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Real estate: Major downtown San Jose projects planned by big-time development team

Westbank, Gary Dillabough team up for several large new projects in downtown San Jose



Westbank Projects U.S.

Fountain Alley entry canopy on South First Street next to Bank of Italy historic tower in downtown San Jose, concept. A development team with a global and a local reach have filed proposals for at least three large projects that would help spur a dramatic transformation of key sections of downtown San Jose.

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SAN JOSE — A development team with a global and local reach have filed proposals for at least three large projects that would help spur a dramatic transformation of key sections of downtown San Jose.

New offices, retail, restaurants, and housing would be added to downtown San Jose — along with a revamp of the historic Bank of Italy tower — as a result of proposals by a venture of Bay Area developer Gary Dillabough and Canada-based Westbank, which has achieved worldwide acclaim under the leadership of its founder Ian Gillespie.

The new projects would occur at the Davidson office building site near the interchange of State Route 87 and West Julian Street, on a surface parking lot next to Fountain Alley between South First Street and South Second Street, and the old Bo Town property at South Second Street and East San Fernando Street, according to documents on file with San Jose city planners.

“Great cities must embrace the imagination of visionaries like Ian Gillespie and Gary Dillabough,” San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo said Thursday. “These development projects provide long-overdue attention to great architecture in our city center that will make our community proud and lend distinction to our skyline.”

Separately, the Westbank-Dillabough group also control the choice Valley Title lot near the corner of South Second Street and East San Carlos Street, which means another major proposal is likely in the works for that large property.

The most recent filings from the Westbank-Dillabough venture sketch out dramatic plans for three downtown San Jose sites:

— Fountain Alley. 35 S. Second St. Office, retail, and restaurant space totaling 437,900 square feet. A residential element would create 194 housing units.

— Bo Town property. 409 S. Second St. and 425 S. Second St. The project would create 520 housing units. Retail and restaurant space on the ground floor would total about 5,300 square feet.

— Davidson Building site. 255 W. Julian St. The existing six-story Davidson building would be retained. A new office and retail building would be constructed next to it, totaling 512,000 square feet.



The new office building would be 14 stories high and connect to the existing Davidson building through an underground tunnel and through a pedestrian bridge that would link the rooftop of the existing building and the sixth floor of the new office building.

Ground-level paseos are planned that will have access to the lobbies of both buildings, the planning documents show.

Ground floor retail is being planned in the new office building and at the street level of the existing Davidson building, which is named after legendary developer and construction executive Charles Davidson.

The project includes multiple elevated landscape terraces at various heights, as well as roof terraces on both buildings, according to the plans.

“The Westbank and Dillabough proposals all have a commitment to ground-floor activation, sustainability, and architecture that downtown needs more of,” said Scott Knies, executive director of the San Jose Downtown Association.

The development venture has picked an array of locations for its first round of projects: the northern edge of the downtown; the South First Area, or SoFA district; and the traditional core of the downtown near First Street and Santa Clara Street.

“They are looking at the downtown as a whole with diverse uses and in different neighborhoods,” Knies said.

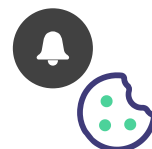
Westbank and Dillabough also are moving forward with a new office tower and expansion of The Tech Museum on Park Avenue.

A growing number of major players with staying power — including projects such as Google’s transit village near the Diridon train station, Adobe’s new headquarters tower, and office towers by veteran developer Jay Paul Co. — are either being actively prepared or are under construction.

Now, Westbank and Dillabough are gradually unveiling their vision for downtown San Jose.

“These developments continue the trend of a dynamic and innovative means of constructing world-class projects,” said Bob Staedler, principal executive with Silicon Valley Synergy, a land-use and planning consultancy.

The wide-ranging interest for big projects in downtown San Jose by Westbank and its architectural allies such as Kengo Kuma Architects and Associates bodes well for the future of the urban core of the Bay Area’s largest city, the mayor said.



“It is a sign of San Jose’s coming of age that the city is attracting globally renowned developers and architects to help us realize our vision of a vibrant downtown,” Liccardo said.

Davidson Building in Downtown Sa...

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