

## Lighting the way

Nighttime aesthetics and safety are keys to new comprehensive illumination plan

SJDA's Street Life team has unveiled a strategic and comprehensive community lighting plan that brightens the downtown core, creates more vibrant streets and provides a greater sense of security for pedestrians at night.

The team will start with two concurrent pilot projects. One will focus on a yet-to-be-determined block or intersection where colored filtered (diffuse) lighting will shine from building interiors along the street, and where additional accent lighting or artistic projections may highlight other buildings. The second project will include artistic lighted elements glowing from a rotation of vacant storefronts that will give life to otherwise dark spaces.

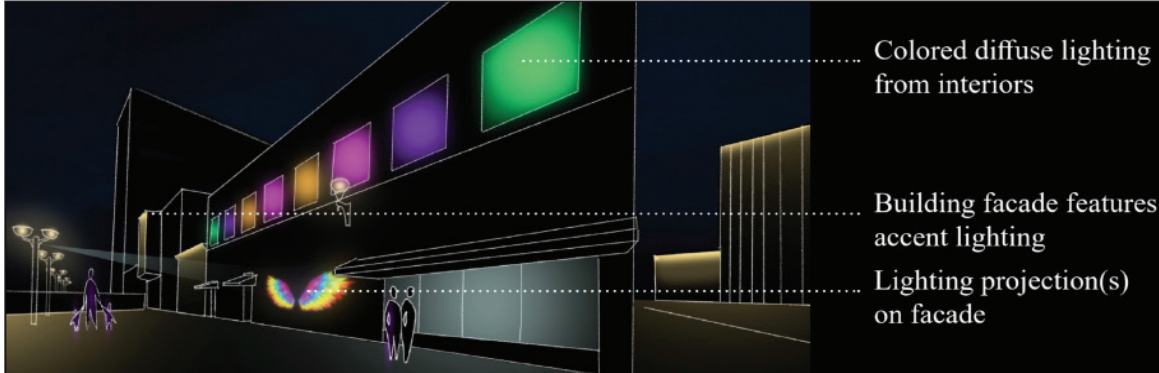
ARUP lighting consultants worked with the Street Life team and groups of downtown stakeholders, from which emerged numerous specific street-lighting concepts and dozens of creative and interchangeable lighting ideas. The study was funded mostly by property owners plus support from the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**, and overseen by the Property-Based Improvement District (PBID) board.

The goal of the program: "Create opportunities that support growth and diversity of the nighttime economy, as well as improve quality of life for urban citizens."

"This lighting project potentially makes a big difference for us," said CEO **Alex Stettinski** at the SJDA Town Hall on March 9. "Downtown already has a lot of areas that are activated and some areas in between where people are not encouraged to walk or do not feel as safe or comfortable. The lighting should help create more social and economic impact between our activated spaces."

The report allows for flexibility of various lighting applications as conditions change and downtown evolves. Possible locations in the report that could be lighting-enhanced in the future include:

- ◆ First and Market streets at the entrance to SoFA near Parque de los Pobladores;

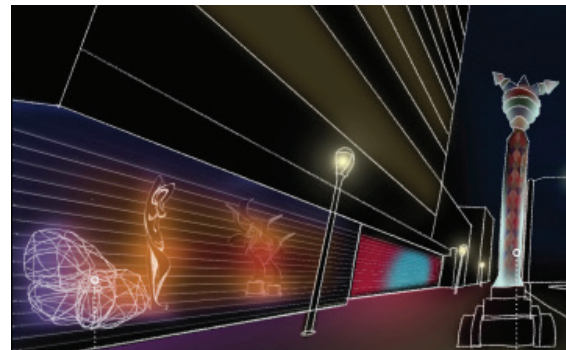


*The Street Life team will start on demonstration projects that will make strolling down a block, above, or past vacant spaces, right, more appealing.*

- ◆ Parking lot facades along North San Pedro and Market streets;
- ◆ West St. John Street underpass leading to Little Italy and other barriers caused by Highway 87;
- ◆ St. James Park and the Heritage Walk of downtown's history;
- ◆ Barack Obama Boulevard and the SAP Center plaza;
- ◆ Fountain Alley;
- ◆ The plaza on Paseo de San Antonio;
- ◆ North Fifth Street and City Hall.

"Static light poles provided by the city mostly light those areas," said **Sarah Billings**, SJDA street life manager. "The beautification lighting aspect would also provide a layer of safety by being so cool that they serve as an attraction for people. That adds more foot traffic and a greater sense of security with the art in place. Also, the art and look of the street become a way-finding tool for everyone."

A group of local artists, business owners and property owners toured downtown after dark and commented on what they liked and didn't; artistic preferences of tones, colors and textures; and offered ideas of how each street they walked down could be improved. Throughout downtown, the group saw the impact of white and/or warm lighting



to local culture.

"We heard a lot about the need for quality over quantity," Billings said. "All the while, our lighting plan will stay inclusive and keep in mind ecological and environmental impacts of the lighting."

The PBID and Street Life team will start immediately to plan the pilot projects. If pedestrian numbers increase and survey respondents confirm they feel better walking past the additional lighting, PBID will commence with future larger projects that will require community collaboration and funding.

Per a request by Mayor **Matt Mahan** in his March budget message, the City Council requested the city evaluate the report and add investments in downtown lighting to near- and longer-term budget consideration.

"High-quality lighting is an integral component of successful events, activation, and public safety," Mahan said.

## City considers downtown vibrancy ideas

San Jose City Council unanimously supported several initiatives that would enhance downtown vibrancy during a Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget session in March.

"A vibrant downtown can become a greater source of tax revenue that can fund higher staffing levels and quality service delivery across our entire city," said Mayor **Matt Mahan** in his March budget message.

Foremost, Mahan expressed the need for the city to hire two permanent full-time employees to augment SJDA's efforts toward downtown's post-pandemic revitalization. Mahan's budget message emphasized the positions focus on downtown's economic development to "ensure consistent 365-day programming, expand marketing efforts and help coordinate responses to safety concerns."

Said Mahan at SJDA's March 9 Town Hall: "I want to have one person whose time is protected, whose sole job is to coordinate

with our many stakeholders downtown to ensure that we're coordinating our emergency and public safety response; we're working closely with the county on behavioral health issues; we're coordinating all the different venues and cultural associations to have consistent 365-days-a-year programming; and we're beefing up our marketing."

Heeding the recommendations in February of the Downtown Vibrancy Transition team, the City Council also supported:

- ◆ Providing financial assistance to the struggling arts community and allowing more events by reducing permitting red tape and relaxing security requirements for lower-scale events
- ◆ Requesting more police foot patrols throughout the city, and adding more downtown community service officers such as officers, ambassadors and private security to create a greater sense of safety.

- ◆ Reducing the number of vacant storefronts by reducing fees; simplifying permitting processes, especially for pop-ups; and allocating staff to focus on citywide business recruitment.

In addition, the mayor and council requested support of the Downtown Association's lighting plan (see story above).

"We must invest in our small businesses and arts organizations to see our downtown continue to grow and thrive," said **Omar Torres**, District 3 councilmember.

The mayor's budget message focuses on big-picture citywide issues to increase community safety, reduce unsheltered homelessness and clean up neighborhoods. Downtown vibrancy is included in the fourth focus area, grouped with jobs and housing programs.

Analyses and funding details won't be available until late May, and the budget for next year will be approved in June.

### Era of printed *Downtown Dimension* ends

This is the final monthly printing of *Downtown Dimension*. Starting in May, SJDA's newsletter will be sent to subscribers via email when news needs to be shared with downtowners.

The newsletter's subscription base of more than 5,000 is a mix of businesses, residents and visitors keeping up to date on downtown happenings.

The electronic version allows SJDA staff to present more information and photos about all things downtown, including business updates; SJDA initiatives, marketing and events; Groundwerx efforts; downtowners; and general information. More space can be devoted to pictorials; key milestones and anniversaries; business need-to-know content; and links to other media stories.

*Dimension* articles will be presented with the most important information, and readers can click to the full story posted on sjdowntown.com to take a deeper dive into the material. This is the preferred way people want to receive news in our increasingly fast-paced society.

*Downtown Dimension* was first published in June 1988. Subscriptions more than doubled a decade ago when the newsletter was also offered digitally.

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