



Westbank and Urban Community have proposed five projects stretching across the downtown core.

Urban alignment

Internationally renowned developer Westbank has joined forces with San Jose-based Urban Community to build five projects that will add office space, residential units and retail space to the downtown core – and do it with architectural style, natural elements, public spaces and technological savvy beyond anything San Jose has seen.

While continuing to expand their presence in Vancouver, Toronto, Tokyo and Seattle, Vancouver-based Westbank and its founder / CEO **Ian Gillespie** have retained some of the world's top architects to shape their downtown San Jose projects.

With local property owner Urban Community, which started investing in San Jose just six years ago, the Westbank-Urban Community team's investment in these five projects alone could approach \$4 to \$5 billion.

"We're aligned," said **Gary Dillabough**, Urban Community principal. "We talked to 20 potential capital partners. When we met with Westbank -- Wow! **Jeff (Arrillaga)**, partner) and I may have our high school diplomas in development, but Westbank has their PhDs. They're making us smarter and working us harder."

Time will tell what the hard work brings to San Jose's center city.

Campus principles

In separate statements, Dillabough and Gillespie are adamant about creating a new way of designing and working that could lead to change on a global scale. They wonder aloud who ever thought that the concept of stale office parks with acres of parking appealed to workers.

Instead, architects for Westbank and Urban Community have purposely set the bar high, attempting to create features and public spaces that not only connect building-to-building, but district-to-district and create ample room for the people inside to convene with each other.

With a focus on energy-efficiency, sustainability and a reduction in carbon emissions, they see well-designed smart buildings creating an experience for employees while they are at work.

"We try to create environments where people have access to nature," Dillabough said.

Their future of work post-pandemic certainly includes workers back in offices.

"Efficient as home is, it's not sustainable -- it's too hollow an experience," Dillabough said. "People need access to each other. We just won't be as competitive if people don't return to the office."

He added: "The biggest thing is that when people return, they won't like commuting. We need to get workers closer to their home environment. And if we don't provide a great user experience, we will fail."

The designers challenge themselves to provide the best solution, not the

cheapest. "We need to think transformationally and take everything to a higher level," he said, including affordable housing.

"Fortunately, Westbank has tremendous experience with affordable housing," Dillabough added. "If we don't do a significant amount of affordable housing, we're simply just not doing our jobs."

Their strategy is to start building for what they call the "missing middle," and then push into the low- and very low-income levels of housing.

The developers also believe in working on the cutting edge.

"We don't mind pushing an envelope and backtracking a bit. That's OK if we have to redo something," Dillabough said. "We want to design the best customer experience we can."

The projects

Two of the five projects are already under construction.



The Bjarke Ingels-designed Energy Hub would provide a spark.

according to Gillespie. From the ground up, the building will be repurposed lobby connecting an entertainment venue and speakeasy, 88,000 square feet of offices on the tower's 11 floors plus a rooftop garden and restaurant.

The other project underway is Park Habitat, so-named because it fronts on Park Avenue and because the office tower will resemble a park.

"For our first significant project in Silicon Valley I chose **Kengo Kuma** for a very deliberate reason: Kuma-San has risen to the pinnacle of his profession by blurring the lines between nature and built environment," Gillespie said.

Besides a 1.2 million-square-foot mixed-use building of office, retail and expansion space for The Tech Interactive, Park Habitat's signature amenities are a sunken garden at ground level that connects the building to the street, a rooftop park, a massive "green lung" skylight that maximizes performance of the interior spaces and a "responsive façade" that helps the building to

One is the landmark Bank of Italy at Santa Clara and First streets. Much of the interior demolition of the building is already complete and work on the interior offices and exterior are set to begin within the month.

Of the announced projects, the Bank of Italy building is the only one focused on improving an existing building. The team of **Bjarke Ingels** Group and RMW Architecture & Interiors have designed an exterior featuring "Giannini's Vertical Garden" that is "part stairway, part outdoor workspace, all inspiration,"

Crime safety report

San Jose Police Department Deputy Chief **Heather Randol** and Capt. **Stan McFadden** presented three- and six-month strategies to reduce crime in the downtown.

"We want to be responsive and protect businesses," Randol told more than 200 participants at the outset of her talk during the Feb. 12 SJDA public meeting. She and McFadden also stressed the importance of community collaboration in solving the issues downtown.

The department described the recent crimes primarily falling into these categories: narcotics, assaults, theft and robbery. Driving the crimes are mental health and drug addiction, alcohol addiction, unhoused and blight conditions. Understanding these drivers helps police in preparing a strategy plan, she said.

- ♦ **Quality of Life:** Officers are focused on prevention, intervention and suppression two days a week;
- ♦ **Foot Patrol Team:** Officers are on downtown streets four days a week intervening and educating business owners on what officers are trying to achieve;
- ♦ **High-Needs Foot Patrol Team:** Four days a week, officers are using data to police predictive locations where crimes are most likely to occur and addressing community concerns;

- ♦ **Mobile-Crisis Response Team:** Two officers with advanced crisis-intervention training work with two licensed county clinicians, frequently contacting and assessing subjects frequently for criminal and mental health reasons. They have the ability to take the lead for further evaluation and provide mental health services and resources resulting in possible long-term solutions, Randol added.

- ♦ **Connections with adult probation:** Police obtain "stay-away orders" as a condition of a subject's probation when they repeatedly re-offend in the same area. Police make arrests when they go back out to same location and see the same people committing the same crime.

"We want to see these programs extended to seven days a week," Randol said. "As we expand, we'll see greater success."

In the next three-six months, police want to be more collaborative, working with county officials, including judges, to assist with crimes involving the mentally ill, and with the District Attorney's Office at the handling of repeat offenders.

Neighborhood Watch programs are encouraged to help citizens take on more responsibility for their role in keeping the community safe. Randol said it is imperative business owners and residents continue to call 311 and 911 to report incidents to police.

Businesses should enroll in the STOP and Trespassing programs; create and implement best practices for security staff and make sure they are trained to meet basic industry standards. Police believe the key to reducing crime is for everyone to understand the plan and know what they are supposed to do.

After six months, officers will make adjustments to the safety plan, Randol said.

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Urban alignment

From Front Page

breathe. Essentially, Park Habitat turns the office park concept from horizontal to vertical, without the large expanse of parking lots, said **Andrew Jacobsen**, Westbank's San Jose initiative manager.

The Park Habitat builders are working with **Jay Paul** Co. to capitalize on synergies between their building and the 800,000-square foot 300 Park project next door and the proposed CityView Plaza reconstruction across the street, plus the city's efforts to reimagine the west side of Plaza de Cesar Chavez along Park Avenue.

"The city's doing a good job, slowing cars by going from three lanes to two; expanding the sidewalk, creating a nice corridor that makes it easy for people to walk from the train to downtown," Dillabough said.

Which project comes next remains a mystery, even to Dillabough. "With the others, we're going through the entitlement process that will determine where we go next. We really think a residential component will be critical."

The two projects with residential units are The Orchard in SoFA and the Energy Hub in the Historic District, combined to add more than 700 residential units to downtown. Both projects also have office components.

The Energy Hub, planned for the Fountain Alley parking lot, is also designed by Bjarke Ingels Group, featuring a curving building of 437,900 square feet of offices and 194 homes divided by a striking five-story atrium. There would also be a smattering of flora, as well as a rooftop garden.

"Westbank has a similar building in Vancouver in which it owns an energy plant in the building and supplies steam to the local Community Benefit District," Dillabough said. "We want our building to generate as much power as possible. That's the thinking for Energy Hub."

The Orchard is a multi-building project along Second Street on both sides of San Salvador Street — in the Valley Title parking lot and the BoTown property now occupied by LvlUp gaming.

The Orchard includes 1.3 million square feet of offices on the parking lot block, 520 homes on the BoTown site, restaurant spaces and a marketplace on the bottom of the office building. Both buildings are 29 stories, with the exterior resembling a vertical orchard, Dillabough said. The northern building pays homage to the "spectacular" California Theatre, Dillabough noted. The architectural team includes **James K.M. Cheng** Architects, WRNS Studio and **Steinberg Hart**.

The fifth Westbank project is called the Arbor, which will reside adjacent to the Davidson building, located at Julian Street and Highway 87.

"I have to admit I was at the front of line in favor of tearing it down," Dillabough explained. "But Ian (Gillespie) and **Jeanne Gang** (of Studio Gang) saw the building as a body of energy. We have a commitment to sustainability. He's one of few developers who would keep that building."

The Davidson building, home to CreaTV for years, will be renovated to open up with food and beverage concessions, providing "elbow room" for people in the proposed 512,000 square-foot, cross-laminated timber office tower immediately adjacent.

If all the projects are completed as planned, more than 5 million square feet of office space will be added — enough for 40,000 additional workers.

Why San Jose?

There are several key factors Westbank considered before committing to San Jose. The fundamental one, according to Dillabough: "You have to start with the mindset to become one of the world's great cities."

Infrastructure. "The Redevelopment Agency put a lot of tools in place — access to the airport, wide streets, transportation, including BART, underground utilities," Dillabough said. "These are things we don't have to contend with. We also have culture in place — the galleries, museums, sports teams, music venues. And, we have San Jose State and its base of engineers."

Weather. "Austin and Nashville have tons of rooftops and outdoor areas. But in summer, they're indoors next to the air conditioning," he said. "Mother Nature is on our side."

Mayor and City Council. "We've spent a lot of time with mayors and city council members in other cities," Dillabough said. "It couldn't be a better group in San Jose. They want to move forward, they understand densities, want to get rid of red tape where they can. They are great partners to us."

PBID News

PBID opens first half of SoFA Pocket Park

Dogs rated the new park in the SoFA District five wags of the tail on Feb. 18, its "soft" opening day.

The new park, half of the larger SoFA Pocket Park which will formally open in April, revitalized a blighted parcel at 540 S. First St., once the parking lot for the former Emile's restaurant.

"Public space has never been more valued and important as we deal with the confines of daily life during the pandemic," said **Doug Bartl**, president of the Property Based Improvement District, which developed the park. "Our goal was to create a little oasis in the urban environment that offers a pleasurable and welcoming respite to everyone."

Bartl pointed out that many of downtown's new residents living in The Pierce, Sparq, 360 Residences and Aura apartments have dogs.

The new park has separate spaces for big and small dogs, artificial turf, double-entry gates, outdoor furniture and sanitizing stations, basic dog amenities such as dog bowls with fresh water and new toys donated by Andy's

Business News

When Colombia meets Italy: Two worlds collide at Natural Sweet Delight, a venture by **Davide Cantara** and his fiancé, **Lina Diaz**, which opened Feb. 1 in the SoFA Market.

Their new business comes as a result of the pandemic, which forced the trilingual Cantara to halt world travels for his regular job in hospitality at top-rate hotels and restaurants. Diaz, who ran an online cake shop in Colombia, has brought her artistic talents to the United States. Take a look at her customized cakes, viewable on Facebook and Instagram @naturalsweetdelight.

"We decided to open during the COVID because we were spending a lot of time home and our customers motivated us to have our own store," Cantara said.

The store allows the couple to feature Diaz' cake-making, but it also brings together elements of the owner's Italian and Colombian roots. "We decided to combine our experience to provide our customers a touch of our cultures ... good coffees, desserts, pastries, tropical fruits and healthy food," he added.

Italian desserts available include homemade tiramisu, cannoli, cheesecake and affogato. The Colombian side offers pan de bono, cupcakes with tropical fruits, baked empanadas and tropical fresh juice. The coffees emanate from both Italy and Colombia.

Chef's Market trial results: Five San Pedro Square Market eateries operated a "Chef's Market" from inside a rented mobile kitchen during the January surge in COVID-19 cases.

By the end of the effort, Loteria Taco Bar, The Shop, Hyland House of Sushi, Jora Peruvian Food and Robee's Falafel made 1,837 takeout meals for their customers, who rolled into the Valley Title Parking Lot in SoFA to pick up their meals. The special twist of Chef's Market was for each meal purchased, one meal was donated to a furloughed or unemployed worker through San Jose Ship Kits and Hunger at Home programs.

Chef **Rodney Baca** of The Shop came up with the idea to help save small businesses and feed those in need.

"Community is what binds us together and what makes us succeed even in the worst of times," Baca said. "Every contribution, donation and sponsorship is greatly appreciated."

In addition to enchiladas, sushi and falafel plates, Baca

Next SJDA Meeting

April 9 on Zoom: SJDA's next public meeting will be April 9, starting 8:15 a.m. The agenda includes a presentation on all the Westbank/Urban Community projects and guest speaker **Zulma Maciel**, director of the city's Office of Racial Equity. RSVP through SJDARSVP@sjdowntown.com to receive your Zoom link and PIN code to the meeting.

Pet Shop and PetSmart.

Not all visitors to the park during its opening week were from the SoFA neighborhood. **Yaniriza Quitroga**, visiting from Campbell with **Sasha**, likes to explore new dog parks and plans to visit the SoFA park twice a week.

"I loved that there is plenty of space for the dogs to run,"



Dogs loved their toys and the new SoFA Pocket Park.

Quitroga said. "Since Sasha is a smaller pup, I liked that there was a smaller area for when she feels overwhelmed being with the big dogs. I think it's important for Sasha to interact with lots of different dogs, not just the same ones in her pack."



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The well-lit park is maintained by Groundwerx. It is open daily from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. until completion of the rest of the park, slated for the spring.

The coming attraction in the park's other half will feature Veggielution's Demonstration Garden with raised planter beds, garden storage, farmstand and movable furniture.

The San Jose-based nonprofit will expand its presence downtown to generate opportunities for their food entrepreneur incubator program, Eastside Grown. Dntownowners can expect the farmstand to sell fresh fruits and vegetables and occasionally offer pop-up events through food trucks.

The SoFA Pocket Park is the PBID's third park project downtown. SJDA Street Life Manager **Marie Millares** managed the project with assistance from PBID Coordinator **Dennis Yu**.

Urban Community provided the lot for an interim use until such time the site is developed. In addition to Urban Community, other contributors include Urban Catalyst, Topa Architecture, Google, Hamilton Builders, The Knight Foundation and JJ Perez Paving.

prepared barbecue brisket and smoked pastrami, then switched over to pizzas the last weekend. Jora's offered Lomo Saltados, sautéed beef tenderloin, tomato, aji amarillo, red onion, potato fries, Peruvian white rice, and lomo saltado sauce.

SJDA's **Eric Glader**, director of community engagement, helped get the pilot program going. Urban Community donated space for the trailer.

Inadvertent omission: First Tech Credit Union was not included as the leading sponsor of the Light the Holiday Night in the last edition. *Downtown Dimension* thanks First Tech for its support and regrets the omission.

From the Archives

15 years ago — March 2016 — City Council approved short-term (February-June) funding to step up its downtown cleaning services. SJDA set the stage to form a Property-Based Improvement District (PBID) with a feasibility study that showed more satisfactory levels of cleanliness could be obtained.

20 years ago — March 2001 — Seismic renovations and interior improvement were nearly complete on the historic 1890 brick two-story Metropole Hotel at 35 S. Market St. New building features included a dramatic spiral staircase, formal offices and an oversized skylight.

25 years ago — March 1996 — San Jose was dubbed America's "Best City" in San Francisco Focus magazine, which pointed to the moves of Adobe and Netcom to the core, the Sharks, the growing arts scene and the celebra-

tion of diversity as signs of downtown's renaissance. **30 years ago — March 1991** — The Plaza Park fountain was temporarily turned off because it gave the impression of not conserving water. The fountain utilized non-potable excess ground water from the airport that was declared safe for children to play in.

Downtown Facts

2020 City of San Jose Coronavirus Relief Fund distributions
73 non-profit arts and cultural organizations received \$2,285,000. Awards ranged from \$5,720-80,030
\$80,030: Cinequest Film Festival; San Jose Children's Discovery Museum; San Jose Jazz; School of Arts and Culture.
\$68,600: Christmas in the Park; MACLA; Opera San Jose; San Jose Children's Musical Theater; San Jose Museum of Art; San Jose Youth Symphony; Starting Arts; Symphony Silicon Valley; The Tech Interactive
Note: San Jose Downtown Foundation received \$11,430.

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION
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