4th of July in the San Diego region, diurnal and nocturnal birds elicit a fear response to fireworks and took flight across San Diego Bay as observed in 2024 in north bay, 2025 in south bay, 2026 in north bay and the middle of the bay. Most concerning was our observations in 2024, when 7,000 Elegant Terns and other waterbirds responded to fireworks with panic flights around Mission Bay extending into the north portion of San Diego Bay. As the birds flew over the proposed Topgolf project area, that flight path presented a realistic scenario that large groups of birds could easily collide with the 170 foot nets. We cannot emphasize enough how risky this project placement of Topgolf in North San Diego Bay is to numerous birds in flight not only during normal activity, but during disturbances caused by fireworks which can cause thousands of birds to take flight in the project area. We urge the Port of San Diego to cease operations of firework shows as these are harmful to birds, animals, people, and the environment and we also strongly recommend that the port works with local municipalities on strict enforcement of illegal fireworks across San Diego Bay. The biodiversity in the San Diego region is irreplaceable once gone and to destroy it to fulfill man-made desires is irresponsible. As the Port of San Diego are the stewards to San Diego Bay, we urge the Port to reconsider the poor location of this project as it may cause a terrible catastrophe to the birds that may collide with the nets in response to disturbances from fireworks on the 4th of July.

3. Night Lighting

We had previously expressed concerns about the impact of night lighting that has the potential to attract birds to the nets leading to a catastrophe of collisions, which was not addressed in the DEIR. Sports lighting, similar to what will be implemented at Topgolf, will exceed glare requirements and cause spillover into San Diego Bay and cause light pollution. A 9 foot wall or berm to control the spillover is not an effective mitigation measure and will only serve to further block public access to the waterfront. San Diego is a critical part of the Pacific Flyway and upwards of millions of birds migrating at night are well documented and monitored throughout the US by BirdCast. The guidelines by the United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) to reduce bird collisions and other adverse effects caused by unnatural



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night time lighting citing specific concerns for urban areas, “Nighttime light pollution is a siren’s song for migrating birds. Its attraction causes them to fly off course, resulting in both disorientation and depleting their precious fat reserves. The outcome is birds that are in the wrong place and the wrong time surrounded by a highly dangerous environment. In urban centers window strikes are the greatest threat, creating death and injury through mass collisions.”⁷

SDBA’s Lights Out, San Diego! campaign raises awareness of light pollution which when combined with glass buildings pose a huge threat to bird life in our county. Most concerning are the periods with heavy migration when the county hosts upwards of millions of birds a night during Spring migration (March 1st to June 15th) and Fall migration (September 1st to November 15th), with birds migrating through the area having no familiarity with the facility. Operations extending until 1 or 2 am with a heavily lit outdoor location near the waterfront with 170 foot tall netting operations year-round is completely irresponsible as it will disrupt circadian rhythms of many wildlife species including other pollinators like insects and bats, with these actions especially more egregious during bird migration. Multiple scientific studies document the detrimental effect artificial light at night has on wildlife, birds, insects, bats, and other mammals.⁸ As most birds migrate at night with thousands of birds using San Diego Bay and nearby areas is a testament to birds flying at lower elevations locally, we request ongoing nocturnal monitoring for the life of the project during heavy migration periods with this data released regularly to the public to ensure that this project is not impacting migrating birds. If this project is identified as harmful to bird migration or alters existing behaviors such as flight paths, stopgaps should be in place to shut down this operation immediately to protect migrating birds.

4. Artificial turf, plastics and microplastics, chemical pollution

Plastic in our waterways has become a clear and present danger to the wildlife in the ocean. As the State of California anticipates an increase and intensity in Atmospheric Rivers (AR) that may bring heavy rains in the future with the recent history in the proposed project area of flooding with the heavy rains in January of 2024, we are concerned that runoff may exacerbate plastic pollution into San Diego Bay. Additionally, hotter temperatures anticipated by Climate Change may exacerbate degradation of manmade materials and if not maintained properly, items may end up polluting San Diego Bay. Plastic pollution impact on seabirds is a major concern as a preliminary study at Scripps Institution of Oceanography has found an average of 76.3 plastic pieces (>1 mm) in the diets of Northern Fulmars, a migratory seabird that utilizes San Diego's oceans as important foraging habitat, with one outlier that contained 660 plastic pieces in its gut. These numbers were 3.3 times more than the averages found in other regions within the past 25 years, and 2.8x more than the other regions sampled in the Pacific within that time period¹⁰. Synthetic turf fibers, made of polyethylene and polypropylene, continuously break off through UV exposure, weathering, and foot traffic, and studies of coastal areas elsewhere have found these fibers can make up over 15% of the plastic debris in nearshore waters. A 4.5 acre artificial turf at the waterfront is not fully mitigated in the current DEIR and a 4.5 acre synthetic turf driving range would shed 700 to 10,500 pounds of plastic annually. The DEIR claims that the artificial turf design will prevent run-off and the stormwater drain design will prevent the microplastic run off then contradicts the



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statement by stating that the danger posed by microplastics is not fully understood and is therefore inconclusive. The Port of San Diego should prioritize protecting water quality and marine habitat in this area. Synthetic turf would substantially degrade water quality of San Diego Bay by PFAS contamination (a class of forever chemicals that never break down), UV stabilizers, heavy metals, plasticizers, and microplastics. There are no cost-effective methods to remove PFAS and other harmful chemicals from runoff or to capture micro and nano plastics. Given the presence of the Endangered Eastern Pacific Green Sea Turtles, numerous eelgrass beds bay wide that serve as fish nurseries, many varieties of fish and diving birds that use the area, and the Port's efforts to support aquaculture specifically grown in the middle of San Diego Bay, should we not invoke a precautionary principle when it comes to potential for increased plastic pollution? In its simplest terms the precautionary principle asks that measures should be taken even when cause-effect relationships are not fully understood, especially when there are serious risks to health and environment.

If the artificial turf is replaced by grass, fertilizer and pesticide run-off into the waterways and the associated chemical pollution that can affect birds and marine life need to be addressed.

5. Public Trust and Coastal Act consistency

SDBA fully endorses the idea of public access to public parks and waterfronts and improvements to the Port should benefit all residents of the county, not just those who can afford to pay. Why does this have to be mediated through a Topgolf project with many undesired outcomes that cannot be mitigated? Topgolf has no connection to providing public access and coastal recreation. The DEIR itself identifies that the All Park alternative meets all objectives except Objective 4 which is "Provide redevelopment that maximizes economic benefits with commercial uses to assist in funding the expansion and enhancement of public access and road improvements."

There are 70+ golf courses in San Diego County, including three municipal golf courses operated by the City of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation. Opportunities for golfing abound in our county already at a range of prices. On the other hand, our County has lost 70% of its wetlands and 84% of its shorelines, according to the Port's own documents. The changing climate is reshaping our coastlines as our beaches are caught between the rising sea levels and the hard infrastructure.

The All Park alternative would send a strong signal to the public that the Port is committed to preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of our coastline and increasing public access while planning for climate resilience. The argument that this alternative does not provide commercial benefits is not accurate for two reasons.

- First, the economic impact of Topgolf is uncertain given the numerous alternatives to similar entertainment that already exist in the county. Also analyzing Topgolf's own financial statements show that financial success is not guaranteed. While Topgolf locations tend to bring in a lot of visitors in their first two years of operation, the numbers quickly drop off after an initial boom.



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While many of their locations experienced a post-pandemic surge that quickly capped out and the new location's novelty soon wore out.

- Second, the All Park Alternative benefits health and human well being and can help protect our natural resources which in the long term offer economic benefits that are not quantified in the analysis. Numerous economic modeling tools are now available that take into account the value of nature. For e.g. it is estimated that pollinators contribute \$34B annually to the US. US birders spent an estimated \$108B in 2022 alone which is six times the revenue of the National Football League for 2022 ¹⁰. These numbers are staggering and do not even account for the economic resilience offered by nature based coastal solutions. The Coastal Resilience Master Plan “identifies potential nature-based solutions for locations along San Diego's coast to improve the resilience of our communities to sea level rise while also benefiting coastal access, recreation opportunities, wildlife and natural coastal resources.” These solutions have real economic value which are not accounted for when considering the All Park Alternative.

6. Who are we dealing with

Last but not the least, SDBA has serious concerns about the project, in light of recent information that Topgolf has been sold to Leonard Green Partners (LGP), a Private Equity firm whose track record is not encouraging. A simple internet search on LGP reveals the following:

- The U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget investigated LGP's ownership of Prospect Medical Holdings (PMH). Senators alleged that LGP prioritized profits over patients, citing health and safety violations, understaffing, and hospital closures ¹¹.
- Critics highlighted that LGP took home \$424 million in dividends from PMH while the hospital operator took on hundreds of millions in debt that it eventually defaulted on ⁸.
- Analysts have criticized LGP's role in the bankruptcies of iconic retailers like J. Crew and Neiman Marcus ¹². While the companies went bankrupt, LGP paid themselves hundreds of millions of dollars in fees

Given this, how confident is the Port that LGP will prioritize public access and enhancement to our coastline over profits? Once again this highlights the question if Topgolf is consistent with the Public Trust doctrine.

Conclusion:

In summary, we have major concerns as the DEIR does not address all the concerns we raised in our 2023 letter and in other discussions. There has been no transparency in terms of Topgolf's previous entanglements with bird injuries and mortality. There has been no serious engagement or mitigation measures provided in terms of planning for such cases in this location. Using the Burlingame location as a flawed proxy to San Diego, and providing no access to any of the protocols or data from Burlingame and other locations, does not leave us with confidence that the issues we highlighted are taken seriously. We also believe that the economic benefits as stated do not address the negative impacts of such a project on



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our coastline and concurrently the long term real economic benefits of the All Park Alternative have not been fully explored. And lastly, we urge the Port to seriously look at Topgolf's own financials and the impact of LGP ownership on the financial viability of this project. The Port of San Diego proposal of this project and other recent proposed development projects that are harmful to the natural resources, communicates to the public that the Port of San Diego is playing fast and loose and is willing to risk our irreplaceable biodiversity in San Diego Bay and surrounding areas for profit. As our climate is changing rapidly, immediate meaningful action towards climate resiliency to plan for the wildlife and environment in San Diego Bay is needed and this reckless approach towards irresponsible stewardship is unacceptable.

Respectfully,

Padma Jagannathan
Conservation Committee
San Diego Bird Alliance

Lesley Handa
Lead Ornithologist
San Diego Bird Alliance

Muriel Spooner
Conservation
Committee Co-chair
San Diego Bird Alliance

James Peugh
Conservation Committee
Co-chair
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Sources:

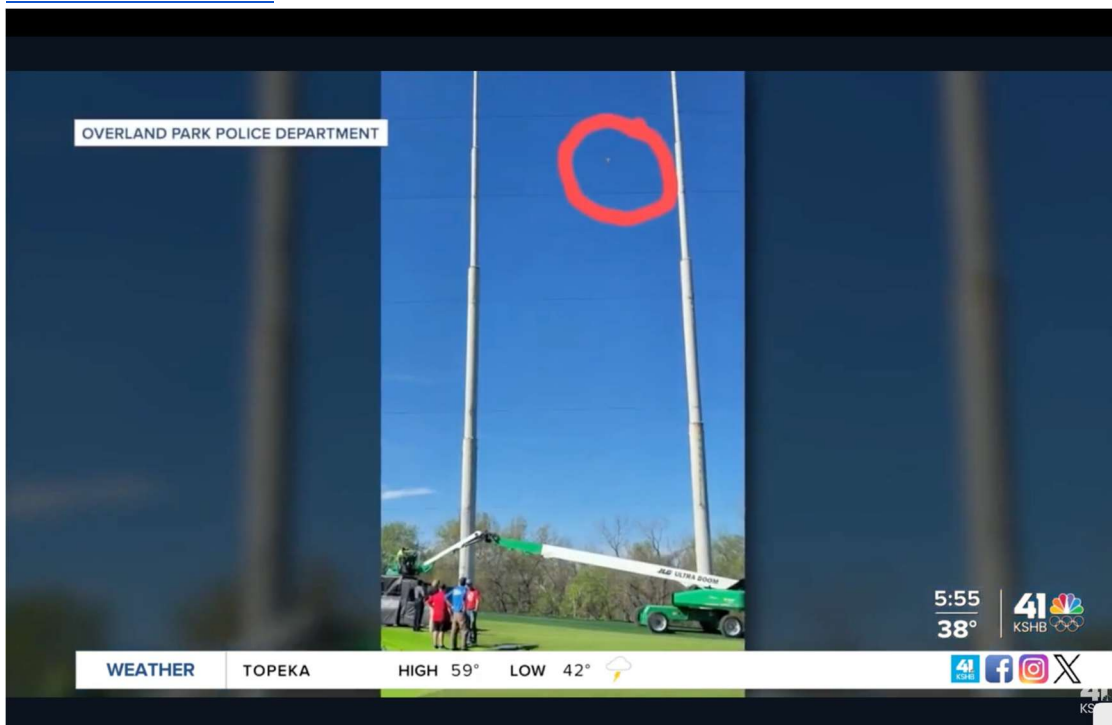
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11. <https://www.budget.senate.gov/ranking-member/newsroom/press/private-equity-in-health-care-shown-to-harm-patients-degrade-care-and-drive-hospital-closures>
12. <https://pestakeholder.org/news/leonard-green-and-tpg-led-owner-group-collected-765-million-in-fees-and-dividends-from-bankrupt-retailer-j-crew-2/>



For birds, for people, for the planet.



Source: <https://www.13newsnow.com/article/news/bird-caught-in-top-golf-driving-range-net-draws-a-crowd/291-417823281>



Source: https://youtu.be/F_rhSSEwIGE?si=9f3RXSPw0MBWhoM7



For birds, for people, for the planet.





For birds, for people, for the planet.



Source: <https://www.wbtw.com/news13-digital-first/it-breaks-my-heart-osprey-dies-following-exhaustive-rescue-effort/>



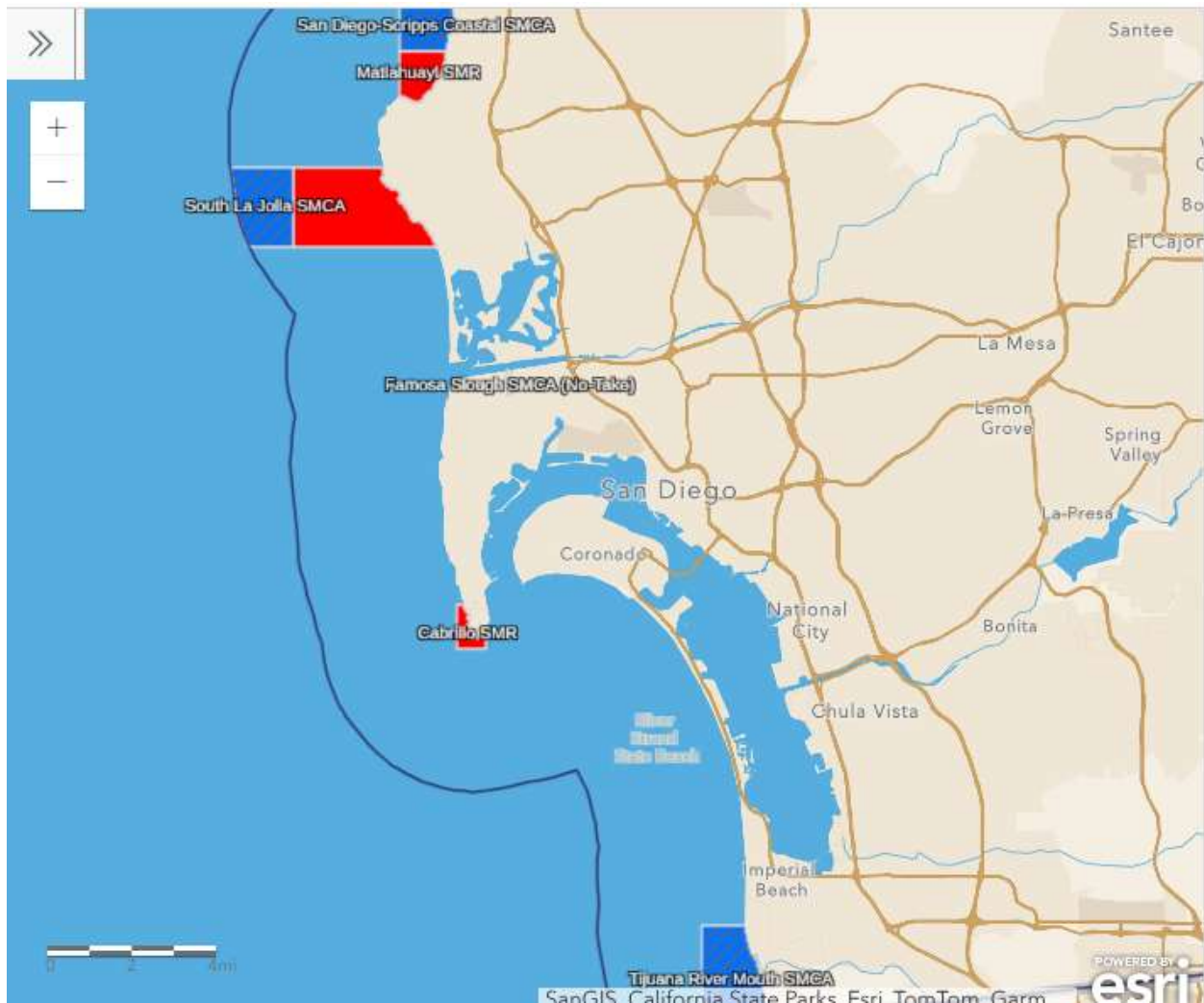
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Photograph through a spotting scope on July 4, 2024. In response to the fireworks, adult terns frenetically flew over the colony in West Ski Island, with panic flights where 7,000 birds flew in huge flocks over Mission Bay and further south over North San Diego Bay. Some birds were in flight for over an hour, expending valuable energy needed to forage and provision young. (photograph brightened 50%)



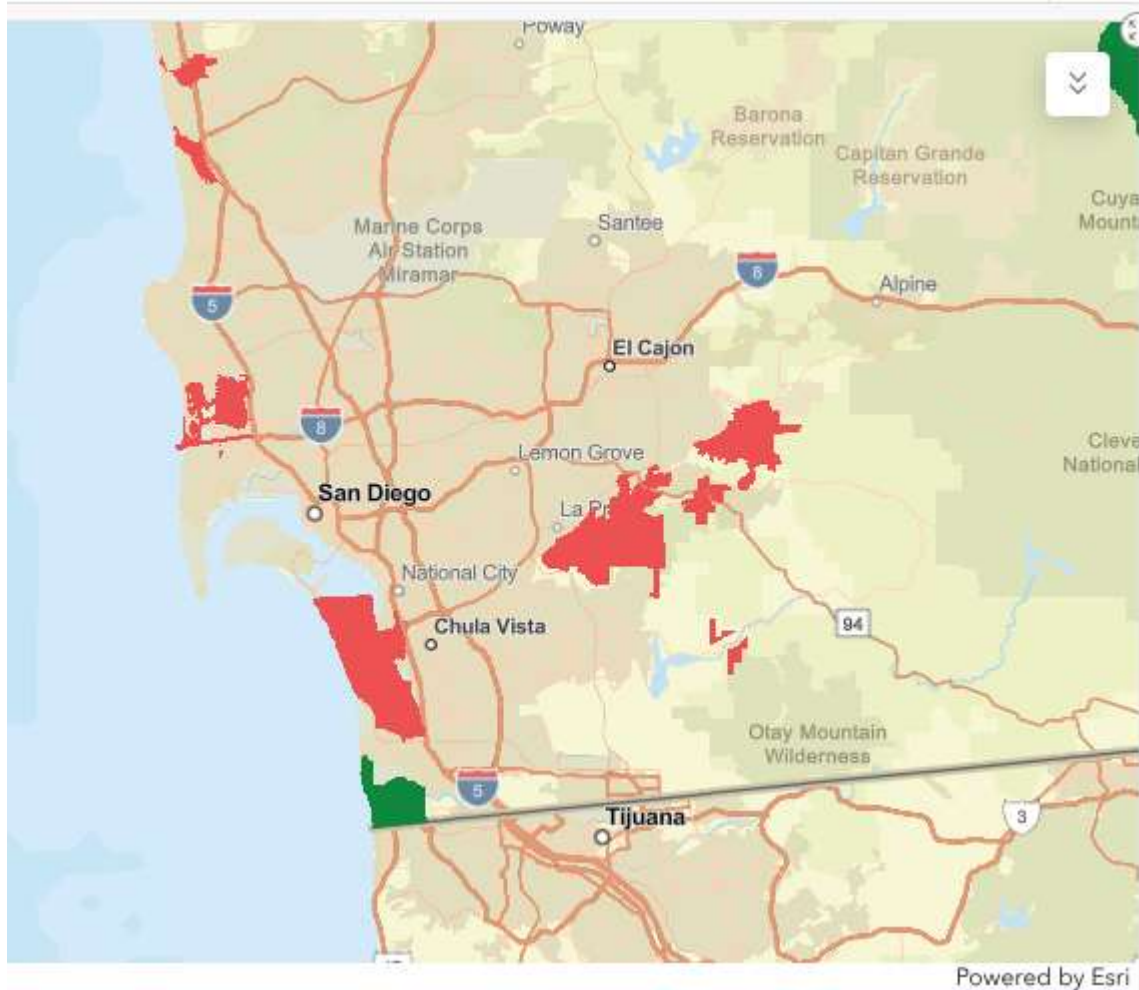
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Birds using IUCN Globally - recognized Green designated Marine Protected Areas managed by the State of California may be impacted by this project as these protected areas may provide a source of birds using the project area as a thoroughfare. Famosa Slough State Marine Conservation Area to the north, Cabrillo State Marine Reserve to the southwest of the project area, Tijuana River Mouth SMCA to the south. South La Jolla State Marine Conservation Area, San Diego Scripps Coastal State Marine Conservation Area and Matlahuayl State Marine Conservation Area further north.



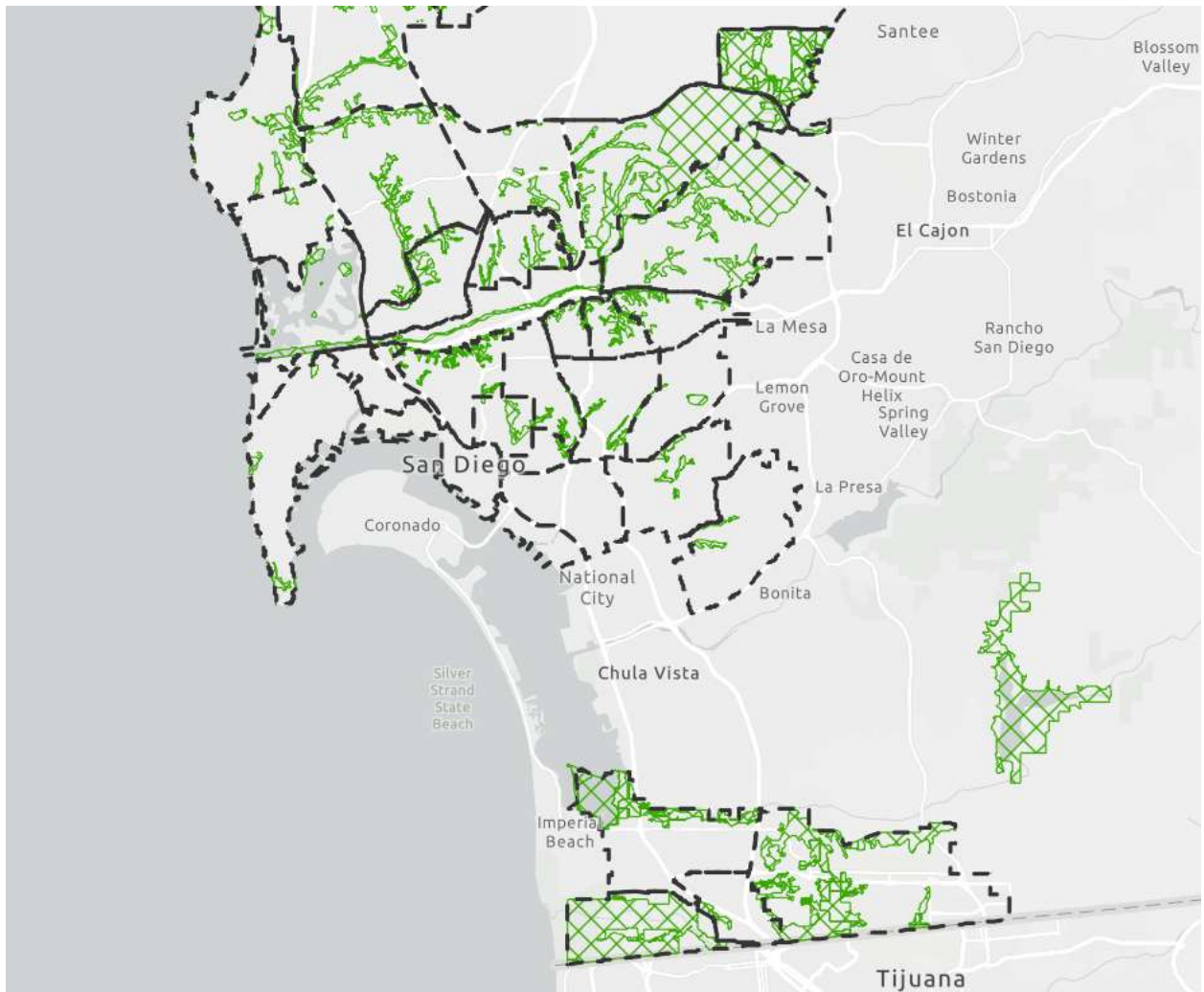
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Birds using Important Bird Areas (IBAs) may be impacted by this project as these protected areas may provide a source of birds using the project area as a thoroughfare. IBAs are sites identified as being internationally significant for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity, the Mission Bay - San Diego River Estuary to the north, San Diego Bay - South and State Important Bird Area to the south the Tijuana River Reserve. Globally Important Bird Areas are indicated red and State Important Bird Areas indicated in green.



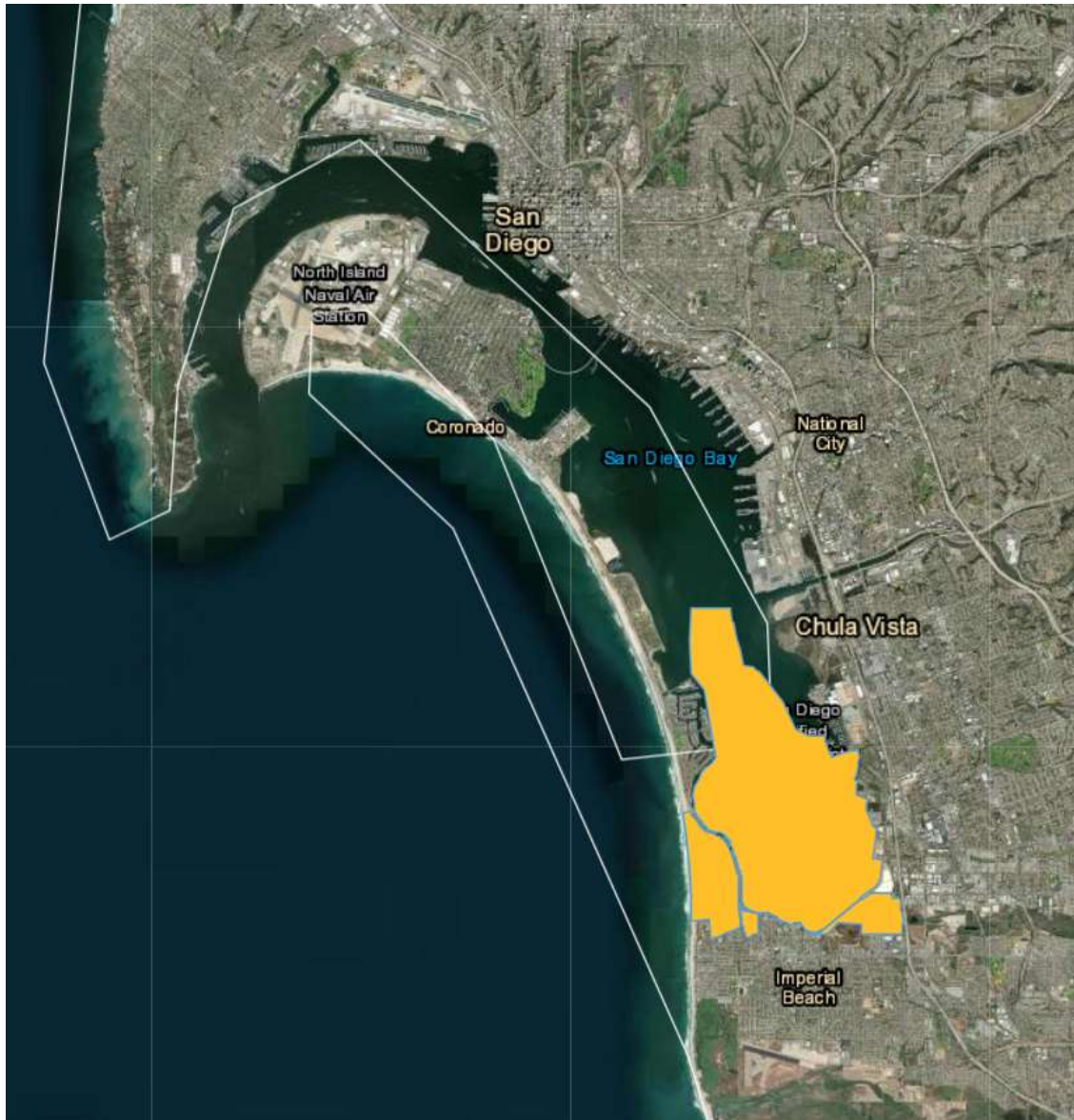
For birds, for people, for the planet.



Birds using Multi-Habitat Planning Areas (MHPAs) may be impacted by this project as these protected areas may provide a source of birds using the project area as a thoroughfare. MHPAs in San Diego, the planned preserve system mapped out under the city's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) to protect core biological resource areas, native vegetation communities, and wildlife corridors are also a concern as these areas surround the project area and support high bird biodiversity and large numbers of individuals at the San Diego River, Point Loma, and canyon areas nearby.



For birds, for people, for the planet.



Shorebirds The South San Diego Bay Unit of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge may be impacted by this project as these protected areas may provide a source of shorebirds using the project area as a thoroughfare. This area is our Crown Jewel for birds in the San Diego Region and is designated a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) site of Regional Importance as of March 1999 and hosts more than 20,000 shorebirds a year.

From: [Courtney Brown](#)
To: mhamilton@portofsandiego.org
Cc: [Patrick McDonough](#); [Ali Martin](#); [Phillip Musegaas](#)
Subject: San Diego Coastkeeper Comments on the East Harbor Island/Topgolf DEIR
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 4:47:51 PM
Attachments: [2026.08.24 Topgolf DEIR comments SDCK.pdf](#)

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Dear Ms. Hamilton,

Attached please find San Diego Coastkeeper's written comments regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project (UPD #EIR 2023-134).

Sincerely,

Courtney Brown | Staff Attorney
619-609-0860 | she/her/hers



[San Diego Coastkeeper®](#) | 8305 Vickers Street, Suite 209 | San Diego, CA 92111

Show your support for protecting and restoring fishable, swimmable, and drinkable waters in San Diego County with a [donation today](#).



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August 24, 2026

San Diego Unified Port District, Development Services Department
Attn: Megan Hamilton
3165 Pacific Hwy
San Diego, CA 92101

Submitted via email to mhamilton@portofsandiego.org.

**Re: Comments – Draft Environmental Impact Report for East Harbor Island
Redevelopment/Topgolf and Waterfront Park Project (UPD #EIR 2023-134)**

Dear Ms. Hamilton,

On behalf of San Diego Coastkeeper ("Coastkeeper"), please accept the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR") for the East Harbor Island Redevelopment/Topgolf Project (UPD #EIR 2023-134) ("Project").

San Diego Coastkeeper works to protect and restore the waters of the San Diego region through water quality monitoring, advocacy, education, community engagement, and enforcement.

As trustee of the Project site's tidelands, the San Diego Unified Port District ("Port District") has a civic duty to uphold the public trust doctrine and the California Coastal Act ("Coastal Act"), and to ensure that the public's interest in these lands is protected over private and other localized interests.¹

The Project proposes the redevelopment of approximately 22.4 of 38 acres on East Harbor Island, which consist of public trust tidelands granted by the State to the Port District and subject to the Coastal Act and public trust doctrine. The Topgolf attraction ("Topgolf") would consume 9.8 acres, including a three-story, 46-foot-high building with 108 hitting bays and 4.5 acres of artificial turf enclosed by netting up to 170 feet high (DEIR Fig. 2-2). Topgolf is antithetical to the core purposes of the public trust doctrine and Coastal Act regimes: it is not water-related and could easily function on inland uplands; it would wall off public access to the Bay rather than enhance it; and it introduces environmental risks the DEIR fails to justify.

For the reasons discussed below, Coastkeeper strongly recommends that the Port District reject the proposed Topgolf project and instead select a less damaging alternative, such as the All Park Alternative or the Other Visitor-Serving Commercial Use Alternative, as the preferred project. We further request that the Final EIR include a more robust environmental impact and mitigation analysis addressing the deficiencies identified in these comments.

¹ See *City of Long Beach v. Morse* (1947) 31 Cal.2d 254, 257; Pub. Resources Code, § 6009, subd. (d).

I. Legal Framework

The public trust doctrine creates a duty for the State to protect coastal lands and waters for preservation and public uses, including navigation, fishing, boating, habitat protection, and other water-oriented activities.² Modern courts have emphasized that one of the most important public uses is “the preservation of [tidelands] *in their natural state* so that they may serve as ecological units for scientific study, as open space, and as environments which provide food and habitat for birds and marine life, and which favorably affect the scenery and climate of the area.”³

The test for what constitutes an appropriate public trust use is deliberately flexible, allowing it to evolve with changing public needs— but that flexibility cannot be stretched to excuse a project that fails to meet even the basic standards the public trust doctrine imposes.⁴ Indeed, in recent years the Coastal Commission has denied proposals within the same vicinity as the current Project area for failing to provide low-cost visitor accommodations, recognizing that such development effectively excludes the public unable to afford it.⁵ Courts have not hesitated to enforce these standards. In *San Diego Unified Port Dist. v. California Coastal Comm'n*, 27 Cal.App.5th 1111 (2018), the Fourth District Court of Appeal upheld denial of a port master plan amendment where the Commission found it failed to further the Act's public access policies and lacked the specificity required for low-cost visitor facilities.

Where Coastal Act policies conflict, they must be resolved in the manner most protective of coastal resources.⁶ The Port Master Plan reinforces this priority, directing the Port District to favor statewide and public benefits over local and private ones.⁷ That principle is squarely at issue here: **where development poses a substantial risk of irreversible environmental harm, less damaging alternatives should be favored and any impacts mitigated to the maximum extent feasible.** As discussed below, both the gaps in the DEIR and the substantive conflicts in the Project should be resolved under this standard.

II. The Project is Inconsistent with the Public Trust Doctrine and Coastal Act

A. Topgolf is Not a Public Trust-Consistent Use

² See California State Lands Commission, Public Trust homepage, <https://www.slc.ca.gov/public-trust/>; see also *Nat'l Audubon Soc'ty v. Superior Court of Alpine County*, 658 P.2d 709, 724 (Cal. 1983); *Marks v. Whitney*, 6 Cal. 3d 251, 260 (1971).

³ See *Marks v. Whitney*, 6 Cal. 3d 251, 259–60 (1971) (emphasis added).

⁴ The Coastal Act “shall be liberally construed to accomplish its purposes and objectives and any exception to the statute's main purpose must be strictly construed.” *San Diego Unified Port Dist.*, 27 Cal.App.5th at 1129–30 (citing Pub. Res. Code § 30009; *Burke v. California Coastal Comm'n* (2008) 168 Cal.App.4th 1098, 1108).

⁵ See *San Diego Unified Port Dist. v. California Coastal Comm'n*, 27 Cal.App.5th 1111 (2018) (upholding the Coastal Commission's decision to deny the Port District's PMPA for a proposed hotel on East Harbor Island for failing to meet public trust doctrine's low-cost visitor accommodation requirements; see also Cal. Coastal Comm'n, Staff Recommendation on San Diego Unified Port District Port Master Plan Amendment No. 39 (Woodfin Suites Timeshare/Hotel) (Dec. 21, 2007) (finding that a proposed private timeshare project on Harbor Island's public tidelands violated the public trust doctrine by restricting general public shoreline access).

⁶ Cal. Coastal Act § 30007.5.

⁷ Port Master Plan Planning Goal IV.

Topgolf is a golf-entertainment, hitting-bay facility with no relationship to the coast, shoreline, or water-oriented recreation, and is not a unique or place-based coastal amenity. Comparable multi-story hitting-bay facilities already exist or are planned elsewhere in the region, including in Sierra Mesa and a planned Topgolf conversion of an existing driving range in Sorrento Valley – neither with any coastal connection. A generic, replicable use unrelated to the coast does not "enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation" within the meaning of Section 30222 of the Coastal Act.

The PMPU's own framework supports this contention. The Water and Land Use Element requires the Port to identify each use's functional dependency on the water consistent with the Coastal Act (WLU Objective 1.2) and to balance the Port District's Port Act responsibilities against its Coastal Act priorities. "Golf course" is listed as an allowable Recreation use, but it is classified as neither coastal-dependent nor coastal-related. Its only asserted basis, "coastal-enhancement," is not a recognized Coastal Act category. Coastkeeper does not agree that golf courses should be listed as an allowable recreational use in the PMPU at all, and in any event the Project falls outside even that flawed category. The PMPU defines "golf course" as "the grounds where the game of golf is played,"⁸ while the DEIR itself describes the Topgolf project as an "entertainment complex." That discrepancy is compounded by the fact that the future redevelopment of adjacent parcels, following the land-use designation change from Industrial Business Park to Commercial Recreation, remains unknown.

The Project fails to meet low-cost visitor-serving requirements. Golf is a notoriously expensive and exclusionary activity, with comparable Topgolf facility rates of up to \$82/hour.⁹ This does not meet San Diego's documented demand for low-cost, open-space recreation in coastal areas.¹⁰ That the surrounding waterfront park and promenade will remain free to the public does not offset this deficiency, because Topgolf itself (the use actually occupying the fenced tidelands) is what the public trust doctrine's low-cost standard evaluates.¹¹

The Project fails the "test" for an appropriate public use on its face: fencing off 4.5 acres of

⁸ PMPU at 393.

⁹ See <https://topgolf.com/us/el-segundo/>.

¹⁰ See City of San Diego, Parks Master Plan Survey Results (2018), available at <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/6-parks-master-plan-community-survey-report.pdf> (finding that citywide, "Beaches and Shoreline Parks" ranked as the highest priority recreation-facility investment, and that residents "strongly agreed that parks improve physical health and fitness and preserve open space and the environment").

¹¹ See Cal. Coastal Comm'n, Staff Recommendation on San Diego Unified Port District Port Master Plan Amendment No. 39 (Woodfin Suites Timeshare/Hotel) at 2 (Dec. 21, 2007) (where Commission Staff rejected the argument that a required grant of two transient boat slips could offset the public trust deficiencies of a proposed timeshare/hotel on Harbor Island. Although the slips would provide a positive benefit and recreational amenity for cruising tourists, Staff explained that "the provisions of a transient guest slip cannot in itself mitigate for the loss of land specifically reserved for landside lower-cost visitor and recreational facilities."

waterfront tidelands held in trust for the people of California serves no preservation, ecological, or public-access function.

B. The Project Violates Multiple Coastal Act Policies

The Project is in tension with numerous Coastal Act policies, including but not limited to:

- **Coastal Act § 30210.** “Maximum access ... and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with ... the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.” By fencing off 4.5 acres of tidelands for a private, fee-based driving range, the Project restricts rather than maximizes public access and recreational opportunity.
- **Coastal Act § 30211.** “Development shall not interfere with the public's right of access to the sea where acquired through use or legislative authorization.” The netting, poles, and enclosed outfield physically block public access to and views of the Bay along this stretch of shoreline.
- **Coastal Act § 30220.** Coastal areas suited for water-oriented recreational activities¹² shall be protected for such uses. A driving range is neither coastal-dependent nor coastal-oriented.
- **Coastal Act § 3022.** Oceanfront land suitable for recreational use must be protected for such use; the Act's broader policies favor lower-cost, publicly accessible facilities over private commercial ones. Topgolf displaces waterfront acreage that could otherwise serve broader, lower-cost public recreation.
- **Coastal Act § 30222.** “The use of private lands suitable for visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities designed to enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation shall have priority over private residential, general industrial, or general commercial development, but not over agriculture or coastal-dependent industry.” Topgolf is not water-related and could function equally well on inland uplands; it walls off public access to the Bay rather than enhance it; and introduces environmental risks.
- **Coastal Act § 30213.** Lower-cost visitor and recreational opportunities must be protected and encouraged. While the waterfront park and promenade offer free access, Topgolf itself – at up to \$82/hour – is not a low-cost facility and does not offset this loss.

¹² This includes coastal areas suited for both contact and non-contact water recreation (activities involving proximity to water where ingestion of water is reasonably possible, such as picnicking, sunbathing, hiking, beachcombing, camping, boating, tidepool and marine life study, hunting, sightseeing, or aesthetic enjoyment in conjunction with the above activities). Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin (San Diego Basin Plan) at p.2-8.

- **Coastal Act § 30251.** Scenic and visual coastal resources must be protected; development must be sited to protect ocean views and remain visually compatible with the surrounding area. We do not agree the Project enhances visual character; 170-foot netting enclosing prime waterfront tidelands does the opposite.

C. The Project Conflicts with State and Coastal Environmental Justice Commitments

Implementation of the Coastal Act has been successful in preserving coastal access for some, but not all, Californians. Particularly with respect to ports, decision-making has historically tilted toward accommodating growing port footprints to the detriment of the health and well-being of port-adjacent communities.¹³ However, recent developments, including the California Coastal Commission's 2019 Environmental Justice ("EJ") Policy, offer real potential for course correction for coastal development decision-making.

Broadly, the EJ Policy commits the Commission to advancing "equitable access to clean, healthy, and accessible coastal environments" for communities that have been historically and disproportionately overburdened by pollution or with natural resources that have been subjected to permanent damage for the benefit of wealthier communities.¹⁴ Article X of the California Constitution guarantees the right of access to navigable waters for all people, and the Coastal Act's mandate to provide maximum access and lower-cost visitor and recreational opportunities embodies these same environmental justice principles.

As the Commission has recognized, "even nominal costs can be barriers to access," and converting trust tidelands to a high-cost commercial use contributes to increased coastal inequality.¹⁵ Indeed, the policy emphasizes that "not only is equitable access to the coast for all Californians essential, so is protecting coastal natural resources for future generations."¹⁶

Many people come to the coast for free outdoor recreation and fresh air; for them, the coast is an accessible refuge from neighborhoods, many of which are lacking parks and greenspace.¹⁷ Yet, as the Commission notes, a "startling lack of diversity" persists among those who live on the California coast, even as millions of inland residents visit and work there daily "without the means to access affordable accommodations."¹⁸ A 2025-2026 assessment by the San Diego Natural History Museum confirms this dynamic locally.¹⁹ Based on input from over 500 County residents, participants consistently cited parking and entrance fees as a key barrier to local nature

¹³ Heather Kryczka et. al., New Steps Toward Environmental Justice: The California Coastal Act and Environmental Justice Near Ports, 50 Sw. L. Rev. 463 (2022).

¹⁴ Cal. Coastal Comm'n Env't Just. Pol'y (Mar. 8, 2019), https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/assets/env-justice/CCC_EJ_Policy_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*, citing Government Code 11135, the state analog to the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964.

¹⁷ See City Parks Master Plan survey.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ See Healing Through Nature Needs Assessment Summary for the San Diego Natural History Museum (November 2025) available at <https://www.sdnhm.org/e-brochures/Anchoring-Healing-Through-Nature/The-Nat-Healing-Through-Nature-Report/>.

and outdoor spaces, while organization leaders pointed to unequal investment in safe, accessible nature spaces across the region.

The EJ Policy asks decision-makers to consider that “[t]aking an *environmental justice approach to coastal policy requires a fundamental rethinking of who is connected to the coast, and how.*” Who, then, does Topgolf connect to the San Diego Bayfront – particularly when layered onto the cumulative impacts of the broader East Harbor Island Redevelopment? A facility priced at up to \$82/hour, occupying trust tidelands that would otherwise remain open and low-cost, sits squarely in tension with these commitments to equitable, community-informed access to the coast.

III. Project-Specific Environmental Impact Concerns

As an initial matter, we’d like to flag that many of the concerns raised in Coastkeeper’s CEQA Scoping comments have not been adequately addressed in the DEIR. As discussed in more detail in Section IV below, Coastkeeper believes the DEIR is inadequate and should be revised to properly address public comments per CEQA requirements.

A. Hydrology/Water Quality

Construction-Related Sediment and Turbidity Impacts

Coastkeeper’s prior comments on the Initial Study identified specific water quality harm mechanisms associated with Project construction, including sediment-related abrasion of aquatic organism membranes, interference with respiration and sensory perception, reduced photosynthesis and survival of aquatic flora, and formation of anaerobic conditions harmful to benthic organisms. The DEIR’s response consists only of generic references to Best Management Practices (BMPs) – unspecified erosion and sediment controls, practices to minimize contact of construction materials with stormwater, and installation of a turbidity curtain (DEIR 3.8-15) – without numeric water quality performance standards, monitoring protocols, or thresholds tied to the specific impacts we identified. Notably, a turbidity curtain only physically contains suspended sediment within a barrier; it does not reduce or treat the sediment generated, meaning the harms to aquatic organisms and marine habitat identified above could still occur within the Project area.²⁰ We request that the Final EIR provide a substantive, quantified assessment of these impacts rather than relying on generalized BMP categories.

The Project’s Location on an Already-Impaired Water Body

These construction and operational impacts are especially significant because the Project site drains directly into San Diego Bay through two proposed reinforced concrete pipes (48-inch and 42-inch), and San Diego Bay is already listed as an impaired water body under the U.S. EPA’s

²⁰ San Diego Basin Plan at 3-31.

Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list.²¹ The DEIR itself acknowledges that Project operations "would introduce potential pollutants, such as chemicals from household cleaners, pathogens from pet waste, nutrients from fertilizers, pesticides and sediments from landscaping, trash and debris, and oil and grease from vehicles," which could discharge into surface waters and degrade water quality (DEIR 3.8-14). This fails to account for numerous additional pollutants which threaten the water quality of San Diego Bay, as discussed in further detail below. Accordingly, the Project would increase discharges of identified pollutants to an already-impaired water body – **a direct and unmitigated water quality impact that calls into question the suitability of this site for the proposed use.**

Artificial Turf: PFAS, Microplastics, and Heat-Related Chemical Leaching

Coastkeeper's NOP comments identified specific and significant water quality concerns associated with the Project's 4.5 acres of artificial turf, including the release of lead, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (the "forever chemicals" known as PFAS), and microplastics.²² Some of these microplastics are carcinogens, neurotoxins, and/or endocrine disruptors, posing serious health impacts to humans and wildlife alike.²³ The DEIR's technical appendices acknowledge these dangers but the proposed mitigation measures do not adequately account for them. The only mitigation measure identified is that the turf's polyester netting "would be designed with no holes to allow for 100 percent horizontal drainage directed into a new storm drain system" (DEIR 3.8-14). This design does not address the underlying source of contamination: synthetic turf fibers, made of polyethylene and polypropylene, continuously shed through UV exposure, weathering, and foot traffic regardless of how effectively runoff is channeled.²⁴ Heavy storms can also cause water to bypass the drainage system entirely by flowing over the surrounding area's edges, and there are currently no cost-effective methods to remove PFAS or capture microplastics and nanoplastics from stormwater before discharge. The DEIR does not identify any mitigation measure capable of addressing this gap, for either routine runoff or catastrophic runoff following inundation or a seismic event.

The DEIR also fails to address the potential for the Project's barrier netting system to shed

²¹ 2024 California Integrated Report, available at

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/water_quality_assessment/2024-integrated-report.html.

²² Shreya Agrawal, *Once it was hailed as a drought fix — but now California's moving to restrict synthetic turf over health concerns*, Cal Matters, Oct. 18, 2023, <https://calmatters.org/environment/2023/10/california-synthetic-turf-pfas/> (updated Oct. 23, 2023).

²³ Murphy M, Warner GR. Health impacts of artificial turf: Toxicity studies, challenges, and future directions. *Environ Pollut.* 2022 Oct 1;310:119841. doi: 10.1016/j.envpol.2022.119841. Epub 2022 Aug 7. PMID: 35948114; PMCID: PMC10262297.

²⁴ William P. de Haan, Rocío Quintana, César Vilas, Andrés Cózar, Miquel Canals, Oriol Uviedo, Anna Sanchez-Vidal, *The dark side of artificial greening: Plastic turfs as widespread pollutants of aquatic environments*, *Environmental Pollution*, Volume 334, 2023, 122094, ISSN 0269-7491, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envpol.2023.122094>.

microplastics into San Diego Bay. Polyester netting release tiny microplastic fragments as it breaks down through outdoor exposure, and 24/7 exposure to salt air, UV rays, and humidity can also accelerate breakdown of the material, increasing the need and frequency of repair and replacement of the polyester netting.²⁵ Given the netting system's substantial surface area and its direct proximity to the Bay, this represents an additional, unaddressed pathway for microplastic pollution into an already-impaired water body.

Another omission is an analysis on the compounding effect of heat. Research by the National Toxicology Program shows that high heat causes chemicals to leach from the crumb rubber base of synthetic turf, exacerbating its chemical pollutant impact.²⁶ The DEIR's own appendices acknowledge that synthetic turf is one of the hottest possible surface materials and that this effect will worsen with climate change. These leached chemicals are known to cause cell death in humans.²⁷ The DEIR states that "the DEIR must assess the impacts of the chemical and heat pollution caused by the completed project and identify mitigation measures to minimize these impacts," yet no such assessment appears anywhere in the document.

Therefore, the final EIR must: (1) evaluate the potential for the Project's polyester netting system to shed microplastics into the San Diego Bay over its operational lifetime, given accelerated degradation from coastal weathering conditions; (2) identify a maintenance and replacement protocol for degraded netting; and (3) provide an impact assessment of toxic waste generated from chemical and heat pollution.

Impacts to Aquaculture

The DEIR fails to evaluate the environmental and public health impacts that Topgolf would have on the Port's adjacent aquaculture project, which run afoul to its own PMPU policies. PMPU Eco Policy 2.1.4 encourages aquaculture in tidelands areas using sustainable practices that do not degrade surrounding natural resources.²⁸ Artificial turf and driving-range operations carry a meaningful risk of microplastic shedding, and increased runoff during heavy rain events can transport that pollution into nearby aquatic systems, including aquaculture farms for shellfish, filter-feeding organisms which bioaccumulate toxins. Because contaminated farmed species directly implicate food safety and human health, the DEIR must evaluate the potential for plastic pollution and runoff to affect the aquaculture operation, and identify feasible mitigation.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ National Toxicology Program, Synthetic Turf/Recycled Tire Crumb Rubber Research Overview, <https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/whatwestudy/topics/syntheticiturf> (last updated Dec. 1, 2023).

²⁷ National Toxicology Program, Synthetic Turf/Recycled Tire Crumb Rubber Research Overview, <https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/whatwestudy/topics/syntheticiturf> (last updated Dec. 1, 2023).

²⁸ PMPU Eco Policy 2.1.4.

Golf Balls as an Unpermitted Discharge

The DEIR fails to identify any mitigation measures addressing the potential for golf balls to pass through gaps in the netting, or clear it entirely, and enter the Bay. Errant balls entering the Bay would constitute a direct discharge in violation of the Clean Water Act absent a permit. This also presents an independent water quality and wildlife hazard, as golf balls disintegrate into microplastic particles over time and release heavy metals as they decompose.²⁹ The Final EIR should include a golf ball retrieval and clean-up protocol, with defined timelines, for balls that enter the Bay.

Downstream and Food-Chain Effects on Bay Wildlife

The consequences of this unmitigated plastic and chemical pollution extend directly into the Bay's marine and estuarine habitat. The planet is already choking from a plastics crisis. Plastics persist in the environment for hundreds of years, absorbing and releasing toxic chemicals as they slowly degrade. Microplastic is in our air, agricultural soil, drinking water, salt,³⁰ beer, fish we eat and agricultural soil. Ingestion of turf fiber and netting fragments by filter feeders and other aquatic life is a particular concern; researchers have documented that swallowed plastic fragments can block digestive tracts and reduce growth and reproduction in marine organisms. These impacts are especially significant given the presence of the endangered East Pacific green turtle³¹ in and around the Project area, as well as the presence of other endangered species like the southern California steelhead in nearby lagoons and estuaries hydrologically connected to San Diego Bay.³² More broadly, microplastics and their associated toxic chemicals bioaccumulate up the food chain and are now documented in human blood, muscle, and organ tissue.³³ Over one-fourth of fish sampled from California and Indonesian markets have been found to contain microplastics.³⁴ The DEIR has not adequately assessed the cumulative effect of adding multiple acres of plastic turf and netting, along with thousands of plastic golf balls, directly on the San Diego Bayfront – adjacent to a working saltworks facility and active recreational and commercial fisheries.

Drainage Impact Assessment Gaps

Coastkeeper's previous comments regarding the Project's alteration of the existing landscape and hydrology have also not been adequately addressed. The DEIR states that water quality-related

²⁹ Bantock, Jack. “‘billions’ of Golf Balls Are Lost Every Year. Where Do They End Up?” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 19 Sept. 2024, www.cnn.com/sport/lost-golf-balls-environment-spt-spc.

³⁰ Karami, A., Golieskardi, A., Keong Choo, C. *et al.* The presence of microplastics in commercial salts from different countries. *Sci Rep* 7, 46173 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep46173>.

³¹ NOAA Fisheries. (2024, May 1). *Green Turtle Research and conservation in Southern California*. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/science-data/green-turtle-research-and-conservation-southern-california>

³² *Southern steelhead*. California Trout. (2020, February 3). <https://caltrout.org/sos/species-accounts/steelhead/southern-steelhead/>

³³ Rochman, C., Tahir, A., Williams, S. *et al.* Anthropogenic debris in seafood: Plastic debris and fibers from textiles in fish and bivalves sold for human consumption. *Sci Rep* 5, 14340 (2015, <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep14340>).

³⁴ *Id.*

indirect impacts to wildlife would be "potentially significant" only "in the absence of measures that would avoid water quality degradation," but never identifies what those measures are, nor does it assess what specific drainage impacts could occur (DEIR 3.3-38). The DEIR asserts that the waterfront park component would not alter existing drainage patterns, but provides no comparable analysis for the Topgolf building, adjacent parking lot, or the Liberator Way roadway realignment – the components most likely to affect site drainage. Further, although the NOP identified the need for a Drainage Memorandum with further analysis in the EIR, the DEIR neither references nor summarizes any such memorandum (EIS Checklist at 34). Coastkeeper therefore requests that the Final EIR identify specific mitigation measures for water quality-related indirect impacts, provide a drainage impact assessment for all Project components (not solely the waterfront park), and include the previously requested Drainage Memorandum and its findings.

Tire Wear and 6PPD-Quinone

Finally, more frequent visits to EHI and increased traffic congestion would result in greater tire wear particle loading into the Bay during storm events. Recent NOAA research has identified 6PPD-quinone – a toxic transformation product formed when the tire additive 6PPD reacts with ambient ozone – as highly toxic to aquatic and marine wildlife.³⁵ Tiny particles containing this chemical are released as tires wear down, which find their way into waterways with stormwater runoff. The DEIR's VMT analysis relies solely on density-based estimates, which we address more fully in a later section, but which likely understate the Project's true traffic generation and, correspondingly, the volume of 6PPD-quinone entering the Bay with every rain event. Coastkeeper requests that the Final EIR conduct a more accurate VMT analysis that accounts for tire-wear pollution as a distinct water quality impact.

B. Biological Impacts

The proposed Topgolf project would produce adverse biological impacts to marine wildlife, shorebirds, and marine habitats, all identified as "Potentially Significant" in the DEIR. However, throughout Section 3.3, Biological Resources, the DEIR relies on vague, discretionary mitigation language rather than the quantifiable, enforceable standards CEQA requires.³⁶ Mitigation measures repeatedly leave buffer distances, monitoring intervals, disturbance thresholds, and construction halt/resume decisions to the discretion of a "qualified biologist," without numeric criteria to guide those determinations. Other measures – including those addressing noise and light – rely on qualifiers such as "to the maximum extent feasible," or defer the substance of

³⁵ Li-Jung Kuo et al., *Analysis of 6PPD-Q in Finfish, Shellfish, and Marine Mammal Tissues*, 379 *Chemosphere* 144418 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chemosphere.2025.144418>.

³⁶ See generally, CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4.

mitigation entirely to a future, contingent determination, such as with eelgrass avoidance. We request that all mitigation measures in this section be revised to include specific, quantifiable thresholds, defined monitoring protocols, and clear performance criteria.

i. Light Pollution Impacts

Construction and operation of the Project would introduce bright lighting with the potential to disrupt migrating birds and foraging habitat. The site sits on the Pacific Flyway and near California least tern nesting habitat at San Diego International Airport and San Diego Bay. Artificial nighttime lighting disrupts natural cycles for marine life and shorebirds, affecting navigation, reproduction, and communication. Further, many species detect light at levels far below human perception, meaning even modest additional lighting can have an outsized effect given the cumulative light pollution already present in the region.³⁷

The DEIR also acknowledges that light and glare at the Liberator Way/North Harbor Drive intersection is expected to exceed the significance threshold and "could result in a hazard to motorists," and does not fully rule out light spill toward the Bay/Coast Guard inlet from display screens or ambient skyglow — which could interfere with Coast Guard night-vision-dependent operations that depend on night vision for maritime safety and navigation. The only proposed mitigation is a single 9-foot physical barrier (AES-1). Coastkeeper is concerned about the durability of this barrier and whether it truly resolves the impact to less-than-significant. As such, we request a monitoring protocol to confirm the barrier's effectiveness, and clarification of what temporary measures would prevent light spill and glare before the barrier is constructed.

ii. Noise Impacts

Section 3.3.5.1 limits construction activity to dawn/dusk to avoid nighttime lighting impacts but does not address daytime noise and visual disturbance to nesting or foraging birds during active hours, and noise monitoring during high-decibel work is left "at the discretion of the qualified biologist" with no specified decibel thresholds, monitoring frequency, or trigger levels.

Section 3.10 addresses construction noise impacts to migrating birds but omits impacts to marine life entirely. Sound travels roughly 4.5 times faster and up to 60 times farther in water than in air, meaning pile-driving noise can be detected well above ambient levels many kilometers from the source.³⁸ Pile-driving noise overlaps with the vocalization frequencies of whales and dolphins and can interrupt social behaviors and fish aggregation/schooling behavior, increasing predation

³⁷ California, S. (n.d.). Keep the Night On: Artificial Lighting on Our Coast – California Ocean Protection Council. In *opc.ca.gov*. Retrieved August 11, 2026, from <https://opc.ca.gov/keep-the-night-on/>.

³⁸ Infographic: Underwater noise. (n.d.). In *WWF Arctic*. Retrieved August 11, 2026, from <https://www.arcticwwf.org/the-circle/stories/infographic-underwater-noise/>.

vulnerability in species like sea bass.³⁹ We recommend the EIR reconsider a larger buffer than the current 100 feet to adequately protect marine wildlife.

Loudspeakers used during operation similarly risk temporary or permanent hearing loss, elevated stress responses, and disrupted feeding, breeding, and communication behaviors in marine life.⁴⁰

Finally, the District's BMPs and Environmental Standards (discussed under Water Quality, above) include noise and vibration guidelines for in-water shoreline work and Project operation (District 2019), but the DEIR does not clarify whether these standards are mandatory or advisory, or under what circumstances the Project could deviate from the designated construction windows.

C. Energy/Greenhouse Gas Emission Issues

The Project would substantially increase traffic congestion and contribute to a significant increase in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), inconsistent with CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan target of reducing per-capita VMT 25% below 2019 levels by 2030 (DEIR 3.6-19). Mitigation Measure TRA-1's Transportation Demand Management provisions address only VMT associated with Topgolf employees— it does not include visitors and patrons, who account for over 95% of the Project's total VMT. Increased vehicle trips also mean more brake dust, tire wear particles, oil drips, and heavy metals accumulating on paved surfaces and washing into the Bay during rain events, compounding the water quality concerns raised in Section III.A. We are concerned that the DEIR concludes VMT impacts are significant and unavoidable while attempting almost no meaningful mitigation for the overwhelming majority of that impact.

The trip generation data underlying the VMT analysis is also unreliable: it relies on 12-year-old data from a single Topgolf location in Arizona. Post-pandemic travel patterns, rideshare prevalence, and the fundamental differences between an inland Arizona market and a Southern California coastal tourism destination are not accounted for, and could materially affect both the trip generation rate and the resulting GHG calculations. We recommend the Port District require an updated, California-specific trip generation study before the Final EIR is certified.

The DEIR's own GHG analysis compounds this problem. The DEIR acknowledges that the District's 2013 Climate Action Plan is intended to guide GHG reduction "in support of the state's climate change efforts," yet the Project's GHG impact is identified as significant and unavoidable

³⁹ Herbert-Read, J. E., Kremer, L., Bruintjes, R., Radford, A. N., & Loannou, C. C. (2017). Anthropogenic noise pollution from pile-driving disrupts the structure and dynamics of fish shoals. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 284. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2017.1627>.

⁴⁰ Peng C, Zhao X, Liu G. Noise in the Sea and Its Impacts on Marine Organisms. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2015 Sep 30;12(10):12304-23. doi: 10.3390/ijerph121012304. PMID: 26437424; PMCID: PMC4626970.

even after mitigation. Moreover, the DEIR does not analyze the Project against California's 2045 carbon-neutrality target, relying instead on outdated benchmarks. The DEIR also omits identifiable emissions sources, including refrigerant leakage from commercial refrigeration and cooling systems, which can be a material contributor given the global warming potential of common refrigerants. Because the Project's VMT and GHG impacts are significant and unavoidable, approval would require findings of overriding considerations under CEQA. The availability of the All Park Alternative – which the DEIR itself identifies as environmentally superior on both VMT and GHG grounds – weighs heavily against any conclusion that these impacts cannot feasibly be avoided.

D. Visual Aesthetic Concerns

Coastkeeper strongly disagrees with the DEIR's conclusion that the Project would not result in significant impacts to scenic vistas. The Project site sits at one of the most visible points along San Diego Bay, within the sightline from I-5 to the Embarcadero to the Point Loma/Cabrillo peninsula. The DEIR itself describes a 4.5-acre turf outfield enclosed by netting supported by poles ranging from 140 to 170 feet – a structure that would, in effect, wall off views between downtown, the airport, and Harbor Island and the bay itself. In place of open water and skyline views, the public would see a 170-foot net strung with airplane warning lights. This degradation would not be limited to daytime: nighttime lighting of the turf area and the three-story building would extend the visual impact until as late as 2:00 AM. These are significant impacts for which the DEIR proposes no, or plainly ineffective, mitigation— a deficiency in the CEQA analysis that appears throughout the DEIR. The DEIR also fails to evaluate several critical viewpoints, including along North Harbor Drive/West Laurel Street and from the Sunroad Marina/restaurant peninsula.

This conclusion is also difficult to reconcile with the DEIR's own procedural history: the NOP for this Project acknowledged a potentially significant impact to scenic vistas and visual character, yet the DEIR now concludes there is none (EIS at 14-15). The DEIR should explain this shift in conclusion, supported by substantial evidence, rather than simply asserting a different result.

Related to the impacts to scenic vistas, Coastkeeper also disagrees with the DEIR's conclusion that the Project would not substantially degrade the site's existing visual character. The site currently has no multistory structures, so drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists along the bay have relatively unobstructed views of the area. The proposed Project would permanently degrade the site's existing visual character, and no mitigation is proposed for that impact – another serious deficiency in the CEQA analysis.

E. Loss of Open Space and Recreational Access

The Project would fence off 4.5 acres of tidelands entirely, serving no function but a golf-ball repository. As discussed above, this is a direct, physical loss of public open space on trust lands in conflict with public trust coastal access policies. Independent of that conflict, the DEIR fails to identify or analyze this loss as a Potentially Significant Impact under "Recreation." This omission must be corrected regardless of how the Coastal Act consistency issues discussed above are resolved.

F. Negative Cumulative Impacts

The Project must be considered together with airport expansion and modernization, Port Master Plan Update (PMPU) implementation, Harbor Island redevelopment, hotel and marina activity, roadway projects, and other reasonably foreseeable waterfront development. The DEIR identifies these cumulative projects only in a general list; each technical section should instead explain how those projects would interact with the Project's specific impacts.

We agree that a significant cumulative impact would occur if cumulative projects (like Topgolf) create new sources of substantial light and glare. Mitigation Measure AES-1's single 9-foot barrier is not sufficient to render that contribution "not cumulatively considerable," particularly where cumulative nighttime lighting from the airport and other waterfront development may independently increase sky glow, glare, and wildlife disorientation, even where each project claims compliance with its own project-level threshold. A revised EIR should analyze the combined effect of airport operations, Project lighting, and other waterfront lighting on pilots, motorists, wildlife, and public enjoyment of the bay.

Cumulative traffic growth would similarly increase congestion, air pollution, GHG emissions, pedestrian conflicts, and emergency-response challenges along the already-constrained Harbor Island and North Harbor Drive circulation system. The DEIR itself identifies a significant cumulative traffic-noise increase on Harbor Island Drive, to which the Project would add trips. The Project's VMT and GHG impacts remain significant and unavoidable and should be understood as contributions to an existing regional climate crisis, not merely isolated project emissions.

The same cumulative pressure applies to biological resources: multiple waterfront developments may progressively reduce the dim, quiet, and relatively unobstructed habitat that birds and other wildlife depend on, and that loss can be substantial even where each project's individual footprint is characterized as limited – particularly given the DEIR's general lack of specific, enforceable mitigation metrics.

The cumulative analysis also relies too heavily on the assumption that other foreseeable projects will simply comply with existing regulations, which does not by itself prevent significant combined impacts. Notably, the PMPU has not yet been approved by the California Coastal Commission and is not yet a binding regulatory standard against which the Project's cumulative impacts can be measured. The EIR should instead evaluate cumulative peak conditions rather than averages and should account for climate change, sea-level rise, and extreme weather, which may compound evacuation, circulation, shoreline, and habitat impacts over the Project's operating life.

Finally, the DEIR's own analysis undercuts any conclusion that these cumulative burdens are unavoidable: it identifies the All Park Alternative as environmentally superior precisely because it would avoid or substantially reduce several of the Project's significant impacts, including VMT and GHG emissions, lighting impacts, and threats to wildlife. That finding demonstrates that the cumulative environmental burden is not unavoidable if the Port selects a lower-intensity use for the site.

IV. The DEIR is Inadequate and Cannot Support Project Approval

Independent of the substantive conflicts described above, the DEIR also falls short as an informational document in several respects, for the following reasons.

A. The DEIR's Baseline Is Factually Inaccurate

The DEIR's description of existing conditions is not accurate, which undermines confidence in the analysis built upon it. In describing the No Project/No Build Alternative, the DEIR states that "the existing 38-acre site would not be redeveloped. The three rental car facilities would continue to operate." This is incorrect: the airport's rental car agencies relocated in 2016 to the Consolidated Rental Car Center on the east side of San Diego International Airport, and have not operated at the Project site for nearly a decade. An EIR's description of existing conditions must be accurate, since it forms the baseline against which all of the document's impact conclusions are measured. Reliance on a decade-outdated site condition raises questions about the reliability of the baseline used throughout the DEIR's environmental analysis, and the Final EIR should correct this error and confirm that no other baseline assumptions rely on similarly outdated information.

B. The DEIR Improperly Concludes No Project-Specific PMPA is Required

The DEIR concludes that no project-specific Port Master Plan Amendment is required if the pending PMPU is certified, reasoning that Topgolf qualifies as the "visitor-serving attraction" the PMPU anticipates for the Commercial Recreation-designated area north of the East Harbor Island Basin (PMPU at 243, PD 2.51). This conclusion is problematic. As explained above, (1) Topgolf is not a "visitor-serving commercial recreational facility" within the meaning of the

Coastal Act because it does not "enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation" whatsoever, and (2) does not fit within the PMPU's own "golf course" category – the only category under which the site's Recreation designation was justified.

Because Topgolf is not a qualifying visitor-serving use, its consistency with the PMPU cannot substitute for project-specific PMPA review. Coastal Act Section 30711 requires that a port master plan describe uses "in sufficient detail to be able to determine their consistency with the policies of Chapter 3"⁴¹ and that the plan "contain information in sufficient detail to allow the [Coastal] Commission to determine its adequacy and conformity with the applicable policies of this division."⁴² The DEIR's own acknowledgment that the draft PMPA includes "additional detail to comply with . . . Section 30711(b)" confirms that the PMPU alone lacks the project-specific detail Section 30711 requires. Separately, the DEIR does not address Section 30708 at all, which requires that port-related development give highest priority to existing land already devoted to port purposes and to public-trust-consistent uses such as recreation and wildlife habitat.

For these reasons, we do not believe the DEIR has adequately supported its conclusion that PMPU certification alone can substitute for project-specific PMPA review. A project-specific PMPA and the site-specific Coastal Act consistency findings it would require should be considered here regardless of the PMPU's certification status.

C. The DEIR's Alternatives Analysis is Inadequate

The DEIR does not seriously grapple with whether a less damaging alternative exists. It does not analyze feasible alternative locations, does not weigh the Project's irreversible impacts against its economic rationale, and does not explain why golf-related development belongs on this site, as opposed to a more resource-protective use. Nor does it address the Coastal Zone's "carrying capacity," a threshold development concept reflected in the Coastal Act and rooted in the 1975 California Coastal Plan.⁴³ That omission matters directly here, given the cumulative loss of open tidelands, habitat, and public access the Project would cause. As noted above, this gap is compounded by the DEIR's failure to analyze the Project's loss of open space and recreational access as a significant impact in the first place, which forecloses any meaningful comparison of the alternatives' relative recreational benefits.

The DEIR's own "Reduced Topgolf Alternative" illustrates the problem rather than curing it.

⁴¹ Cal. Coastal Act § 30711(a)(4).

⁴² Cal. Coastal Act § 30711(b).

⁴³ See Coastal Act Section 30250(a); CAL. COASTAL ZONE CONSERVATION COMM'N, CALIFORNIA COASTAL PLAN 152, 82 (1975), <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/13541>.

That alternative retains the same overall 22.4-acre project footprint (with 9.8 acres still devoted to Topgolf) and the same range of uses; it reduces net height from 170 feet to 140 feet without changing the driving-range footprint or the loss of public access. Because it is too similar in design, operations, and impacts to the proposed Project, it does not constitute a meaningfully different alternative and does not satisfy the requirement to consider a reasonable range of alternatives that could reduce the Project's effects.

V. Conclusion

While we are not opposed to waterfront development in general, we do not believe a Topgolf facility is an appropriate use of public tidelands. A driving range is better suited to a commercial lot elsewhere in the San Diego area, away from the waterfront.

Coastkeeper prefers the All Park Alternative, as it would reduce an overwhelming majority of the Project's potentially significant impacts, is the most accessible to the public, and most closely aligns with the public trust doctrine and the Coastal Act. We would also support the Other Visitor-Serving Commercial Use Alternative, as it would provide a similar visitor experience using golf simulators with reduced environmental impact.

For the reasons discussed above, we ask that the Port District decline to approve the Project as proposed and instead direct staff to prepare a Final EIR that selects a less damaging alternative and addresses the deficiencies identified in these comments.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Courtney Brown
Staff Attorney
San Diego Coastkeeper