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For immediate release

Knight Foundation invests in 5-year initiative to make downtown San Jose more vibrant for residents and visitors

Knight support will enable the San Jose Downtown Association to analyze mobility data to guide the urban core's economic recovery.

SAN JOSE – The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and San Jose Downtown Association (SJDA) are partnering on an initiative to create a more vibrant downtown San Jose for residents and visitors to live, work, study and play.

Knight is investing nearly \$1 million in SJDA's Beautiful Tableau initiative, a five-year effort to create a better future for downtown San Jose by using data to provide insights for city planners and the downtown community to build an urban center that is innovative, vibrant, equitable and inclusive.

“San Jose can learn from shared experiences and challenges during the pandemic to build a city that amplifies our diversity, accelerates our innovation, leverages our history, and builds equity by connecting residents and business owners with those who wish to invest in the city's future,” said Christopher Thompson, Knight's San Jose director. “Now, we're moving forward with this unique opportunity to reimagine a downtown that is welcoming, safe and desirable for everyone.”

The Beautiful Tableau project is expected to start small and grow over the years. SJDA will work with executives, business and property owners, artists, investors, developers and others for input on project decisions.

The project intends to:

- Gather information that's useful to fill empty storefronts and enhance merchandising in existing storefronts;

- Make a list of favored native plants to populate pedestrian paths;
- Identify best sites for public art placement;
- Establish temporary art on fencing separating visitors from large construction projects;
- Collect evidence that raises the level of street life improvements beyond murals, decorative lighting and planters.

“The definition of ‘tableau’ is a memorable and dramatic image or scene,” said Sarah Billings, SJDA Street Life Manager. “We’re inspired to collaborate with our partners to evoke new opportunities downtown for our residents, workers, students and visitors by filling in the spaces between our established districts.”

Over the five years of the grant, SJDA wants to strengthen the public experience along Santa Clara from the Diridon Station to City Hall; between the Historic District and South First Area (SoFA); on routes to and from Guadalupe River Park; and on Park Avenue between Market Street and Almaden Boulevard. SJDA also wants to connect San Jose State with the rest of downtown.

Knight’s investment will kickstart a sustainable means of building, allocating resources and adding onto downtown during the pandemic and beyond.

“With the Beautiful Tableau initiative, we’re reaching for a higher bar of excitement and vivacity than we’ve ever experienced,” said Chloe Shipp, SJDA Director of Public Space Operations. “We’re going to make sure we’re ready for the eruption of construction we expect over the next several years.”

More than 50 office and residential high-rise projects are already in downtown’s planning hopper, and Google plans to create a multi-use transit village called Downtown West next to an expanded Diridon Station.

Portions of Knight’s commitment will be used to crunch numbers that will assist with downtown branding, marketing and communications; and expand downtown’s capacity for research and development. The objective is to build confidence among stakeholders and encourage additional investment.

Beautiful Tableau builds off the successes of two impactful Knight investments with SJDA:

- The MOMENT shops in San Pedro Square added four ground-floor micro retail spaces by renovating a section of the Market-San Pedro Square parking garage. Opened in May 2018, the award-winning MOMENT project has provided 15 entrepreneurs a chance to test their concepts in a storefront location.
- A five-year Street Life initiative completed in June 2020 resulted in dozens of downtown decorative and landscape improvements, including an explosion of colorful crosswalks,

LED lighting and murals. The Street Life manager position initially funded through the grant is now a permanent, full-time role sustained through the Property Business Improvement District.

“Knight’s support and the leveraging of funds provided by property owners, businesses and City of San Jose resources resulted in a more dynamic downtown environment pre-COVID, which sets the table for the Beautiful Tableau initiative,” Shipp said.

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About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

We are social investors who support democracy by funding free expression and journalism, arts and culture in community, research in areas of media and democracy, and in the success of American cities and towns where the Knight brothers once had newspapers. Learn more at kf.org and follow @knightfdn on social media.

About San Jose Downtown Association

San Jose Downtown Association (SJDA) enhances the unique and diverse character of downtown San Jose by providing a clean and welcoming urban environment, public space improvements, marketing and community programming and advocacy on issues that affect business and property owners. Currently, SJDA is focused on assisting businesses through economic recovery and planning beyond the pandemic. Sjdowntown.com

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