

# **Business Will Boom with a Second Opening to San Diego Bay**

By George Mullen and Rudy Ramirez



An aerial view of San Diego Bay from downtown to Imperial Beach. Photo courtesy Port of San Diego

If the long-talked about second San Diego Bay opening finally happens, our region is likely to experience an unprecedented economic boom and renaissance of opportunities.

Doing so will create thousands of new jobs, as well as a myriad of new businesses and blue tech innovations. And though our entire region will be the beneficiary, the South Bay will be ground zero.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is on top of everyone's mind, and a second opening is first and foremost a [national security imperative](#). But there are also important [environmental](#) and economic reasons to pursue this idea.

The economic reasons haven't been talked about as much, but are significant. There are six key opportunities.

## **Second Bay Opening Construction Project**

The construction project itself will require thousands of workers, from the highest-paid engineers and architects to operators of heavy machinery, truckers, boat captains, divers, as well as critically important physical day laborers.

This is a major labor-intensive project that will take five to 10 years to complete. The project will include dredging a large channel from mid-bay to Emory Cove in the South Bay; cutting through the Silver Strand landmass; construction of breakwaters; construction of a cutting-edge wave energy plant; building a tunnel that will re-route State Route 75 under the new opening; and re-routing the entrance to the Navy's Silver Strand Training Complex.

## **South Bay Wave Energy Plant Construction and Operation**

The creation of an innovative wave energy plant within the new breakwater is a golden opportunity to create green energy for our region, and become a California and global model for doing so.

This project is modeled on the [Mutriku Wave Energy Plant](#) that is already operating in northern Spain, but ours could be far larger in output. The development, initial construction, and ongoing operation

and maintenance of this plant will necessitate a significant number of high-paying jobs that would naturally occur in the South Bay.

## **South Bay ‘Blue Tech’ Innovation Cluster**

With an adjacent new opening to the sea, cheaper commercial and industrial rents in the area versus downtown San Diego and Point Loma, and a large adjacent labor pool with affordable housing, the South Bay is the perfect place to concentrate the San Diego region’s maritime-based “blue economy.”

The [San Diego Maritime Industry Report 2012](#) analyzed maritime and “blue tech” sectors and identified over 1,400 companies producing over \$14 billion in sales, including a workforce of 46,000. The economic and employment opportunities in this sector are vast.

To date the [Port of San Diego](#) has approved nine projects through its Blue Economy Incubator, including shellfish nursery operations, copper remediation technology, a drive-in boat wash, a smart marina application, a marine debris removal vessel, seaweed aquaculture, bio-enhancing shoreline armoring technology, and a new approach to soil remediation in marine environments. With an opening to the sea, South Bay is a natural for many of these.

Furthermore, a second bay opening would help seed the “University and Innovation District” being planned for Chula Vista.

Think about a centerpiece of this district being a new South Bay Oceanographic Research Center with quick access to the bay and ocean. Such a center would be ideal for conducting 5-year, 10-year, and 30-year research studies on the effects of our second bay opening, as well as on wave energy development for California and the world.

The findings on wave energy generation, as well as on bay flushing and cleansing, levels of silting, and overall environmental health could provide invaluable research for waterfront regions around the globe.

## **Tijuana Business Potential**

With a new bay opening so close, many maquiladora manufacturing plants in Tijuana will begin to see San Diego as a better option for global shipping of their products. The alternatives are trucking all the way to Ensenada or Long Beach.

In addition, there will be a golden opportunity to establish regular daily boat ferries going to and from South Bay to Playas de Tijuana, Rosarito Beach and Ensenada. This will be appealing to tourists, but also help relieve pressure on the ultra-busy San Ysidro border crossing.

Many other binational opportunities are sure to surface as well.

## **South Bay Boating Activity Opportunities**

With a new opening and access to the sea, the South Bay will experience a significant increase in boating activity.

This will present an array of opportunities such as new marinas, ferries and water taxis, adjacent boat servicing businesses, supply stores catering to boaters, perhaps a South Bay fueling station, paddle boarding and kayaking shops, bike shops, fishing supplies, bait stores, deep-sea fishing charters, and so on. Likewise, demand for hotel rooms and restaurants will rise.

All these represent increased employment and business opportunities for Chula Vista and the region.

## **Fresh Seafood for the South Bay**

Why must people in the South Bay be forced to travel all the way to Point Loma for fresh off-the-boat seafood?

With a second bay opening, there is an opportunity to establish a Fisherman's Wharf in Chula Vista or Imperial Beach to unload and sell fresh seafood. We could have a South Bay Fresh Seafood Open Market and our very own Chula Vista Seafood along the lines of Point Loma Seafood.

This again represents additional employment and business opportunities, as well as widespread consumer benefits for South Bay citizens.

However, with all this being said, we must weigh all new business and employment opportunities against the Navy's national security mission here, as well as against our regional priority of protecting the South Bay's environmentally sensitive areas.

With wise planning and thoughtful decisions, we can develop something truly special that accommodates all our priorities.

The combination of Coronado's Silver Strand State Beach and the National Wildlife Refuge already constitute significant open space and a head start at preserving the beauty and natural environment of South Bay. This wondrous area is home to thousands of migrating birds, sea turtles, fish, eelgrass, and even a single pink flamingo known as [Pink Floyd](#).

In conclusion, a second San Diego Bay opening is likely to launch a significant business and employment boom for our entire region. If we want to enable our children and grandchildren to thrive and be able to afford to remain local, we need to be developing economic opportunities for them to do so. Otherwise, many will be forced to

relocate elsewhere based on better opportunities, as well as affordability.

A second bay opening is the single largest economic opportunity driver we have available to bequeath to our children and grandchildren. Likewise, it is one of the most important national security infrastructure projects to protect the Pacific Fleet from the rising hypersonic missile threats emanating from Russia, China and North Korea.

This opportunity should be seized upon as soon as possible.

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