

AVRP Studios and Skyport Studio Announce Merger

Relationship Formalized by \$1.2 Billion Seaport San Diego Project

San Diego, CA, **September 21, 2016** – **AVRP Skyport Studios** is pleased to announce the merger of AVRP Studios and Skyport Studio. The new entity brings together the longevity, design excellence, and creativity of AVRP Studios with the highly regarded and innovative urban design specialist, Skyport Studio. The joint firm will operate at its combined space located at 703 16th St., San Diego, CA 92101. The merger was formalized when the two regional firms joined forces for Seaport San Diego—the most significant urban, waterfront project in San Diego. The new **AVRP Skyport Studios** leverages the team’s 40 years of design excellence and a strong infrastructure, with Skyport’s high creativity focused on urban projects, which brings new energy to the collaboration for the design and execution of some of the most visionary and high-profile projects in San Diego.

Leadership of AVRP Skyport Studios

AVRP Skyport Studios brings together four principals, each with their distinct talents.

- AVRP Studios was originated by **Douglas H. Austin, FAIA** in 1976. A highly respected and widely recognized leader in design, Doug, “the architect,” directs the firm’s urban projects.
- **Randy Robbins, AIA, LEED AP**, is the firm’s “scholar/artist,” and has a keen eye for design and aesthetics with more than 40 years of experience in architecture and interior design. Joining the team in 1983, he is the design lead for the firm’s campus and community projects.
- **Christopher T. Veum, AAIA, IIDA**, President of AVRP, joined the team in 1992. He leads the firm’s workplace and healthcare projects, and has become a sought-after speaker in how to provide hospitals with design that leads to high reliability. As “the chief strategist,” he oversees AVRP Skyport’s strategic growth, direction, and development.
- **Frank Wolden**, who has served as a design principal for three high profile firms over the past 26 years, now joins the firm’s principals. Most recently, he served as the founding principal of Skyport Studio where he focused on idea-driven urban design and architectural projects that address the changing needs of 21st century cities. As AVRP Skyport’s “urbanist visionary,” he brings extensive experience in urban design and has gained a reputation as an educator, artist, and urban philosopher. His inventive concepts often guide the planning and design principles for new projects.

Frank Wolden, Principal at AVRP Skyport Studios, says, “My goal when I started Skyport Studio was always to associate with a larger firm that could bring more horsepower. I knew that my team could bring new energy and capability to an established firm. Joining AVRP Studios was the perfect match because Doug and I are very aligned in our vision for weaving together community connections with growth and development. The Seaport San Diego project became the launch pad for the merger I had always envisioned.”

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Christopher T. Veum, AIA, IIDA, President of AVRP, states, “In collaborating with Frank and his team leading up to Seaport San Diego, there was a great organic energy between our two firms, and we took notice of that. In any good merger, one plus one must equal three. With Frank and his team, we saw that happen.”

Seaport San Diego, the Catalyst for a New Partnership

Seaport San Diego is a proposed 2.2 million-square-foot development, consisting of 40 acres of land and 30 acres of water for a total of 70 acres. The ambitious waterfront development will replace the current aging Seaport Village in downtown San Diego and includes a mix of hotels, shops and restaurants, a public beach, an aquarium, a charter high school, a Smithsonian Media attraction, and a 480-foot observation tower called “The Spire.” The project team includes Protea Waterfront Development, AVRP Skyport Studios, Gafcon, AECOM and BIG among others. Seaport San Diego is currently favored by a 6-1 Port of San Diego commissioner vote over five other proposals for the waterfront property.

Randy Robbins, AIA, Principal at AVRP Skyport Studios, says, “We view this as an incredible opportunity to provide something extraordinary for the visitors and residents of San Diego. The Spire, the new hotels, the aquarium, the new parks—these are the places where dynamic architecture will help create the backdrop for human interaction and enriching life experiences.”

Wolden adds, “In 30 years of designing downtown projects, from Horton Plaza and the Gaslamp Quarter, to the Ballpark District and many others, I have found limited opportunities to create emotional, much less physical, connections to the waterfront. For the most part, the City and the waterfront have developed in isolation of one another. When we started the design process for Seaport San Diego, it was obvious that the power of this site provided the opportunity to make this connection and create magic within the engagement of the City and the Bay.”

Beyond Seaport San Diego, the AVRP Skyport team is already well integrated, collaborating on both planning and architectural projects. AVRP Skyport Studios plans to continue to expand its reach nationally and globally. Douglas H. Austin, FAIA, Chairman & CEO of AVRP Skyport Studios, says, “Frank and I already knew that we work well together because we have been jointly involved in many of our city’s iconic projects for years. We couldn’t be more thrilled to have Frank’s visionary and creative thinking skills under our roof. He and his team are a great asset to our firm, and he is already challenging us to grow via international opportunities and endeavors.”

About AVRP Skyport Studios

In a world of “decorated boxes” and formula design, AVRP Skyport Studios strives to find and develop an original idea that drives the creative process for each project. Principals Douglas H. Austin, FAIA; Frank Wolden; Randy Robbins, AIA, LEED AP; and Christopher T. Veum, AIA, IIDA represent award-winning portfolios that have inspired developers and civic leaders to think beyond traditional boundaries to infuse each project with experiential community connections. Celebrating 40 years of creativity and accomplishment in 2016, the firm and its principals have earned nearly 150 design awards. For more information, visit

www.avrpstudios.com.

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