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## **Downtowners are changing skates this holiday season in San Jose**

Aloha Downtown Skate opens Nov. 19 through the holidays

SAN JOSE – Aloha Downtown Skate roller rink will replace Downtown Ice this holiday season beginning Nov. 19 at the same Circle of Palms plaza on Market Street next to the San Jose Museum of Art and Signia by Hilton.

The downtown anchor holiday attraction is produced by Aloha Fun Center in partnership with San Jose Downtown Association and with funding from the City of San Jose. Google is presenting sponsor.

Downtown Skate manager Tricia Lee McNabb, who has worked at the downtown rink each of its 26 years, thinks the switch from ice skating to roller skating is a good move. “Like a lot of people, my sister and I were looking for something fun to do together during the COVID lockdown and we both had loved roller skating as kids,” she said. “Every year I would get a new pair of skates for my birthday and now I’m continuing the tradition.”

Apparently, McNabb and her sister are not alone. A roller-skating page on social media platform TikTok has received more than 8 billion views after shelter-in-place mandates started in spring 2020, and now roller skating has had a resurgence in popularity.

“I used to skate recreationally in the Circle of Palms area and always thought it would be a great spot for a roller rink,” said Downtown Skate producer Elizabeth Ruiz, who also operates the Aloha Fun Center at Eastridge and was a former member of the Silicon Valley Roller Girls roller derby team. Ruiz says she is honored to have an opportunity to activate this high-profile urban space and bring her style of roller-skating fun to downtown San Jose.

The design of inner and outer rings around 32 palm trees lit with programmable LED lights will be familiar to anyone who skated previously at the ice rink. There will be two areas for skaters to rest on benches between the palms and retro design elements to play off a “roller disco” theme. The popular Snowman Hot Chocolate cabin is again next door to the rink.

McNabb pointed out that the most noticeable change will be the fact that the rink will be at plaza level rather than on a raised platform.

“Not only will skaters be able to rest on benches right between the palm trees, but the trees themselves will appear taller and more majestic,” she said.

Construction started Oct. 31 and will take less than three weeks, a reduction by four weeks compared to the ice rink build. Basic construction includes a Sport Court laid over a plywood base plus “Jersey barriers” – also known as “K-rail” – providing the walls of the rink.

McNabb said she looks forward to working with the rink’s neighbors at the San Jose Museum of Art, 50 West office building and especially the Signia by Hilton hotel this season.

“Last year, the rink was open but the hotel was still closed, and it definitely felt like there was something missing,” McNabb said.

The cost to skate on the downtown rink will be \$20 for 90 minutes, including skate rental. Tickets can be purchased online in advance or at the rink.

The roller rink will be open daily from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. weekends and from Dec. 17-Jan. 7. Weekdays before Dec. 17, the rink will be open from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., closing at 9 p.m. on Sundays and 11 p.m. on Friday nights and the night before Thanksgiving. The Opening Ceremony will be at 6 p.m. Nov. 22.

Ruiz stepped in to ensure the Circle of Palms will be busy during the holidays after last year’s ice rink operator opted not to return this year. The location just across the street from Christmas in the Park is ideal for a fun family-oriented activity, she said.

“Christmas is my favorite holiday and I love skating, so this is a great combination of two things I am very passionate about,” Ruiz said.

The rink will stay open through Jan. 8. Rink information, hours and tickets are available at [alohadowntownskate.com](http://alohadowntownskate.com) or through [sjdowntown.com](http://sjdowntown.com).

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