

## Bayfront Development Wins Full Approval

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By John Freeman

*Planned since the 1970s, the massive project will include a marina reconfiguration and channel entry straightening.*

**CHULA VISTA** - Don't expect the Grand Ole Opry to open its doors in Chula Vista.

But thanks to Gaylord Entertainment, the Nashville-based firm that owns the Grand Ole Opry, the doors are about to swing open to Chula Vista's bayfront after decades of neglect.

"This will change the face of Chula Vista forever," said former Port of San Diego Commissioner William Hall, who represented Chula Vista on the board since 2002 before announcing his resignation July 10. "After years of waiting for something to happen, this is a very exciting time for Chula Vista and her citizens."

The \$716 million project - which will be the largest waterfront development ever built in California - won full approval July 20 from the Port of San Diego's Board of Commissioners, marking the beginning of a new era for the fast-growing city of 175,000.

Ambitious but unrealized plans for such a massive makeover have been in the works since the 1970s. With that in mind, Hall credited a 27-member citizens advisory committee for moving the project along.

"By the time (the project) reached us for approval, all of the controversies and squabbles had been worked out," Hall said. "We (the board) couldn't have been happier with the final outcome."

The Chula Vista Bayfront will include a 1,500-room resort hotel operated by Gaylord, along with a 400,000-square-foot convention center. A publicly traded company, Gaylord owns and operates successful hotels and entertainment resorts in Nashville, Orlando, Fla. and Dallas.

In addition, the project includes two more hotels, 2,000 condominiums and a collection of high-end shops, restaurants, an entertainment site and an enhanced marina area.

Along with the substantial landside improvements, boaters stand to benefit from a significant change in the channel entry.



Photo by: Courtesy of Port of San Diego

"You know that nasty dog leg?" Hall asked. "I'm happy to say that will be removed to allow straight entry into the channel. As my boating friends know, that's been needed for a long time."

While the total number of slips at Chula Vista's California Marina will not be increased from its present 900, the configuration is expected to change.

Current plans call for 700 slips to be available at California Marina and another 200 to be added at The Marine Group, the boat repair facility at the northern edge of the project formerly known as Southbay Boatyard. Plus, the area around the existing marina will be dredged to create a turning basin.

The Chula Vista Bayfront will ultimately occupy the 550 acres now occupied by a long-dormant aerospace facility, a soon-to-be closed power plant and an RV park. In addition, the plot of land includes large stretches of marsh land that will be untouched by the project.

Hall's resignation was not connected to anything related to approvals for the Chula Vista Bayfront project. He made the move voluntarily after he purchased stock in HERC Products Inc., which has contracts for tank cleaning with a Port tenant, Continental Maritime.



### **On the waterfront**

A 163-foot-long yacht undergoing renovation in Chula Vista, visible from the water and Interstate 5, belongs to Howard S. Leight, a pioneer in the design and manufacture of earplugs. The La Mesa entrepreneur doesn't have to worry about rush-hour traffic when he checks in on his craft. He just lands in a helicopter atop the boat's helipad. And, yes, officials say, he insists the Marine Group renovation company's workers there wear earplugs.

The repair facility, formerly called South Bay Boat Yard, is gearing up to attract the largest of luxury yachts. When fully equipped by year's end, it will be able to lift ships up to 220 feet long, 54 feet wide and as much as 665 tons.

Todd Roberts, VP of operations, credits the expansion to a burgeoning mega-yacht market. He called U.S. repair facilities inadequate, forcing some owners to take their yachts to the Far East, Australia or Europe for repairs.



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## Community Affiliate Profile



An interview with Todd Roberts of The Marine Group (formally South Bay Boat Yard)

**Q:** What does The Marine Group do (particularly in relation to the military)?

**A:** We work primarily performing repair and refit on Special Forces vessels, port operations vessels and equipment and security vessels. We are a full service repair facility providing every trade. We also operate a small specialty fuel barge that is used by naval security for a 24/7 force readiness. This barge has created major cost cutting measures for force protection.

**Q:** What is your job (title/responsibility)?

**A:** I am the Vice President, responsible for overall operations and management of the facility.

**Q:** Why did The Marine Group become a community affiliate?

**A:** We believe in the Navy League's mission and supporting the Navy League is a small step in supporting our troops and insuring the strength of this great nation.

**Q:** Are there specific areas of the Navy League in which The Marine Group participates (or which areas are of greatest interest)?

**A:** Yes, we are a major contributor to the Warrior Foundation that supports wounded servicemen returning from battle. Our support is not only financial; we listen to their needs and respond quickly. Around the holidays, the chow hall was closed more than normal, the Marines and Sailors had kitchens and food but no plates, forks and knives. We received the call on Friday and  
(cont Group pg 4)

(Group cont)

Monday morning we showed up with enough supplies to support 50 Marines and Sailors with 3 sets each. When a bridge at the naval Medical Center was damaged and closed, the Marines and Sailors in wheelchairs were forced to be pushed up a long hill by other wounded Marines and Sailors. We got wind of this and delivered a 6 passenger golf cart to transport them. When that cart needed service, we gave them a loaner cart so they would never be without!

**Q:** What benefits, opportunities, or experiences has the Marine Group had as a result of being a Navy League Member?

**A:** The real benefit was being introduced to the Warrior Foundation and other charitable arms of the Navy League. We also attend the breakfasts that keep us on top of what's going on on the waterfront.

**Q:** Is there anything you'd like to mention that I haven't asked about?

**A:** We are proud to be part of the Navy League. We are proud of the quality and value of the service we offer the Navy, and most important we are proud of the support we offer the troops! By bringing one of the largest travel lifts in the world to San Diego we are excited about the capacity and readiness we can offer the navy here in San Diego. By operating a large travel lift it allows us to service Navy and commercial craft in the most environmentally friendly fashion possible.