

Let the games begin

Entertainment options widen as two large spaces set to open

Customers who grew up playing video and table games will soon enjoy large additions to downtown San Jose's hospitality and entertainment venues as San Pedro Social and Guildhouse prepare to open.

To the owners of these establishments, the triad of food, beverages and games — including bowling — combine for good times just when people need it recovering from the pandemic.

"Because most people's days are either at home, at work, or online, people naturally get excited for a place that is none of those things where they engage with others in a social setting," said **Kevin Wick**, owner of Guildhouse in the former Forager space at 420 S. First St. in SoFA.

In San Pedro Square there's a similar message.

"We're creating a place so people can gather and have an all-around fun experience with great food, drinking and games," said **Mike Messenger**, along with **David Mulvehill**, San Pedro Social managing partners at 163 W. Santa Clara St.

Both are expected to open soon. With Covid-19, each business has been able to take time getting their large spaces properly prepared for when downtown's social scene ramps up again.

"We won't open until we have that daytime pop," Messenger said, expecting a September opening. "The time is right when the office workers come back in."

"We're thinking soft-opening in early June, but don't hold me to it," Wick said on opening day of the Farmers' Market, when he had doors open for a preview. "We'll have our grand opening when everyone can come in."

LvlUp and Miniboss reopened their food, drinks and gaming establishments in March after a long Covid-related hiatus. Both offer classic video and pinball games. Miniboss, 52 E. Santa Clara St., is in an historic building and has a flair for the nostalgia. LvlUp, 409 S. Second St., has high-end pub fare and themed cocktails,

featuring favorite table games like Foosball and air hockey.

San Pedro Social has 15,000 square feet on two floors, plus a 3,000-square-foot back patio opening onto the new San Pedro Square Alley. Customers will be drawn down stairs by the sounds of bowling bowls striking pins from four lanes in the basement.

"Bowling is a fun social game, and it's fun if you just want to blow off some steam," Messenger said.

"We'll also have classic pinball, driving and shooting games, Pac-man, pool and shuffleboard, super-sized Jenga and other old-school computer games. We're also considering space for Virtual Reality," he added.

Eating will be on the casual side, featuring burgers and slices of New York-style pizza. The bar will be more traditional than high-end, he added.

Both San Pedro Social and Guildhouse will cater to Silicon Valley firms for team-building events.

Guildhouse differentiates itself by offering modern e-sports games, said Wick, who was previously behind the AFK Game Lounge, which used to be located in the San Pedro Social space.

Guildhouse has 19,000 square feet of modern PC and console gaming, some older console systems, and a large collection of board games and tabletop games. Wick plans to host tournaments, leagues and events. Guildhouse has an in-house e-sports team

"The social aspect is the draw," Wick said. "The food-and-beverage program and the corporate events are the revenue drivers that allow us to continue providing a home for the gaming community. Guildhouse is all about experiences you can't get at home, connecting communities of gamers that have primarily existed online until now, and changing the way people interact with technology."



San Pedro Social features bowling.

Both Wick and Messenger think the timing is right for their food-drink-social mix.

"Many gamers go to school for programming, art, or engineering that was inspired by video games — and once they land that tech career it's often reinforced by co-workers sharing the same interests," Wick said.

E-sports leagues include teams from Google, Apple and Facebook, and all the Bay Area colleges. "These groups and the numbers of players in them have only grown during the pandemic where online gaming is one of the few places we can still connect," Wick added.

Messenger said downtown has room for the four businesses. "There will be some competition, but each is doing its own thing. Miniboss has the students and tournaments, Guildhouse has the consoles, and we're part of the San Pedro Square destination for workers."

Covid delayed the progress for San Pedro Social to be ready to open by six months, Messenger said. Wick is waiting for the green light and even then may pause before having a real grand opening.

"We'll most likely start with limited engagements and soft opens on weekends only and ramp up to a Grand Open when we are allowed full capacity and the majority of Californians have received a vaccination," he said.

North San Pedro housing area comes to life

In terms of downtown housing, the North San Pedro Area — between Highway 87, Coleman Avenue Overpass, St. James Street to Ryland Street and Park — is buzzing with activity.

The 381 units at The Julian at 171 Julian St., by InterCorp, has been open to tenants since February and is 20 percent leased (75 units). With the great spring weather and high rate of Covid vaccinations, the sales office is "crazy," said a sales representative. Tour in person or at livethejulian.com.

Iamesi Village (formerly North San Pedro Studios), 201 Bassett and Terraine streets, by First Community Housing, is scheduled to be completed in October. The 135-unit affordable housing project — 118 studios and 17 one-bedroom units — will be for veterans and special needs individuals and families. The pandemic caused project delays via a reduction of workers on site, extra expenses related to safety protocols and supply-chain issues. The builders ran out of contingency funds and materials costs increased, requiring the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors on May 25 to add up to \$3.1 million to the project budget so that it can be finished. Total project cost will approach \$70 million.

The 1.6-acre North San Pedro Tower #3 site at 323 Terraine St, was sold in May to Urban Community, Westbank and Terrascope for \$11.4 million. Terrascope had been in negotiations with owner Z&L Properties since 2019. Z&L had hoped to build an 18-story, 313-unit high-rise.

Circa 2010, San Jose Redevelopment Agency was able to secure a \$24.6 million grant to return the S-curved Julian Street to a traditional street pattern and install new infrastructure, such as utilities, water and sewage to the area with First Community Housing's commitment to build the affordable housing development.

With the grant, the City planned the rest of the 6.5-acre area to include First Community's building, at least two other high-rises, a large apartment complex and 78 townhomes and a park. The townhomes by Trumark were first to be built and sold. North San Pedro Park will be between Bassett and Julian streets at San Pedro Street.

Two other projects in the North San Pedro Area are on hold.

♦ Swenson's high rise on Julian Street. "It's teed up and ready, but not moving forward at this time," said **Christy Marbry** of Swenson.

♦ 199 Bassett St. by Starcity: The "co-living" concept of shared kitchens and living areas for adults is struggling in

Continued on Back Page



Dine Downtown goes all out starting July 1

More than 20 of downtown's best restaurants and cafes are expected to participate in Dine Downtown San Jose July 1-18, including the Michelin-recommended Adegá, Pastelería, Petiscos, The Grill on the Alley, Grace Deli Café, Habana Cuba, Nomikai Social Food + Eatery, and Orchestria Palm Court.

Participating establishments will be offering a chef's special, a price-fixed three- or four-course menu or a food-and-drink pairing. During June, the Dine Downtown webpage at sjdowntown.com will load with

choices for customers as eateries post special offers. The 2020 Dine Downtown event was pushed back to October and November and expanded to seven weekends due to the Covid pandemic, but had astounding results for restaurants in the Orange Tier at the time. Restaurants should see more patrons discovering restaurants and revisiting old favorites this year now that downtown is in the less restrictive Yellow Tier. "Despite the pandemic, Dine Downtown registered great results for our restaurants doing their best to

stay in business last fall," said **Julie Carlson**, SJDA marketing director. "We hope to see that momentum continue this year."

Dine Downtown has been customized so that every eatery can participate, no matter how big or small, Carlson added.

"We'll see restaurants of every size and price point offering special dishes and pairings," she said. "It should put smiles on the faces of customers returning to eat and drink downtown."

County adopts Laura’s Law

Santa Clara County became the 20th county in the state to approve implementation of Laura's Law (AB 1976), also known as the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Demonstration Project Act.

Laura's Law was signed into law in 2002 after a man with mental illness fatally shot **Laura Wilcox**, a 19-year-old volunteer receptionist, and two others at a Nevada County mental health clinic.

The law is meant to assist individuals with untreated severe mental illness. To qualify for Laura's Law, an individual must have a serious mental illness that resulted in a psychiatric hospitalization or incarceration twice in the past three years or resulted in violent behavior within the past 48 months.

"Laura's Law can serve as an essential bridge to recovery and end the cycle of repeated hospitalizations, homelessness and incarceration," said San Jose City Councilmember **Raul Perez**.

In the latest report from the California Department of Health Services, the data has shown a reduction in

violent behavior by 64%, homelessness by 30%, hospitalization by 33% and contact with law enforcement by 46% from participants in the program, Perez said.

The county Board of Supervisors put off a vote in December 2019 to give time for the county's Behavioral Health Services department time to find safe places and support services for residents with high needs and to consider funding and whether the law violates personal civil liberties.

"It is imperative that AOT is available for the most vulnerable in our community," said **Nathan Ulsh**, SJDA Director of Policy and Operations.

Supervisor **Cindy Chavez** stressed the need to expand not only AOT but all the county's behavioral health services to reach the people with "very different needs to help them find success."

County Executive **Dr. Jeffrey Smith** assured the board that county staff will present a budget and plan that implements AOT and expands current programs after summer recess.

Groundwerx News

Top employee: William Quevedo, Groundwerx's Employee of the Month for May, loves the energy of downtown and does his part to add to the city's vibrancy.

"My favorite time of the day is when I can interact with people," he said.

Quevedo's positive outlook is contagious, according to Groundwerx Program Director **Chris Kendrick**. "William starts each shift by saying hello to his co-workers," Kendrick said. "He sets

the tone for the shift, and puts a smile on everyone's face."

During the pandemic, Quevedo has gone out of his way to greet people on the street and have a quick chat.

Quevedo is one of Groundwerx's multi-taskers. Since starting his job in November 2019, he can be found pressure-washing sidewalks, detail cleaning,



William Quevedo

Room to grow at Farmers’ Market in SoFA



Downtown residents and workers enjoy the warm days and wide streets at the Downtown Farmers’ Market, held each Friday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on South First Street in SoFA District.

painting or serving as a safety ambassador.

His award-winning month included removing 16 cases of graffiti; pressure-washing 128 hours, including 254 messes needing immediate attention; and cleaning 479 street fixtures. As ambassador, he also logs about 10 miles per shift.

During the lunch hour, Quevedo eats and makes friends at HOM Korean Kitchen, Muchos! And Mexico Bakery.

To report items needing cleaning immediately, please call Groundwerx dispatch at (408) 287-1520.

Business News

50 years of Togo's: Togo's, a San Jose business success story, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Founded in 1971 by **Mike Cobler**, a San Jose

State student who bought the original Togo's store at 336 E. William St. from **Gordon Reed**, Togo's started expanding throughout the Western United States. Still headquartered downtown above its San Pedro Street store, Togo's has almost 200 locations.



Togo's is also known as an innovator in the sandwich business. It was first to market with the turkey and avocado sandwich and coined the phrase, "fast service, not fast food."

During the pandemic, Togo's sales declined by about 45 percent. However, the organization pivoted by updating its logo, remodeling stores and improving its sandwich-making process so that customers can customize the food they order and have a choice of ordering through a kiosk or over the counter. With the changes, Togo's sales in the fourth quarter of 2020 were almost back to the prior year's level, said CEO **Glenn Lunde**.

Drink @ Dr.Ink: Dr.Ink is where boba and tea merge to create a drink experience.

"Boba can be the magical sprinkles in a drink, but the right cup of tea is the ultimate magic potion," says the dr-ink.space/ webpage. Dr.ink focuses on organic loose-leaf tea, Straus Milk products, housemade fruit puree and pure cane sugar – nothing artificial. Dr.ink is at 77 N. Almaden, Suite 70.

DashMart running to SoFA: DoorDash has leased a space at 431 S. First St. from longtime SoFA property owner **Richard Berg** to open its DashMart digital convenience store channel. Customers go to the Doordash platform and order from about 3,000 items including household essentials, ready-made meals, snacks, candies and restaurant retail items such as specialty spices and sauces all stocked in the SoFA space.

"It's a bit like the express lane of a store," DoorDash CEO **Tony Xu** explained when the first eight DashMarts opened in August 2020. "Sometimes you just need those things that either you forgot or just need in high frequency."

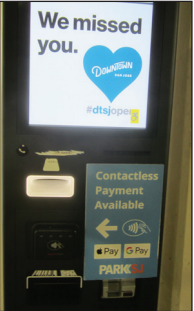
Those who use the new service will get their supplies delivered in about 30 minutes. DashMart is scheduled to open this month. To see how it works, check doordash.com/convenience/store/dashmart-concord-1097721/.

Downtown News

Upgrade at ParkSJ meters and garages: Contactless payments can now be made at most ParkSJ Garages using Apple Pay or NFC (near field communications) credit cards.

Parking guests can pull up to the entry gate and hover their credit card or Apple Pay over the reader located on the entry column. This creates an electronic ticket where nothing is printed but the gate opens.

Upon exit, the same card used to get in is applied to get out, hovering it over the reader in the exit column. The reader will take payment and open the gate for exit.



Swipe your card to pay.

Similar methodology is used to add time at downtown parking meters.

A couple of notes: At the garages, all entry/exit columns have an intercom button that can be used should any problems occur.

Also, use contactless payment at the ParkSJ garages where the first 90 minutes are free: Fourth Street Garage; Third

Street Garage; Second and San Carlos Garage; and Market and San Pedro Square Garage.

The Globe Garage on Third Street and the City Hall employees' garage on Fourth and St. John are not set up to accept contactless payments.



The Julian leasing office is at Julian and Terraine streets.

North San Pedro

From Front Page

the wake of the pandemic. Putting the deal together and obtaining necessary permits for the 803-unit building has been difficult, Starcity's CEO admitted last summer. Previous owner KT Urban has filed suit against Starcity.

Another property, 188 W. St. James, by Z&L Properties, is in the "finishing-touches" stage, including streetlight installation; pouring of cement sidewalks; limestone cladding installation on the south side facing San Pedro Square; lobby tile installation and stone tile on the steps outside the lobby; and final inspections on both towers for electrical, mechanical and plumbing, said **Ruby Huang**, Z&L senior sales and marketing manager.

The development is 640 units across the twin high rise buildings – one tower to be leased and the other to be sold as condominiums. First move-ins are expected in August. Visit 188weststjames.com.

Just north of the North San Pedro housing area is Rail Yard Place, adjacent to the Coleman Avenue and Highway 87 overpasses, by Acquity Realty. Instead of office, revised plans call for 180 apartments, 90 condos, and a 265-room hotel. The project is in the permitting process.

Although not part of the original 6.5 acres, Westbank's The Arbor, a 14-story office building, is a gateway to the North San Pedro district. The proposed project, which features a stunning design by Studio Gang and revitalization of the adjacent Davidson building, is in the permitting process.

Plans to build out the North San Pedro housing area on what was previously known as the Brandenburg site trace back to 2007 when the San Jose Redevelopment Agency planned for five projects and 600 units. Today, eight housing projects totaling about 2,800 units are being built out or in planning.



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SJDA Meeting June 11

Focus on behavioral health: SJDA's next public meeting will be Friday, June 11 at 8:15 a.m. via Zoom.

The agenda includes a Q&A with Santa Clara County Supervisor **Cindy Chavez** and **Raul Perez** on mental health and homeless solutions. Register for this webinar at tinyurl.com/sjda-june-11.

From the Archives

10 years ago – June 2011 – Redevelopment Agency Executive Director **Harry Mavrogenes** retired. Un-known at the time, his retirement foreshadowed the state's closure of all redevelopment agencies by a year.

15 years ago – June 2006 – Downtown businesses rejected a parking proposal similar to a plan put into action last year. The 2006 proposal suggested one-hour free parking anytime and eliminating the validation program. The 2020 plan, supported by SJDA, provides free parking for the first 90 minutes in designated city-owned garages and ended the validation program.

20 years ago – June 2001 – Construction began on Adobe Systems' third tower and on the 34,000-square-foot Manley Hall at Notre Dame High School's downtown campus, established in 1927.

25 years ago – June 1996 – SJDA's oldest original committee, Alive After Five, reinvented itself as Downtown Arts & Dining to "trumpet the collaboration between downtown's world-class arts groups and restaurants."

Downtown Facts

San Jose State's Fall 2021 Semester

"Fall will be a transition semester," said **Edwin Tan**, director of advocacy and community relations for San Jose State University. "Not all staff will return to campus, some will be hybrid or fully online. Our goal is to maintain a safe density on campus."

-- Staff starts returning in July.

-- First day of instruction: Aug. 19. About 20 percent of courses will be hybrid, 40 percent in-person and 40 percent fully online.

-- Masks will be required on campus.

-- Vaccines required contingent on adequate supply.

-- Last day of instruction: Dec. 6

-- Finals: Dec. 8-10 and Dec. 13-14

-- Commencement: Dec. 15-16

-- Students enrolled in 2020: 33,000

Source: San Jose State University

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

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