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Designers unveil updated design for amphitheater at San Pedro's West Harbor

Changes include a pivot of the stage slightly east, pointing more toward the port shipping channel's water, and a design that allows for more flexibility to use small speaker boxes that can be more easily spaced apart and have a more specific directional focus.



Aerial view of newly redesigned amphitheater proposed for the West Harbor waterfront development in San Pedro. (Rendering courtesy of Studio One Eleven)

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Among the more spectacular plans for San Pedro's new West Harbor waterfront redevelopment is a 6,200-seat outdoor amphitheater that will feature an array of musical genres, including popular rock acts.

But the plan has drawn concerns about amplified sounds and other disruptions to nearby neighborhoods in south San Pedro.

This week, developers, adding that neighborhood compatibility is a priority, released an updated design that they hope will speak to some of those apprehensions.

Changes include a pivot of the stage slightly east, pointing more toward the port shipping channel's water, and a design that allows for more flexibility to use small speaker boxes that can be more easily spaced apart and have a more specific directional focus.

The new design also features more amenities and space for performers to load, unload and store large equipment, and an additional 2,000-space surface overflow parking lot.

Studio One-Eleven has been working with the West Harbor developers and Nederlander Concerts in Los Angeles, which will manage the venue that will sit on far southern end of West Harbor's 42-acre linear footprint.

The venue will feature bookings across all genres and kinds of music, from jazz to rock and symphonic, perhaps even Broadway-style summer theater. Entertainment in the tradition of Jackson Browne, Bonnie

Raitt and other singer-songwriters will likely be especially drawn to the site, said Nederlander COO Rena Wasserman.

The amphitheater currently is undergoing a supplemental environmental impact review that is set to be released sometime later this year. That will be followed by a public review for input.

“The shape of the venue compared to the previous design will make it easier to hang sound (equipment) and focus that toward the audience as opposed to anything bleeding out into the neighborhood,” Wasserman said in a telephone interview on Thursday, Aug. 17.

The stage area, also, she said, has been “pivoted a little bit more toward the water.”

Responding to community concerns about how sound might bleed out into residential areas, the changes also include pivoting the stage area slightly east, more toward the water, she said..

With technology also having changed significantly in recent years, Wasserman said, the new design will allow smaller speakers to be directed and moved in specific ways to better control and focus the sound.

Wasserman, who formerly managed the Greek Theatre, pointed to that 41-year-old venue’s history. “They have had a terrific relationship with their neighbors,” she said.

“You’re always going to have concerns with an outdoor venue,” she added, “there’s no way around that. We’ve always been very concerned about how (this) works not only for the artists but with the neighbors and employers” around it.

The venue will occupy some 108,000 square feet at the southern end of the West Harbor waterfront development footprint. That will place it just east of the Southern Pacific Slip where commercial fishing boats tie up. The stage, which will sit 6 feet off the ground, will be on the north part of the footprint facing southeast with the audience to the south and facing north toward downtown San Pedro. Large screens will project out toward the audience.

It will all sit on a gently sloped “great lawn” of artificial turf — on about 50,000 square feet — and will offer programming year-round and seats that can be moved in and out or reconfigured. That versatility, Wasserman said, will accommodate rows of seats, seats with tables and chairs, or no seats allowing for a standing festival event.

When there are no professional bookings, the area can accommodate community use for gatherings such as graduations, yoga classes or family picnics. It also can be used simply as open space when concert season ends.

An original EIR was approved but only for 500 seats, requiring this current supplemental review that calls for 6,200 seats, which is about the same size as the Greek Theatre. Originally, Wasserman said, the stage area featured [a “shell” design](#) that is designed more specifically for symphony performances. That design also has been changed and the elevated stage is geared to provide better viewing.

Backstage accommodations will include green rooms and dressing rooms; a rooftop viewing bar and lounge is planned at the rear of the amphitheater and also spaces for concessions and restrooms.

The design, according to a news release, “is intended to complement the port’s industrial character with a stage house that is modeled after the industrial metal warehouses surrounding the site. A modern LED facade will provide the ability to “shapeshift” the simple shed through art, graphics and videos to accompany the performing artists.

Wasserman said the amphitheater should be ready to open around mid-2025, shortly after the rest of the West Harbor attraction debuts in late 2024 and into early 2025 when the grand opening is set.

“The great thing is that with the flexibility of this venue it can easily scale down,” she said.

But it is the location, she said, that will give the venue its special vibe.

“In one word,” she said, “Location, location, location. It’s the water.”



Night-time rendering of newly redesigned amphitheater stage for San Pedro's West Harbor waterfront development. (Rendering courtesy of Studio One Eleven)