When it comes to bidding for a project the size of the Manchester Pacific Gateway, divide and conquer isn’t a bad strategy. At least, that’s what four local engineering firms decided when they took on and beat out the national competition. KPFF Consulting Engineers and Hope-Amundson Inc., two structural engineering firms in town who are usually competitors, teamed up for this project. KPFF is the prime structural engineer and Hope-Amundson is the sub-consultant. Mechanical engineering firms MA Engineers and McParlane & Associates also joined together to form a winning bid.

“San Diego has suffered from ‘big project syndrome,’ where big projects go out of town for design,” said Eric Lehmkuhl, principal of KPFF.

By Katie Callahan
Seven Buildings

The Manchester Pacific Gateway is a $1.3 billion, 13.7-acre waterfront development. The project is three million square feet and contains seven buildings.

Conceived in 1992, the development will occupy eight blocks and include office space, two hotels with almost 1,400 rooms, restaurants and retail, museum/cultural space, 4.5 acres of open space (which includes a public waterfront park) and almost 3,000 underground parking stalls. The project is at the front of the Broadway office corridor, along North Harbor Drive and across from the Broadway office corridor, along San Diego Harbor.

The project is still in the schematic design phase, the earliest phase of design. Demolition of buildings on the site could begin as early as June 2016. The project’s completion is scheduled for 2019.

100 Firms

The project requires about 30 firms on the architecture and engineering side, and 60 to 70 firms on the general construction side, almost 100 firms total.

“This is one of the largest private projects in the history of San Diego,” Dealy said. “This is a $1.3 billion project. And so when you’re looking at it on that basis, it’s a Goliath for San Diego.”

KPF and Hope-Amundson will team up to build the underground garage but otherwise divided up the work. From a manpower standpoint, this move benefited both firms.

“This is an opportunity to work closely with our largest competitor, sharing design approaches and best practices,” said Chuck Hope, principal at Hope-Amundson and the third generation in his family to do business with Manchester. “It will make both of our firms better as a result and open the door for more large-scale project collaborations.”

Initially, Hope-Amundson peer-reviewed the designs KPF submitted in 2006 for the Navy building. KPFF credited their competitive fee, extensive proposal and local presence with the developer and other consultants as what helped them get the project.

“Project this year is somewhat of a milestone for the local design industry,” Lehmkuhl said.

Paul McParlane, principal of McParlane & Associates.

“I felt that if we didn’t team, that our chances of getting the project were going to be diminished,” McParlane said. “The architect was indicating that he thought the project might be too big for MA or MPA to take on by ourselves.

McParlane will work on the heating, ventilation, air conditioning and plumbing for the two hotels, and MA Engineers working on the offices and the Navy campus.

A mechanical engineer for 25 years, McParlane said joint projects are more common with subcontractors than with engineering firms. He said both companies’ downtown high-rise experience made them more attractive to Dealy, as did having both firms collaborate on design concepts, bring together their resources and ensure quality control for each building.

“One of the biggest advantages is that both mechanical firms have a tremendous amount of experience and we can also be an asset to each other,” McParlane said. “I think the owner benefits from having an extra set of eyes that they wouldn’t have had if they went to a national firm.”