Redondo Beach will launch an environmental review of a project to revitalize waterfront with restaurants, shops and a boutique hotel.

Redondo Beach will press forward with a planned $300-million makeover of its harbor and pier area, the first effort in years to reenergize the ailing waterfront district.

The city will launch a lengthy environmental review of the proposed revitalization and extend its exclusive agreement with CenterCal, the developer that hopes to bring a movie theater, boutique hotel and new restaurants and shops to the 15-acre waterfront.

Since a crippling winter storm in 1988 and a failed redevelopment effort, crowds along the pier and the harbor-front have thinned.
But not everyone in the South Bay city is enthusiastic about the latest plan to bring back the waterfront's past glory.

Councilman Bill Brand, whose district includes the waterfront area, dubbed the new proposal a "shopping mall by the sea," echoing complaints of many of his constituents that the development was too dense.

CenterCal, wary of controversy surrounding past attempts to remake the pier, has held several community meetings to solicit feedback. It could be as long as two years before the council votes on a final plan.

At a recent City Council meeting, other residents commended CenterCal's efforts, calling the project a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to reverse the pier's fortunes.

"We need to regain pride in an area that used to be a bright and shining star and is now a crumbling, ugly kind of mess," said Trinity Singer, who has lived in Redondo Beach for a decade and used to work on the pier.

Some council members and residents have asked CenterCal to conduct an economic feasibility study to measure competition from nearby redevelopment efforts in San Pedro and Manhattan Beach.

Fred Bruning, chief executive of CenterCal, said he's confident in the strength of the firm's plan for the Redondo Beach waterfront but will proceed with the study.