

Daily Breeze

San Pedro Fish Market strikes deal for temporary spot on waterfront

The market, forced to leave its current spot because of the West Harbor development, has plans to build a new permanent home to the north.



A deal appears to be in the works to provide temporary space for the San Pedro Fish Market somewhere within the 40 acres of the West Harbor waterfront development site. The business must vacate its long-standing waterfront premises by March 3, in San Pedro on Wednesday, February 8, 2023. (Photo by Brittany Murray, Press-Telegram/SCNG)

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A deal appears to be in the works to provide temporary space for the San Pedro Fish Market somewhere within the 40 acres of the West Harbor waterfront development site. The business must vacate its long-standing waterfront premises by March 3, in San Pedro on Wednesday, February 8, 2023. (Photo by Brittany Murray, Press-Telegram/SCNG)

The San Pedro Fish Market and Restaurant has reached an agreement with the West Harbor developers that will allow the iconic eatery to operate out of a nearby, temporary “pop-up” spot as work begins to clear the current site.

The market must move out of its current and longtime location by March 3 under port requirements currently in place.

“San Pedro Fish Market is officially moving into the next phase of development,” the restaurant wrote in a Tuesday, Feb. 7, Facebook post announcing the deal.

That post thanked Los Angeles Councilmember Tim McOsker, the Port of Los Angeles and the West Harbor development team, which have “worked with us collaboratively on the waterfront in San Pedro” to reach an agreement for an interim location.

McOsker, in a Wednesday, Feb. 7, statement, called the market a “crucial part of our community for over 65 years.”

“It has been important to me to work with them to find a new home,” he added, pledging to continue doing so until the market finds “a more permanent home on the LA waterfront.”

The restaurant, which has long-term plans to build a new facility and move to the cruise terminal berth near the Vincent Thomas Bridge, has been embroiled in lengthy closed-door discussions with the port over details regarding a permit for that site. Neither party will comment on the specifics of those discussions.

But with the move-out date fast approaching, the lack of clarity about a permanent site raised concerns over whether the market would have to stop operating for a time if it couldn't find a temporary location.

West Harbor needs access to the current Fish Market location so work can begin in preparing to demolish the building and remediate the land underneath before construction gets underway for West Harbor. The new waterfront development is slated to open in late 2024.

The San Pedro Fish Market originally was initially part of that new development. But the restaurant later pulled out, deciding it needed more room than what was being offered.

Michael Ungaro, CEO of the Fish Market, declined to comment Wednesday.

Details on how soon a temporary spot could be ready to serve customers weren't immediately available.

Eric Johnson of Jerico Development, one of the West Harbor waterfront development partners, said Tuesday that a specific site on the development's waterfront footprint hasn't been determined. Those specifics will be worked out with the fish market, he said.

“We've got 40 acres, a fair amount of room, and we'll be sitting down with them and seeing what they can do,” Johnson said in a telephone interview. “All in all, we're pleased.”

In the Facebook post, the market said, “Our new ‘pop-up’ location will be just a short walk north.”

For now, though, the San Pedro Fish Market continues operating at its longstanding location. It's unclear whether it will be allowed to remain beyond the March 3 move-out date if more time is needed to set up the temporary facility.

Questions had swirled around how the market's forced exit would be handled, especially considering many in the community still have lingering resentments over how POLA officials handled the eviction process for the iconic Ports O' Call Restaurant and nearby shops several years ago, while plans for the West Harbor development were still relatively nascent.

The fish market hoped to have a [temporary spot up and running on the same cruise terminal site](#) where its new [permanent building](#) will eventually go. Instead, the pop-up spot will be adjacent to the market's current location. But either way, having a temporary location eases the threat of the market losing business after it moves out of its longtime location.

Restaurant operators, the Facebook post said, are “excited to very soon have plans to share for our ‘pop up’ location within the West Harbor project which will have plenty of seating and all the great seafood we're known for.”

There have been no recent comments on the specific plans for the new permanent Fish Market location at the cruise terminal. But the Los Angeles harbor commission is, again, set to discuss negotiations between the city and the restaurant on “price and terms” for a permit at “Berths 93 C, D and E” in closed session during its Thursday, Feb. 9, meeting.

The port also announced recently that it would include the original cruise terminal site as part of a request for proposals to create a new Outer Harbor cruise terminal and to possibly revamp the existing one at Berth 93 as a companion project.

But a port spokesperson said the Berth 93 site the restaurant has been eyeing for its new permanent location is not within the cruise terminal footprint that would be included in the RFP.

The popular family-owned restaurant, with a 65-year history in the port town, has been one of the area's most colorful and unique attractions, drawing visitors from a wide region to enjoy giant fresh fish platters, mariachis and other live music, and a festive, outdoor setting that features a front-row seat to San Pedro's commercial shipping channel.

The market's planned new home, about 1 mile north of its present location, will provide "bookend" attractions on the waterfront, as Mike Galvin, POLA's director of waterfront and commercial real estate, once described it.

The Fish Market had been a centerpiece of San Pedro's now-shuttered Ports O' Call Village, which opened in the early 1960s and is being replaced by the West Harbor development.

The restaurant, in its Facebook post, assured the community that it intended to keep its location in town. It has recently opened other smaller locations, including one in Long Beach.

"We intend to maintain a home in San Pedro," the market said in its post, "and are encouraged and thankful to be working directly with West Harbor on a plan for us to quickly resume operations in a temporary location, which we are excited about.

"This will allow our family and staff to continue to serve our loyal customers," the market added, "while we explore a longer-term opportunity on the San Pedro waterfront."