



# REPORT

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

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DATE ISSUED: January 11, 2019 REPORT NO. 101

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board  
Agenda of January 17, 2019

SUBJECT: Sea World San Diego Mako Roller Coaster

### SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Park and Recreation Board approve the recommendation to support the proposal to install the Mako roller coaster at Sea World San Diego?

Director's Recommendation – Approve the recommendation to support the proposal to install the Mako roller coaster at Sea World San Diego.

Fiscal Impact – No fiscal impact is anticipated with this action.

Water and Energy Conservation Status – Not applicable.

Environmental – Per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines section 15162, this project complies with EIR No. 99-0618.

### BACKGROUND

Sea World San Diego is requesting Board support of their planned new attraction, the Mako coaster. A rendering of the coaster is shown in Attachment 1.

As part of Sea World's Master Plan, Sea World is allowed to have four projects between 100 and 160 feet in height. The first such project was the Electric Eel, which was presented to the Board in February 2017. Mako would be the second such project proposed; it would be 153 feet tall. The Sea World Master Plan was approved by the California Coastal Commission and the City of San Diego in 2002, and the Master Plan has been incorporated into the Mission Bay Park Plan update.

### DISCUSSION

City staff has determined that Mako is in substantial conformance with the Sea World Master Plan as shown in Attachment 2. As such, the Park and Recreation Board does not need to review the Master Plan for purposes of this item.

Support from the Park and Recreation Board is part of Sea World’s overall process as outlined below:

- City of San Diego review for substantial conformance with the SeaWorld Master Plan and EIR (complete)
- Mission Bay Park Committee (approved unanimously on January 8, 2019)
- Park and Recreation Board (January 17, 2019)
- Planning Commission
- San Diego City Council
- California Coastal Commission

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the recommendation to support the proposal to install the Mako roller coaster at Sea World San Diego.
2. Do not approve the recommendation to support the proposal to install the Mako roller coaster at Sea World San Diego.

Respectfully submitted,



Approved by:  
Herman D. Parker  
Director  
Parks and Recreation Department

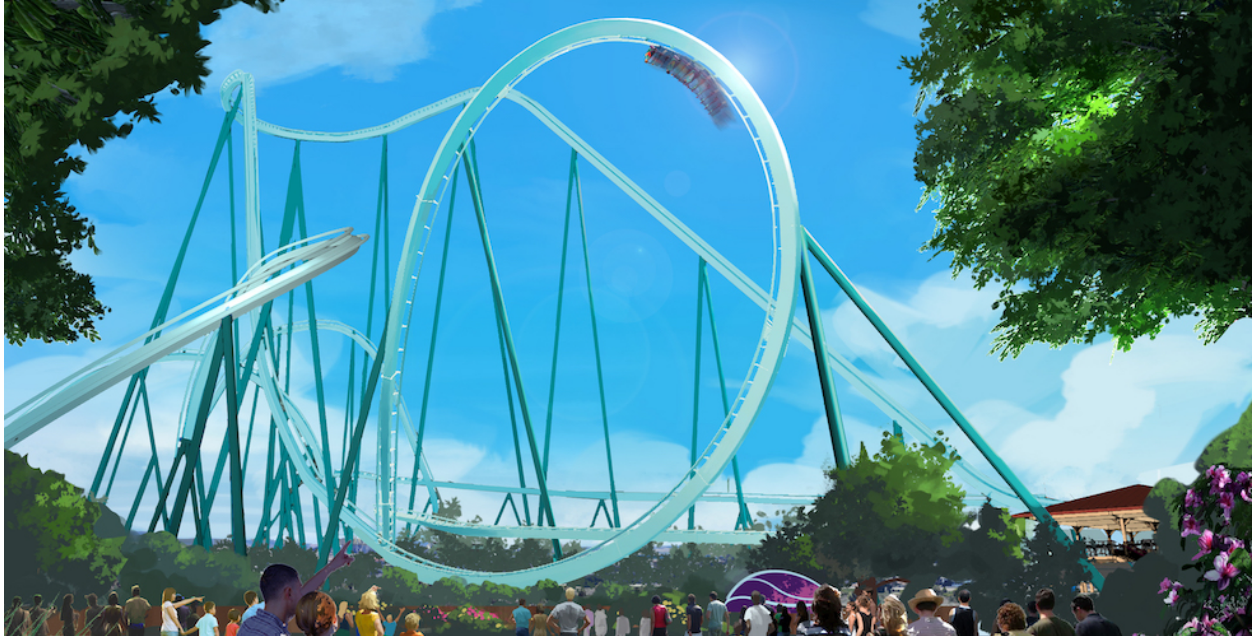


Prepared by:  
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Assistant Director  
Parks and Recreation Department

Attachments:

1. Artist Rendering of Mako Roller Coaster
2. EIR Consistency Document

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**Artist Rendering of Mako Roller Coaster**



**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**EIR Consistency Document**

SeaWorld and the Project 2020 site are located within Mission Bay Park. The Mission Bay Park Master Plan Update recognizes SeaWorld as an existing theme park and tourist attraction which is compatible with the commercial recreational component of the Plan. The project's site within the Theme Park (Area 1 of the SeaWorld Master Plan) is an established visitor-serving commercial use within Mission Bay Park providing a variety of attractions (exhibits, rides and shows) and guest support services centered on entertainment and educational themes.

The SeaWorld Master Plan is incorporated into the Mission Bay Park Plan Update. The Theme Park area of the SeaWorld Master Plan is developed with a variety of marine-related attractions and support facilities, reflecting the dominant marine animal theme. The SeaWorld Master Plan includes a detailed list of Theme Park facilities, including stadium animal show facilities, marine aquariums, themed animal exhibits, interactive animal experiences, rides/arcades/playgrounds and 4 D Theater.

The SeaWorld Master Plan contemplates that all areas of SeaWorld may be subject to renovation and development. As a result, the Master Plan “emphasizes multiple development scenarios and flexible development options” for the entire Park area. SeaWorld Master Plan, page V-2.

All environmental impacts of the SeaWorld Master Plan were identified and analyzed in Environmental Impact Report LDR No. 99-0618; SCH No. 1984030708 certified by the City of San Diego City Council on July 10, 2001, by Resolution No. R-295138 (“SeaWorld EIR”).

The SeaWorld EIR Project Description provides details of the Master Plan, including all Theme Park area facilities. Among those facilities are eight Tier 2 sites, which are candidate sites within the SeaWorld leasehold for future renovation, expansion or redevelopment: Sites E-2, F-2, G-2, H-2, I-2, J-2, K-2 and L-2. SeaWorld Master Plan, pages II-21 to II-23 and Figure II-3. Under the SeaWorld Master Plan, Tier 2 projects may include, not limited to, aquariums, special-effects theaters, land-based adventure rides, pelagic fish exhibits (large fish habitats and aquariums), water play attractions, themed track or water rides, special format projection attractions, playgrounds, wildlife performance venues, boat rides, historic reenactment presentations, research facilities, live performance venues and wildlife exhibits. SeaWorld Master Plan, page II-21.

As described in more detail in the Project Description, Section II of the application, Project 2020 involves the development of Site I-2 designated as one of the Tier 2 projects in Figure II-3 of the SeaWorld Master Plan. The proposed Project 2020 will be a new themed track ride, which is listed among the SeaWorld Master Plan Theme Park area uses contemplated for the Tier 2 projects.

The SeaWorld EIR identified and analyzed environmental impacts of Tier 2 projects that were to be developed consistent with the SeaWorld Master Plan uses, Development Criteria and

Design Guidelines. As described above, Project 2020 is consistent with the SeaWorld Master Plan uses. The following further describes how Project 2020 is consistent with all SeaWorld Master Plan Development Criteria and Design Guidelines.

**I. Consistency with SeaWorld Master Plan**

**A. Development Criteria**

The Development Criteria chapter of the SeaWorld Master Plan “sets forth the development parameters applicable to the entire leasehold . . .” SeaWorld Master Plan, page III-1. The Development Criteria includes: (1) development height, (2) setbacks and buffers, (3) transparency, (4) structural separation, (5) landscaping, lighting, signage and architecture, (6) noise and (7) attraction themes/elements. SeaWorld Master Plan, pages III-1 to III-5.

(1) *Development Height.*

Criteria: Within Area 1, not more than four (any four) conceptual development sites, identified in Figure II-3 of the SeaWorld Master Plan, shall be developed with structures exceeding 100 feet in height.

Consistency: Electric Eel/Project 2018 was the first of those four conceptual development sites to be developed to date. Attraction 2020 will be the second and the total height of the structure is less than 160 feet.

(2) *Setbacks and Buffers.*

Criteria:

Shoreline Bulk Plane Setback - All new development (except in Area 4) shall be setback behind a bulk plane line beginning at the shoreline set back (75 feet from the existing rip-rap revetment or the bluff edge) at a height of 30 feet and inclined at a one-to-one angle (45°) until the 160-foot height limit is reached; and

Perimeter Bulk Plane Setback - All new development shall be setback behind a bulk plane line beginning at the perimeter landscaped area (20 feet from the perimeter on the eastern and southern leasehold perimeter boundaries) at a height of 30 feet and included at a one-to-one angle (45°) until the 160-foot height limit is reached.

Consistency: Project 2020 is located in the east end of the Theme Park area and is over 300’ feet from any setback or buffer zones and the perimeter of the Theme Park designated and shown on Figure III-2 of the SeaWorld Master Plan.

(3) *Transparency.*

Criteria: Within Area 1 all structural bulk above 100 feet in height shall be at least 50% open to light and air, unless the structure consists of a single tower.

Consistency: Project 2020 will contain no buildings or track housing above 30 feet and will utilize open and airy track and support structures to eliminate or reduce visual obscurity when viewing the skyline from outside of the SeaWorld leasehold. As stated in the Project Description, Project 2020 is 85% open to air and light.

(4) *Structural Separation.*

Criteria: No structural connection between any of the conceptual development sites identified in Figure II-3 of the SeaWorld Master Plan shall be permitted.

Consistency: Project 2020 is a standalone structure and has no structural connection with any other conceptual development sites identified in Figure II-3 of the SeaWorld Master Plan.

(5) *Landscaping, Lighting, Signage and Architecture.*

Criteria: Building forms, color, materials, landscaping, exterior lighting, and signs shall be consistent with the SeaWorld Master Plan Design Guidelines set forth in Section IV of the SeaWorld Master Plan.

Consistency: See discussion below regarding consistency with Design Guidelines.

(6) *Noise.*

Criteria: Noise generated by any new ride, exhibit, or show, including mechanical sounds, or amplified sound shall comply with the City of San Diego Noise Ordinance, Chapter 5, Article 9.5 of the Municipal Code.

Consistency: Project 2020 has been designed to comply with the City of San Diego Noise Ordinance, Chapter 5, Article 9.5 of the Municipal Code.

(7) *Attraction Themes/Elements.*

Criteria: At least 75% of the total number of attractions (excluding the hotel) within SeaWorld shall contain a significant animal, education, or conservation element.

Consistency: Project 2020 will include a conservation partner and

educational message. Guests will be exposed of ocean health and wildlife conservation messages that include meaningful ways they can have a positive impact on the ocean environment.

## B. Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines chapter of the SeaWorld Master Plan sets forth designs guidelines to be used primarily to assure aesthetically pleasing public views of SeaWorld from outside its leasehold. SeaWorld Master Plan, page IV-1. The Design Guidelines “are not intended to regulate the internal design, operations and maintenance of SeaWorld projects that are not visible from public view outside the leasehold.” SeaWorld Master Plan, page IV-1. The applicable Design Guidelines analyzed below include: (1) landscape design, (2) lighting and (3) architecture. SeaWorld Master Plan, pages IV-1 to IV-26.

### (1) *Landscape Design.*

Guideline: While the landscaping guidelines do not apply to the overall interior landscapes of the Theme Park area that are not within public view, interior landscape that is intended to screen and mitigate views of tall structures is subject to City design review. SeaWorld Master Plan, page IV-16.

Consistency: Project 2020 utilizes existing mature trees particularly on the park perimeter to soften the visual impacts from land and water areas of Mission Bay Park and surrounding communities.

### (2) *Lighting.*

Guideline: SeaWorld lighting shall: (a) be directed to use areas and not spill over into areas adjacent to SeaWorld; (b) be located to minimize spill over outside the leasehold when used as accent lighting of buildings and structures over 30 feet in height; and (c) be used to enhance the design theme and accentuate the sculptural aspects of a theme park attraction and ride while avoiding garish, “carnival” style lighting with excessive illumination, colors and motion (chaser lighting). SeaWorld Master Plan, page IV-21.

Consistency: Project 2020 will utilize low-level lighting to highlight sculpted details of the structures. Harsh lighting or glare directed toward Mission Bay or upward into the night sky will be avoided.

### (3) *Architecture.*

Guideline: For proposed theme park attractions and rides that may be visible from outside SeaWorld, (a) light or neutral colors for large mass areas shall be used and bright colors and reflective surfaces shall be

reserved for accents; (b) lighting may be used to enhance the design theme and accentuate the sculptural aspects of a theme park attraction and ride while avoiding garish, “carnival” style lighting with excessive illumination, colors and motion (chaser lighting); and (c) high-quality materials and construction practices shall be used. SeaWorld Master Plan, page IV-25.

Consistency: The design of Project 2020 will be contemporary, responsive to the aquatic environment and avoid excessive or exaggerated thematic styles. It will utilize sky colors above 50 feet to blend with the backdrop of the skyline from all viewing angles. Also, it will utilize low-level lighting to highlight sculpted details of the structures. Harsh lighting or glare directed toward Mission Bay or upward into the night sky will be avoided. High-quality materials and construction practices will be used. Further, by locating Project 2020 away from the northern shoreline, it permits portions of Project 2020 to be partially blocked by existing development from water view and existing perimeter vegetation to partially obscure lower views from the eastern and southern parts of the Theme Park.

## II. SeaWorld EIR Analyzed Impacts

The SeaWorld EIR identified and analyzed all potential impacts of any new projects or renovation of existing facilities, provided that they are consistent with the SeaWorld Master Plan uses, Development Criteria and Design Guidelines. Because Project 2020 is consistent with the Master Plan uses, Development Criteria and Design Guidelines, all potential impacts were identified and analyzed in the SeaWorld EIR. Specific potential impacts are further described below:

### A. Neighborhood Character/Aesthetics

The Tier 2 projects identified in the SeaWorld EIR, including Site I-2, are long-range potential development or redevelopment projects that may occur in any of the eight sites identified in Area 1 in Figure II-3 of the SeaWorld Master Plan. The analysis in the SeaWorld EIR assumed a maximum utilization of the height allocation as defined in the Development Criteria and that the four sites permitted to have structural development exceeding 100 feet in height would be located in the most environmentally-sensitive locations relative to the resources or impacts under consideration. Because the SeaWorld Master Plan includes specific requirements for the development of the Tier 2 sites, the EIR analysis of the Tier 2 future projects evaluates the impacts based on the general development parameters contained in the SeaWorld Master Plan. SeaWorld EIR, pages 4.1-34 and 4.1-35.

Therefore, not only did the SeaWorld EIR locate those four Tier 2 projects in the most environmentally-sensitive locations, the photo simulations in the SeaWorld EIR for all of the Tier 2 projects provide the visual representation of the worst-case scenario, or maximum development envelopes, allowed by the SeaWorld Master Plan. SeaWorld EIR, page 4.2-54;



SeaWorld Master Plan, page 4.2-58. A massing model of the development envelopes created for the photo simulations was based on the SeaWorld Master Plan area and height criteria, taking into account that development within four of the eight Tier 2 project areas could be 160 feet in height. SeaWorld EIR, page 4.2-54.

Being the second of the four Tier 2 projects contemplated to have structural development exceeding 100 feet in height, Site I-2 was assumed in the SeaWorld EIR to be located in the most environmentally-sensitive location.

The updated photo simulations of the Tier 2 projects attached to this application shows that the proposed Project 2020 uses very little of the building envelope. The maximum potential building mass associated with the Site I-2 site building envelope analyzed in the SeaWorld EIR illustrates a much greater visual impact than the proposed Project 2020.

Consequently, Project 2020 is expected to create less visual impacts than those identified and analyzed in the SeaWorld EIR for Site I-2.

#### B. Transportation/Circulation

As required by the SeaWorld EIR, traffic mitigation measures are implemented based on predetermined key thresholds, which are monitored annually pursuant to the SeaWorld EIR Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. The monitoring reports are submitted to the City Environmental Review Manager and the Coastal Commission on an annual basis. When thresholds are reached, mitigation measures identified in the SeaWorld EIR will be implemented. SeaWorld EIR, pages 4.4-44 to 4.4-49.

Project 2020 will affect approximately 380 parking spots in the designated Area 1 of the theme park. If Project 2020 triggers any key thresholds, the required mitigation measure(s) identified in the SeaWorld EIR will be implemented to mitigate the significant traffic impacts resulting from the project.

#### C. Water Quality

The SeaWorld EIR identified no significant impacts as a result of existing operations due to SeaWorld's existing surface runoff controls and Best Management Practices ("BMPs") or from the discharge of treated water into Mission Bay due to the existing treatment of aquaria water, facility irrigation, wash down and storm water by SeaWorld's treatment facility as provided in SeaWorld's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit. SeaWorld EIR, pages 4.5-1 to 4.5-20.

Likewise, Project 2020 is not expected to create any significant water quality impacts due to SeaWorld's continued implementation of its effective surface runoff controls and BMPs. Project 2020 will capture 100% of facility irrigation, wash down and storm water and diverts that water to SeaWorld's treatment facility.

D. Noise

The SeaWorld EIR requires that prior to issuance of a Coastal Development Permit; a project-specific noise study must be prepared by a qualified acoustician for any new ride attraction and must demonstrate that sensitive receptors would not be exposed to noise levels in excess of applicable standards. SeaWorld EIR, page 4.7-24.

For instance, the study prepared for the “Splash-Down” ride showed no substantial increase in ambient noise levels outside of the leasehold and the 2018 Electric Eel identified no substantial increase in ambient noise levels; therefore, no significant noise impacts were found and no mitigation measures were required for either ride attraction. SeaWorld EIR, page 4.7-24. Project 2018/Electric Eel did not create any new significant noise impacts for the same reasons set forth in section 4.7.4 (page 4.7-24) of the SeaWorld EIR.

Navcon Engineering Network – Noise and Vibration Consultants, have been engaged by SeaWorld to conduct the noise analysis for the 2020 Attraction and the study is currently underway.

E. Human Health/Public Safety - Landfill

The inactive Mission Bay Landfill is located on a portion of the east side of the guest parking area in the SeaWorld leasehold. The SeaWorld EIR identifies an Assessment Report for the Lease Expansion (Appendix A-1, Volume II, Appendices to the Final SeaWorld EIR Responses to Comments) prepared by Fluor Daniel GTI in December 1996 and January 1997 (“Landfill Report”). For that Landfill Report, the undeveloped parcel east of the SeaWorld leasehold boundary and the northeast part of the SeaWorld leasehold were studied. The Landfill Report found no significant contamination of the leasehold near and outside the documented landfill perimeter provided by the City; therefore, the Landfill Report concluded that the landfill does not pose a threat to human health or the environment. Further, City Solid Waste Local Enforcement Agency inspection reports indicate that landfill gas emissions have not exceeded background levels and that there have been no known instances of a major hazardous release from the landfill. SeaWorld EIR, pages 4.11-1 to 4.11-9.

Project 2020 is located adjacent to the documented landfill perimeter. All projects within 1,000 feet of the landfill are coordinated with the City of San Diego Local Enforcement Agency. A Workers Health & Safety plan will be in place as a precautionary measure based on proximity of the site.

APPENDIX B

LOCAL AGENCY REVIEW FORM

**SECTION A** (TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT)

Applicant SeaWorld San Diego

Project Description SeaWorld San Diego – Attraction 2020

Roller Coaster

Location SeaWorld San Diego

Assessor's Parcel Number 760-037-01-01

**SECTION B** (TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL PLANNING OR BUILDING INSPECTION DEPARTMENT)

Zoning Designation N/A du/ac

General or Community Plan Designation N/A du/ac

**Local Discretionary Approvals**

Proposed development meets all zoning requirements and needs no local permits other than building permits.

Proposed development needs local discretionary approvals noted below.

*Needed*    *Received*

- |                          |                          |                                                     |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Design/Architectural review                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Variance for _____                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rezone from _____                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tentative Subdivision/Parcel Map No. _____          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grading/Land Development Permit No. _____           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Planned Residential/Commercial Development Approval |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Site Plan Review                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Condominium Conversion Permit                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Conditional, Special, or Major Use Permit No. _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____                                         |

**CEQA Status**

Categorically Exempt    Class \_\_\_\_\_    Item \_\_\_\_\_

Negative Declaration Granted (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Environmental Impact Report Required, Final Report Certified (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Other PER CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15162 COMPLIES WITH EIR NO 99-0618

Prepared for the City/County of San Diego by Mark Pardo

Date 12/18/18 Title SENIOR PLANNER