

May 21, 2025

ITEM TITLE: REGULAR COASTAL PERMIT, DESIGN REVIEW, SITE PLAN REVIEW, AND CEQA CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION SECTION 15302 TO CONSTRUCT A NEW SPLASH PAD FACILITY AT THE I.B. PORTWOOD PIER PLAZA (APN 625-330-08-00 & 625-330-09-00 & 625-330-10-00). USE-25-0007. MF 1661(0920-20)

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:

Community Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The San Diego Unified Port District has applied to demolish an existing playground area and perimeter wall and construct a new splash pad facility including an equipment enclosure, landscape areas, and ADA upgrades to increase access to the public restrooms and showers, at the Imperial Beach Portwood Pier Plaza (APN 625-330-08-00 & 625-330-09-00 & 625-330-10-00) in the PF (Public Facility) Zone and City of Imperial Beach jurisdictional boundary.



RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council adopt Resolution 2025-026 approving Regular Coastal Permit (CP-25-0003), Design Review Case (DRC-25-0002), Site Plan Review (SPR-25-0002), and categorical exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15302 Replacement or Reconstruction of existing structures for the removal of an existing playground and construction of a new splash pad facility, equipment enclosure, landscape areas, and ADA upgrades at the Imperial Beach Portwood Pier Plaza (APN 625-330-08-00 & 625-330-09-00 & 625-330-10-00) in the PF (Public Facility) Zone.

RATIONALE:

The project should contribute favorably to the Imperial Beach Portwood Pier Plaza and would comply with the purpose of the Public Facility (PF) Zone, which is to designate land devoted to

public facilities and utilities, including designation for parks and lands utilized for public recreational purposes.

OPTIONS:

In addition to adopting staff's recommendations, the City Council can:

- Approve the project with modifications by the City Council; or
- Disapprove the project and deny the requested permits by making specific findings for denial; or
- Continue the Public Hearing to a specific future meeting to allow staff to provide additional information upon which a decision can be rendered.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Since 2020, the Imperial Beach Pier has been the focus of a series of enhancements aimed at revitalizing this important public space. Recent improvements have included the addition of shade canopies, new wood railing, and artistic elements along the pier. The next phase of this ongoing initiative involves the replacement of an existing playground with a new, publicly accessible splash pad featuring engaging water play elements, including illuminated ground-level jets. The design also incorporates new seat walls, concrete paving, a dedicated equipment enclosure, and a complementary landscape area. This new amenity directly aligns with the purpose of the Public Facilities Zone.

In addition to the splash pad, upcoming work would include ADA upgrades to increase access to the public restrooms and showers at the west end of the Portwood Pier commercial building, involving concrete replacement, updated rinse-off showers, and new planting areas.

Public Access During Construction

Construction of the splash pad is scheduled to commence in early January 2026 with an anticipated completion date in December 2026. Importantly, access to both the beach and the pier would be maintained throughout the construction period. The contractor would confine their activities to a clearly demarcated project work zone, which would be secured with temporary chain-link fencing, as detailed in Attachment 3. The applicant has explicitly stated that the construction work zone would not impede public access to the beach and pier, ensuring continued enjoyment of these areas.

Landscaping

Existing palm trees located to the east of the future splash pad would be carefully protected and remain in place. The project proposes new landscaping installations to the north and west of the splash pad area. This would include a diverse selection of plants and grasses specifically chosen for their suitability to the coastal environment. Additionally, strategically placed boulders would be incorporated into the landscape design, adding visual interest and a natural element to the space.

Lighting

The design thoughtfully integrates lighting with timers, offering the ability to power down the fixtures as needed. As part of the overall project, a single downlight emitting a warm, 2700 Kelvin glow is proposed, which would integrate with the existing plaza ambiance.

The splash pad water jet would feature multi-color RGB lights, which would only illuminate when the splash pad jets are active. This ensures they operate solely when the water is flowing, a safety and design consideration, as other overhead lighting would be present. Moreover, the controls for these dynamic lights are programmable and can be switched off as desired.

Concerning construction lights, typical construction is planned to take place during daylight hours when supplemental construction lighting is generally unnecessary.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

This project may be categorically exempted from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements according to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15302 Replacement or Reconstruction of existing structures where the new structure would be located on the same site as the structure replaced and would have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced.

COASTAL JURISDICTION:

This project is located in the coastal zone as defined by the California Coastal Act of 1976. The City Council public hearing will serve as the required coastal permit hearing and the City Council will consider the findings under the California Coastal Act. Pursuant to the City of Imperial Beach Zoning Ordinance Section 19.87.050, review of the proposal will consider whether the proposed development satisfies the required findings prior to the approval and issuance of a Coastal Development Permit. The project is located in the Appeal Jurisdiction of the California Coastal Commission as indicated on the Local Coastal Program Post Certification and Appeal Jurisdiction Map and, as such, it is appealable to the California Coastal Commission under Section 30603(a) of the California Public Resources Code.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the project.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 – Resolution Number 2025-026
- Attachment 2 – Project Plans
- Attachment 3 – Construction Fencing and Public Access
- Attachment 4 – Plant Palette
- Attachment 5 – Concept Materials Board