

Sports Arena Redevelopment Gears Up

PROPERTY: \$2B Project Will Be Game Changer for Midway District



Photo courtesy of Brookfield Properties

Brookfield Properties and ASM Global are refining plans for redevelopment of the 48-acre Sports Arena site that would include an entertainment district.

■ BY RAY HUARD

The long-anticipated redevelopment of San Diego's Midway District has started with the selection of a team led by Brookfield Properties to take over the 48-acre site of the San Diego sports arena.

Details on what the \$2 billion Sports Arena project would look like under the proposal submitted by Brookfield Properties and ASM Global are hazy

but will be worked out over the coming months in negotiations with city officials and meetings with community members.

Regardless of the details, redevelopment of the sports arena site has been called transformational and is expected to kick-start redevelopment of the overall Midway District.

Central to the plan is construction of more than 2,100 housing units, 590,000 square feet of retail space, five acres

of parks and what Brookfield Properties calls an entertainment complex, although it's unclear on whether that includes construction of a new sports arena, renovation of the existing structure or something entirely different.

A city selection committee in August picked the partnership of Brookfield Properties and ASM Global over a rival proposal by a development group led by Toll Brothers Housing.

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South Korean Firm Purchases Systran

TECHNOLOGY: Deal Will Help Translation Co. Grow New Products

■ BY FRED GRIER

Systran, a leading provider of language translation software products, has been acquired by Korean institutional investors to further accelerate growth.

STIC Investments Inc., a South Korean firm, took over ownership of the company from CSLI, which had acquired Systran in 2014. Purchasing 51% of Systran shares, it is now the majority shareholder.



Systran
CEO
Jean Senellart

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The deal had been under discussion since early 2019 but was not quite finalized before the coronavirus hit. CEO Jean Senellart the acquisition will

enable the company to expand its new marketplace and translations products across industries.

"This acquisition is exciting and will give us more resources to increase our innovation and delivery speed and geographical footprint, enabling us to further expand through our new Cloud Marketplace offering as well as provide secure, on premises or cloud-based customized

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Stone Brewing Hires New CEO

HOSPITALITY: Maria Stipp Brings a 'Meld of Skills'

■ BY MARIEL CONCEPCION

Maria Stipp is no stranger to the executive suite.

From 2001 to 2004, she was vice president of sales at Vivendi Universal Games, a former Los Angeles video game publisher. From 2004 through 2011, she held leadership roles at Activision, the Santa Monica-based video game company. From 2011 to 2015, Stipp was president at ecoATM, the San Diego headquartered mobile



Stone Brewing
CEO
Maria Stipp

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Contractor Rules in Flux

EMPLOYMENT: State Voters Mull Drivers' Fate

■ BY BRAD GRAVES

The rules governing whether and how California businesses may use independent contractors changed Sept. 4 when Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation clarifying contractors' roles.

Follow-up legislation carried by Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego) amended Assembly Bill 5 — her legislation from last year — which spelled out whether businesses must regard certain workers as independent contractors or treat them as full employees, with benefits.

Gonzalez's follow-up law clarifies that various types of workers may work as independent contractors. They include musicians, freelance writers, translators and

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THE LIST LIFE/HEALTH INSURANCE SERVICES *Based on 2019 Revenue	
11	MetLife
12	Prudential
13	Chubb
14	Aviva
15	Genworth
16	Swire
17	Manulife
18	Sumitomo
19	Shimizu
20	Meiji
21	DAI-ICHI
22	Sanpa
23	Chunil
24	Woori
25	Shinjiro

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Birch Aquarium Makes STEM Approachable for Students

EDUCATION: Virtual Youth and School Group Programs Cater to Multiple Ages

■ BY MARIEL CONCEPCION

Inspired by the success of its Virtual Summer Learning Adventure Camps, which served 1,361 students, **Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego** has launched a couple of new online education offerings catering to both teachers and parents.

The hope, said **Megan Malaska Medley**, director of education, is that the new courses will expand the organization's reach while encouraging young learners to pursue a path in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).



**Birch Aquarium
Director of Education
Megan Medley**

"We recognize and understand that students, teachers and families are dealing with a lot right now," Medley said. "We also recognize the potential of lost learning when it comes to science and STEM. In recognizing that, we decided we wanted to pivot and fill the gap."

STEM education is important because it helps students understand how to solve problems and better handle everyday challenges, Medley said.

Birch Aquarium's virtual programs are rooted in science through observation, which leads to interest and understanding, she added.



Photo courtesy of Birch Aquarium

Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego has converted three classrooms to virtual studios.

"Often, students feel like science can be daunting," said Medley, "so by starting off with observation, sparking curiosity through questions and seeing problems through, we can help encourage young learners that anyone can pursue a path in STEM if they're interested."

Tomorrow's workforce is expected to need a good background in STEM.

Virtual Studios

Led by aquarium instructors, Virtual Youth and School Group Programs will be available to schools, homeschool groups, after school programs and scout collectives. The Virtual After School Series, a six-week bundle, is meant to be booked by caregivers as a supplemental, after school learning option for kindergartners through eighth graders.

From ideation to execution, it took about a month to get the programs up and running, said Medley. She said the aquarium converted three of its existing classrooms into virtual studios, equipped with new lighting, cameras on gimbals and animals on deck, among other arrangements.

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Acquisition Sparks Life Science Market Push

ARCHITECTURE: AO Creates Science + Design Studio

■ BY RAYHUARD

An architectural firm with offices in Solana Beach is expanding with the acquisition of a Sunnyvale firm with a goal of making a foray into San Diego's life science and high tech market.

AO in August acquired **WHL Architects**, using the acquisition to create a Science + Design studio that "allows the firm to offer architecture and planning services for clients in San Diego's robust and growing science and tech industries as well as attract a different pool of niche talent which will add value to the entire firm," said Partner **Rob Budetti**.



**AO
Partner
Rob Budetti**

"We believe San Diego is definitely a hotbed for the science-technology market and with an office in Solana Beach, we felt we'd actually be able to make some good inroads with some of our existing clients in other product types," Budetti said. "Between San Diego and Northern California, those are very strong markets."

Although AO is based in Orange, the company has had offices in Solana Beach since 2018 and has worked on San Diego County projects prior to establishing a brick-and-mortar presence, said Budetti. He also lives in Solana Beach.



Photo courtesy of AO

Vici in Little Italy was among AO's San Diego projects.

San Diego Projects

"AO has been very active in San Diego County for nearly two decades, completing over 40 multifamily, mixed-use, hospitality, restaurant and retail developments," Budetti said. "Some of the



**AO
Principal
Douglas White**

firm's most notable completed projects include **Vici in Little Italy**, and renovations for **Westfield North County**, **Mission Valley** and **University Town Center malls**."

On-going projects include the 900,000 square-foot **Watermark mixed-use project** being developed in Poway by **Sudberry Properties** and the **Inns at Buena Vista Creek** in Oceanside, Budetti said.

Headed by **Douglas White**, **WHL's** primary market was in Northern California, although White said the firm has provided design services for a few San Diego

projects, such as a lab for **Matrix Pharmaceuticals**.

AO's acquisition of **WHL** gives the firm entry into the science and technology market, in which San Diego is a key player.

A Strategy

"AO's foray into science and technology is part of our diversification strategy and was motivated by the strength of the sector," Budetti said. "Our acquisition of **WHL** enables us to leverage Douglas

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Tech Coast

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president of funding for TCA.

Broad-Based Strategy

According to new research by **Angel-List**, a popular website for startups to raise capital from investors, broad-based angel investing remains the best strategy and serves as a value proposition for angel groups.

“Investors increase their expected return by indexing as broadly as possible at the seed stage (i.e., by putting money into every credible deal), because any selective policy for seed stage investing — absent perfect foresight — will eventually be outperformed by an indexing approach,” said **Kyle Stanford**, analyst at **PitchBook**.



**PitchBook Analyst
Kyle Stanford**



Photo Courtesy of Outside the Lens.

Three San Diego companies were awarded a total of \$75,000 at John G. Watson Quick Pitch competition last year.

Record-Breaking Fund

Despite the global venture deal-making slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Tech Coast Angels and many

other investor groups remained open for business throughout the year.

Rosenberg said the new annual fund demonstrates the group’s commitment

to startup investing even during precarious times.

“The record-breaking size of our annual investment fund this year shows that TCA members are committed to startup investing—even in a pandemic, in an election year, and with all of the other market volatility,” said Rosenberg.

In 2019, Tech Coast Angels’ San Diego chapter invested in 22 companies, with an average investment of \$555,000 for new portfolio companies. To date, the group has invested a total of more than \$6 million so far in 2020.

The latest ACE Fund is for both new and existing TCA portfolio companies. ■

Tech Coast Angels San Diego



FOUNDED: 1997

PRESIDENT: Caitlin Wege

HEADQUARTERS: Del Mar

BUSINESS: Angel investor group

MEMBERS: 200

WEBSITE: www.tcasandiego.com

NOTABLE: To date, the group has invested a total of more than \$6 million so far in 2020.

AO

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White’s extensive expertise and the legacy of his firm which spans more than three decades delivering state-of-the-art labs and R&D facilities to industry-leading companies nationally and internationally.”

Nationally, San Diego is ranked as the third most active market for life sciences and recent reports from commercial real estate brokerages show that investments in life science are on the rise, partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“San Diego is a good market to do business with a strong, diverse economy across high-tech, education, health, military and tourism sectors,” Budetti said. “But it’s the innovation sector that’s really outpacing everything else, growing at a rate of 10 times that of other sectors over the past 25 years. For AO, the San Diego regional aligns well with the comprehensive suite of architectural design services that we offer.”

As a partner in AO, White will lead the new Science + Design studio with Budetti.

White said he brings “an expansive network throughout San Diego’s life sciences, tech and pharmaceutical fields” to the venture, “in addition to consultant and construction industry connections.”

“The concept is to advance and grow what I’ve been doing throughout my career,” White said. ■

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who worked on the building are the owners of the building,” Smith said.

Abpopa also is named for a Russian warship.

“We look for not only architectural and housing alternatives, but also look to operate a company that shares the wealth. Thus the other meaning of RED, not only ‘Real Estate Development’ but also as a bow to the early ideals expressed in the communist revolution - not the totalitarian reality of course, or the failed reality, but the idea that all workers should be equally treated and should share the wealth of the collaborative,” Smith said. “We’re idealists, that’s what we are. We don’t think communism is the way to make things fair.”

Smith said the firm’s favorite projects are those named after ships that played important roles in what he called moments of change.

They include the company’s Little Italy headquarters in a building named The Merrimac after the Civil War ship that was the first ironclad.

“The Abpopa was the site of the first rebellion beginning the Russian revolution, where the crew took control of the war ship,” Smith said. “We also like the way certain ships look. We think the Abpopa is really a great looking ship in addition to being the seat of the initial rebellion.”

The Praises

Abpopa has been nominated for an orchid in the **San Diego Architectural Foundation’s** annual Orchids & Onions review of new building projects. Orchids go to projects deemed worthy of emulating and onions go to those that missed the mark, according to the foundation.

Smith has mixed feelings about the possible accolade because he fears orchids go to conventionally designed projects. He would almost prefer an onion.

“If you get an orchid, it means you’re an old stodgy guy,” Smith said, whereas



Photo courtesy of The Red Office

Abpopa Hillcrest was designed as a graceful tall building on a narrow lot

projects that dare to be different like his might wind up with an onion.

“We figure if we’re not controversial, we’re not doing our job,” Smith said.

Abpopa was praised in the foundation’s nomination form as “a wonderfully creative way of addressing housing needs.”

“Small units in a walkable neighborhood keeps costs down without loss of quality of life,” the nomination reads. “Guests and residents don’t need more space because their whole neighborhood is their home.”

Abpopa opened just as the COVID-19 hit, which put a serious crimp in rentals.

“It caused a horrible hardship in March, April and May,” Smith said. “We’ve weathered the pandemic. Now we’re just looking

at hopefully not having much of a resurgence.” ■

The RED office



YEAR FOUNDED: 2015

INITIAL MANGER: Ted Smith and Kathleen McCormick

HEADQUARTERS: Little Italy.

BUSINESS: housing developer

EMPLOYEES: none. The firm said it has contributors, which range from six to 15.

WEBSITE: www.theredoffice.com

NOTABLE: The Red Office describes itself as a sweat equity firm in which everyone who works on a project is paid the same amount and shares in project ownership.

AO



FOUNDED: 1974

CEO: Jack Selman

HEADQUARTERS: Orange

BUSINESS: Architecture, Design, Relationships

REVENUE: \$60.5M 2018; \$64.5M 2019

EMPLOYEES: 278

WEBSITE: www.aoarchitects.com

NOTABLE: 2019 marked the firm’s 45th anniversary. AO has grown to encompass 13 distinct studios offering architecture, design, and planning services in the areas of multifamily, retail, hospitality, restaurant, mixed-use, office, industrial, parking, landscape, global design, science and technology, modular, and transit-oriented developments.