

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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STAFF REPORT: REGULAR CALENDAR

Application No.: 6-20-0154

Applicant: San Diego County Regional Airport Authority

Agent: Ted Anasis

Location: San Diego International Airport, North Harbor Drive and Lindbergh Field Way, San Diego, San Diego County

Project Description: Demolition of a three-story, 65-ft. tall, 132,000 sq.ft. administration building and construction of a new four-story, 87-ft. tall, 150,000 sq.ft. administration building

Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (Authority) proposes to demolish an existing administration building located on the east side of the San Diego International Airport (SDIA) and construct a new administration building on a paved lot located on the west side of SDIA ([Exhibit 1](#)). The purpose of the project is to consolidate the Authority's employees into one building and to allow for the future redevelopment and expansion of Terminal 1.

The primary Coastal Act concerns related to this project are potential impacts to visual and biological resources. The proposed administration building would be located west of

Terminal 2 ([Exhibit 2](#)). Although the building would be 87 ft. tall, it would not block views of the San Diego Bay or the San Diego skyline. However, the building would be visible to those traveling along North Harbor Drive, a major coastal access road along the San Diego Bay shoreline, from Spanish Landing Park, and the boat channel adjacent to Liberty Station ([Exhibit 3](#)). To ensure the building blends in with the sky and surrounding airport structures, the Authority proposes to construct the public facing façade of the building largely of glass. **Special Condition No. 2** further prohibits any logos, advertising, or public art on the façade of the building. However, the presence of tall structures and glass surfaces in close proximity to San Diego Bay increases the risk of bird strikes and resulting impacts to avian populations, as the windows may reflect the bay, sky, or vegetation and create the appearance of open area. In order to reduce the chance of bird strikes and make the proposed development more compatible with its surroundings, **Special Condition No. 3** delineates effective bird strike prevention measures to incorporate into the development's final design, such as glass that is reflective to light spectrums visible to avian vision, or glass treatments and lighting design to minimize the attractiveness of the buildings to birds. As conditioned, the project would not result in any adverse impacts to visual or biological resources.

Commission staff recommends that the Commission **APPROVE** coastal development permit application 6-20-0154, as conditioned. The motion is on page 4. The standard of review is Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

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EXHIBITS

[Exhibit 1 – Location Map](#)

[Exhibit 2 – Site Plan](#)

[Exhibit 3 – Visual Renderings](#)

I. MOTION AND RESOLUTION

Motion:

I move that the Commission approve Coastal Development Permit 6-20-0154 subject to conditions set forth in the staff recommendation specified below.

Staff recommends a **YES** vote on the foregoing motion. Passage of this motion will result in approval of the permit as conditioned and adoption of the following resolution and findings. The motion passes only by affirmative vote of a majority of Commissioners present.

Resolution:

The Commission hereby approves the Coastal Development Permit for the proposed project and adopts the findings set forth below on grounds that the development as conditioned will be in conformity with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. Approval of the permit complies with the California Environmental Quality Act because either 1) feasible mitigation measures and/or alternatives have been incorporated to substantially lessen any significant adverse effects of the development on the environment, or 2) there are no further feasible mitigation measures or alternatives that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts of the development on the environment.

II. STANDARD CONDITIONS

- 1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment.** The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the applicant or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
- 2. Expiration.** If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date on which the Commission voted on the application. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.
- 3. Interpretation.** Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
- 4. Assignment.** The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.
- 5. Terms and Conditions Run with the Land.** These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the applicant to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

III. SPECIAL CONDITIONS

1. **Final Plans. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**, the applicant shall submit, for the review and written approval of the Executive Director, two full-size sets of final plans that conform with the plans submitted to the Commission, titled “New Administration Building” and dated December 6, 2019.

The permittee shall undertake development in conformance with the approved final plans unless the Commission amends this permit or the Executive Director provides a written determination that no amendment is legally required for any proposed minor deviations.

2. **Exterior Treatment.** By acceptance of this permit, the applicant agrees that the exterior of the building may not include any graphic depictions, including logos, advertising, or public art unless the Commission amends this permit or the Executive Director provides a written determination that no amendment is legally required.

3. **Bird-Safe Building Standards. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**, the applicant shall submit to the Executive Director for review and written approval, project plans for the proposed development that are in compliance with bird-safe building standards for façade treatments, landscaping, lighting, and building interiors, as follows:

(a) The amount of untreated glass shall be less than 35% of the building façade.

(b) Acceptable glazing treatments include: fritting, netting, permanent stencils, frosted, non-reflective or angled glass, exterior screens, decorative latticework or grills, physical grids placed on the exterior of glazing, ultraviolet patterns visible to birds, or similar treatments, as approved by the Executive Director.

i. Where applicable, vertical elements within the treatment pattern should be at least 1/4” wide, at a maximum spacing of 4”;

ii. Where applicable, horizontal elements within the treatment pattern should be at least 1/8” wide, at a maximum spacing of two inches 2”;

iii. No glazing shall have a “Reflectivity Out” coefficient exceeding thirty percent (30%). That is, the fraction of radiant energy that is reflected from glass or glazed surfaces shall not exceed 30%.

iv. Equivalent treatments recommended by a qualified biologist may be used if approved by the Executive Director.

(c) Building edges of exterior courtyards and recessed areas shall be clearly defined, using opaque materials and non-reflective glass.

- (d) Trees and other vegetation shall be sited so as to avoid or obscure reflection on building facades.
- (e) Buildings shall be designed to minimize light spillage and maximize light shielding to the maximum feasible extent according to the following standards:
- i. Nighttime lighting shall be minimized to levels necessary to provide pedestrian security.
 - ii. Building lighting shall be shielded and directed downward.
 - iii. Up-lighting and use of event “searchlights” or spotlights is prohibited.
 - iv. Landscape lighting shall be limited to low-intensity and low-wattage lights.
 - v. Red lights shall be limited to only that necessary for security and safety warning purposes.
- (f) Artificial night light from interior lighting shall be minimized through the utilization of automated on/off systems, motion detectors, or similar devices.
- (g) Avoid the use of “bird traps” such as glass courtyards, interior atriums, windows installed opposite each other, clear glass walls, skywalks, and transparent building corners.

Within 90 days of the completion of the development authorized by coastal development permit CDP No. 6-20-0154, the applicant shall submit evidence in the form of a narrative report with supporting photographs, for the review and written approval of the Executive Director, showing that all project components were installed in compliance with bird-safe building standards as required by this condition.

IV. FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS

A. Project Description and Background

The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority' (Authority) proposes to demolish a three-story, 65 ft. tall, 132,000 sq.ft. administration building on the east side of the San Diego International Airport (SDIA) and construct a new four-story, 87 ft. tall, 150,000 sq.ft. administration building on the west side of SDIA ([Exhibit 1](#)). The new administration building would be constructed on a paved lot west of Terminal 2 that currently is used for two office trailers and associated parking. The two office trailers would be removed from the project site and repurposed. The Authority has applied for a separate coastal development permit (CDP application no. 6-20-0180) to allow for the repurposed office trailers to be placed east of Terminal 2 for construction personnel offices. That application is still under review by Commission staff. **Special Condition No. 1** requires the applicant to submit final plans that substantially conform to the plans submitted with this application.

The purpose of the project is twofold. First, the Authority's staff is currently spread out between the existing administration building and the two office trailers that are currently located on the site of the future administration building; this project would allow all of the Authority's employees to be located in one building.

Second, the relocation of the building allows for the future replacement of Terminal 1 which would expand the footprint of the existing Terminal 1 to the east. The Authority has indicated that they plan to submit the CDP application for the Terminal 1 expansion in August of 2020. Although the subject project would facilitate the Terminal 1 expansion, the subject approval does not predispose the Commission's review and approval of the Terminal 1 expansion project.

SDIA is within the Coastal Commission's permit jurisdiction and the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act constitute the standard of review.

B. Visual Resources

Section 30251 of the Coastal Act states:

The 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.

The proposed administration building would be located west of Terminal 2 ([Exhibit 1](#)). Although the building would be 87 ft. tall, it would not block views of the bay or the San Diego skyline. However, the building would be visible to those traveling along North Harbor Drive, a major coastal access road along the San Diego Bay shoreline, from Spanish Landing Park, and from the boat channel adjacent to Liberty Station.

Other projects in the area have been required to use architectural or visual treatments and landscaping to screen or break up the façade of the structure as it presents to pedestrians and vehicles on North Harbor Drive. In this case, the Authority proposes to construct the building largely of glass in order to blend in with the sky and surrounding airport structures ([Exhibit 3](#)). This exterior treatment will minimize the potential visual impacts. **Special Condition No. 2** further prohibits any logos, advertising, or public art on the facade. Therefore, the project, as conditioned, conforms to Section 30251 of the Coastal Act.

C. Biological Resources

Section 30240(b) of the Coastal Act states, in relevant part:

Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which

would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas.

The proposed project would be 87 ft. tall and would incorporate a substantial amount of glass panels in its façade. The project site is located close to San Diego Bay, which provides important eelgrass and avian foraging habitat, and along the Pacific Flyway, a major north-south flyway for migratory birds in America. The presence of tall structures and glass surfaces close to San Diego Bay increases the risk of bird strikes and resulting impacts to avian populations, as the windows may reflect the bay, sky, or vegetation and create the appearance of open area. In order to reduce the chance of bird strikes and make the proposed development more compatible with its surroundings, Special Condition No. 3 delineates effective bird strike prevention measures to incorporate into the development's final design, such as glass that is reflective to light spectrums visible to avian vision, or glass treatments and lighting design to minimize the attractiveness of the buildings to birds. Therefore, no impacts to biological resources are expected as a result of this project and the project, as proposed and conditioned, conforms to Section 30240(b) of the Coastal Act.

D. Public Access and Recreation

Section 30212.5 of the Coastal Act states:

Wherever appropriate and feasible, public facilities, including parking areas or facilities, shall be distributed throughout an area so as to mitigate against the impacts, social and otherwise, of overcrowding or overuse by the public of any single area.

Section 30252 of the Coastal Act states:

The location and amount of new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by (1) facilitating the provision or extension of transit service, (2) providing commercial facilities within or adjoining residential development or in other areas that will minimize the use of coastal access roads, (3) providing nonautomobile circulation within the development, (4) providing adequate parking facilities or providing substitute means of serving the development with public transportation, (5) assuring the potential for public transit for high intensity uses such as high-rise office buildings [...]

The San Diego International Airport is located just inland of the San Diego Bay shoreline and many coastal destinations, including Harbor Island, Spanish Landing Park, and the boat channel at Liberty Station. Public access at these locations could be impacted if adequate parking was not available onsite for airport employees, guests, and passengers leading them to utilize public parking offsite.

In this case, 190 parking spaces would be removed at the site of the existing administration building and 24 parking spaces would be removed at the site of the new administration building in order to accommodate the construction, for a total of 214 parking spaces lost. Employee and visitor parking for the building would be consolidated

into the public parking reservoir located directly to the south of the project site and no new parking would be provided for the project. The Authority has indicated that typical daily parking needs for the new administration building include approximately 300 employee and 40-120 visitor parking spaces.

The Authority has identified that a total deficit of 2,150 parking spaces would occur at SDIA beginning in 2021 during the construction of several airport projects associated with the redevelopment and expansion of Terminal 1, including the subject project; however, in 2024, the date of occupancy for the proposed administration building, there is anticipated to be a surplus of 2,100 parking spaces at the airport. In addition, the Authority has plans to implement a direct shuttle from the Old Town Transit Center (Amtrak regional train station, Coaster local train station, MTS trolley/bus station) to SDIA in 2021, prior to occupancy of the building, which would allow employees and passengers to connect to the airport via alternative transportation and reduce the number of vehicles parking at SDIA. In addition, as a result of the COVID-19 virus, passenger travel at SDIA was down 96% in April and 85% in May. The Authority has indicated that during the next fiscal year (2020/2021), a 50% drop in passenger air travel is expected from previous predictions and the Authority expects that it will take two to three years before passenger volumes return to normal. Therefore, no impacts to public parking are expected as a result of this project and the project, as proposed, conforms to Sections 30212.5 and 30252 of the Coastal Act.

E. Local Coastal Planning

Section 30604(a) also requires that a coastal development permit shall be issued only if the Commission finds that the permitted development will not prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. In this case, such a finding can be made.

SDIA was previously under the coastal permit jurisdiction of the San Diego Unified Port District and the standard of review for coastal development permits was the certified Port Master Plan. However, legislation which took effect in January 2003 transferred authority over airport property to the newly created Airport Authority. Thus, the airport is now within the Commission's permit jurisdiction and Chapter 3 is the standard of review. Although the airport is not anticipated to be subject to a LCP, approval of this project would not prejudice the preparation of a LCP consistent with the requirements of Chapter 3. As discussed above, the proposed project, as conditioned, is consistent with Chapter 3, including the visual resource protection policies of the Coastal Act.

F. California Environmental Quality Act

Section 13096 of the Commission's Code of Regulations requires Commission approval of Coastal Development Permits to be supported by a finding showing the permit, as conditioned, to be consistent with any applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(A) of CEQA prohibits a proposed development from being approved if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse effect which the activity may have on the environment. In January 2020, the Airport

Authority adopted the San Diego International Airport, Airport Development Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse No. 2017011053).

The proposed project has been conditioned in order to be found consistent with the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. Mitigation measures, including conditions addressing visual resources will minimize all adverse environmental impacts. As conditioned, there are no feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project is the least environmentally-damaging feasible alternative and can be found consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act to conform to CEQA.