

DAILY BREEZE

San Pedro waterfront plans advance; groundbreaking set for spring 2020

The San Pedro Public Market will be constructed where Ports O' Call Village once stood.



A rendering of the future San Pedro Public Market waterfront development planned for San Pedro. (Courtesy San Pedro Public Market Partners)

By [Donna Littlejohn](#) | dlittlejohn@scng.com | Daily Breeze
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With an environmental review expected to start soon for the proposed 5,000-seat outdoor amphitheater and some tenant agreements close to signing, plans for the [new waterfront development](#) in San Pedro are going as planned, according to both port officials and developers.

“We’re on schedule, we should hold our groundbreaking in spring of 2020 and open in the fall of 2021,” said Alan Johnson of Jerico Development.

Port of Los Angeles officials agree that timeline remains on schedule.

The San Pedro Public Market will be constructed where Ports O' Call Village once stood.

No one denies the process has been a lengthy one. The slow process has given rise to skepticism and speculation that it's all dead in the water.

"We've been at this for seven years now," Johnson said, acknowledging that it's not going as fast as everyone would like. "There are a whole lot of pieces that just have to be put into place, including infrastructure."

Considering the bureaucratic hoops that are all part of a major development on the water, he said, the timing has been "logical and normal."

Port officials also anticipate a groundbreaking in late winter 2020 for the town square and promenade, both linked infrastructure elements for the overall waterfront project. Construction on both of those projects is expected to move forward at the same time as construction on the first 60,000 square-foot building that will house a new home for the San Pedro Fish Market along with other tenants in the San Pedro Public Market.

A rendering of the future San Pedro Public Market waterfront development planned for San Pedro. (Courtesy San Pedro Public Market Partners)

Two other buildings, about 45,000 square feet each, will be built in phases following that one, Johnson said. The Ratkovich Company in Los Angeles is lead developer on the project while Jerico Development has deep Harbor Area roots.

Despite assurances that the project remains on track, speculation and social media-fueled rumors have spread over the past year claiming the plug has been pulled on the project for various reasons.

"It speaks to the importance" the waterfront holds in the town, Johnson said of all the speculation. "I get all that," he said.

The [Sampson Way realignment](#) project, he said, was among infrastructure improvements that had to take place before the development could begin construction. Realigning the Harbor Boulevard-linked road, [completed in June 2018](#), will now provide a more seamless access into the waterfront development site.

"It wasn't like there was a site ready for us to start construction," Johnson said. "The Sampson Way realignment (already) has worked wonders for weekend traffic. If they'd just said do the development without that, we'd have this great draw that no one could effectively get to. Building a town square and a promenade, these things just take time."

Ports O' Call also had to be [cleared out](#) before work on the promenade and other infrastructure could begin.

While the port had to go [back out to re-bid for the town square and promenade](#), that is still not expected to delay the San Pedro Public Market construction schedule, according to both the port and developers.

The size of the footprint — 375,000 square feet of linear waterfront space — poses both challenges and opportunities, Johnson said.

While [Ports O' Call Village, which opened in the 1960s](#), was a hit that endured until the late 1980s, the outdoor venue designed as an East Coast fishing village fell victim to changing consumer tastes and a deterioration of the buildings.

Two components of the original village, however — the San Pedro Fish Market and Ports O' Call Restaurant — managed to retain their customer base. The fish market remains open and will be an anchor tenant in the new development. The building that housed Ports O' Call Restaurant, amid much public protest, was demolished to make way for the new development.

While the [final closing down of Ports O' Call](#) drew loud community laments and some anger, most had long agreed, Johnson said, that San Pedro's waterfront was simply in need of a "giant refresh."

While he said it is premature for tenant deals to be finalized before construction commences, some agreements are close to being signed and will be announced in the coming months.

"We're going to be signing people up in the next few months," he said. "It's just the nature of these developments that people don't commit years in advance."

Restaurants, especially, he said, have short planning horizons.

"The project has generated a lot of interest with a lot of very familiar names," he said. While some are national chains, the goal, he said, is to open with a mix of national, regional and local businesses.

"We need big players and we need small players," he said.