

# Daily Breeze

The South Bay's choice for 117 years

## Redondo Beach Prepares for a Wave of Change at King Harbor



*In this rendering for a redesigned Redondo Beach waterfront, a new boardwalk is pictured with a market hall to the south, in roughly the same area where Samba's restaurant sits today.*

July 30, 2013

By Kristin Agostoni

**What:** The Redondo Beach City Council will hear developer CenterCal's latest revitalization plans for the waterfront, and could decide to kick off an environmental review process.

**What:** 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 30, 2013

**Where:** Redondo Beach City Hall, 415 Diamond St.

**Information:** [redondo.org](http://redondo.org) or [redondobeachwaterfront.org](http://redondobeachwaterfront.org)

Redondo Beach has been talking for years about remaking its aging waterfront, an area often described as the city's crown jewel, but one that's lost much of its luster. New shops and restaurants, a hotel, more public gathering spaces, better connectivity among walking paths -- those ideas and others all have appeared on wish lists for an updated pier and King Harbor.

On Tuesday, the city's latest waterfront revitalization effort could take a step forward if the City Council agrees to kick off an environmental review of concepts developed by El Segundo-based CenterCal Properties, which was selected in October 2012 to spearhead the overhaul.

Since then, CenterCal has held eight public meetings to get feedback from waterfront business owners, residents and others on how to improve the area that spans 15 acres from Torrance Boulevard to Portofino Way, taking in the pier, International Boardwalk and Redondo Beach Marina. The company will present its latest vision to the council the same night.



*A boardwalk is proposed in front of a new hotel near the pier with retailers on the ground level.*

It includes plans to add a boutique hotel facing the sand near the horseshoe pier, high-end shops and eateries, a foot bridge linking the marina to the pier's north side and a plan to open up the enclosed Seaside Lagoon to King Harbor, creating a "natural beach" that would be accessible year-round. The city and CenterCal together could invest as much as \$250 million to \$350 million in the area within the next five to 10 years, officials say. "It's pretty much our latest site plan," CenterCal CEO Fred Bruning said of the concepts his firm will present to city leaders. "We want to develop a project that's going to please the vast, vast majority of the people in Redondo Beach."

That's not to say it will suit everyone.

In recent weeks, many residents living close to the harbor and pier have voiced concerns that CenterCal's building proposal is too dense, and that the focus on new commercial projects outweighs the emphasis on more recreation and water-themed amenities.

People in surrounding condominiums fear the new buildings will block their views. And some residents have also taken issue with a proposed connection -- possibly a two-lane road -- that would link Torrance Boulevard to Harbor Drive, following roughly the same path Pacific Avenue once did through the city's historic downtown.



*Proposed upgrades for the Redondo Beach waterfront include a new hotel near the horseshoe pier.*

"A lot of the residents' concerns have to do with the density, and the change of character of the waterfront," said Nadine Meissner of the citizens group Residents for Appropriate Development, who fears CenterCal is focused "too much on the commercial aspects."

"As residents of Redondo, we love our harbor. Basically, we're just looking for a good balance in the commercial and the recreation, so people can really enjoy the waterfront."

The city expects a decent turnout at the 6 p.m. Tuesday meeting in council chambers, said Pete Carmichael, waterfront and economic development manager. He said that's also been the case at recent workshops, some of which drew a couple hundred people wanting to share their thoughts about the area named for the late Rep. Cecil R. King, who helped Redondo Beach obtain money in the 1950s for the construction of the harbor breakwater.

Mayor Steve Aspel expressed support for attractions aimed at drawing more foot traffic and upgrading the harbor's image, including an "upscale" movie theater and "high-end" retailers.

"We're not looking for toe-ring shops," the mayor said. "You're not going to be able to buy a bong. Our whole interest is to make it upscale."

But Aspel also stressed that a council vote to move forward with the environmental review and extend a contract with CenterCal wouldn't mean any of the concepts on the table are set in stone.

Proposed upgrades for the Redondo Beach waterfront include a new hotel near the horseshoe pier. harbor's image, including an "upscale" movie theater and "high-end" retailers.

But Aspel also stressed that a council vote to move forward with the environmental review and extend a contract with CenterCal wouldn't mean any of the concepts on the table are set in stone.

"This is just the beginning of a plan," he said. "And I'm sure there will be many iterations. ... In my opinion, whatever they show us on Tuesday night doesn't mean that will be the final design." Still, he indicated some may have to accept changes they don't like.

"What people have to remember," Aspel said, "is just because the council, the mayor or CenterCal doesn't agree with what they say, doesn't mean we weren't listening."

Meissner said she hopes the council will step back and not rush into any approvals this week. Instead, she wants officials to ask CenterCal to consider more view corridors and open spaces and decrease the building density. And she'd also like to see a feasibility study that analyzes the likely success of the commercial projects, factoring in new and upcoming developments in nearby cities and more.

Assuming the environmental review gets underway soon, city officials said the public will have additional opportunities to comment throughout the process. And it's not expected to move at breakneck speed; studying CenterCal's proposals could last two years.

Nonetheless, some pier vendors are uneasy about what the future holds, even though they agree the area needs some attention. They wonder whether they'll land spots at a redesigned waterfront and how they'd weather the construction.

"I think it's a good move. I mean, the pier really, really does need it. It needed to be updated a long time ago. ... I've been here 20 years and it's been a tough climb," said Steve Montez of God's Awesome Blossoms, a kiosk on the pier that sells flowers, gifts, balloons and more. "We're all mom-and-pop stores and they're trying to go corporate, and I hope it doesn't knock us out of business," he added.

Charlie Anderson, the manager of the Slightly Different shop, said pier merchants are taking a wait-and-see approach given that "we haven't heard anything concrete at this point in time." He said shops have struggled during the economic downturn and the recent remodel of the leasehold at the front of the pier. The proposed waterfront revitalization continually stirs up rumors, Anderson said.

"Everybody seems to come up with something new every day: 'Oh did you hear this, did you hear that?' " he said. "Until we see something concrete about what's coming up, it's been rumor central around here."

[http://www.dailybreeze.com/news/ci\\_23748585/redondo-beach-prepares-wave-change-at-king-harbor](http://www.dailybreeze.com/news/ci_23748585/redondo-beach-prepares-wave-change-at-king-harbor)