

# Downtown Ice is back

**Kristi Yamaguchi** Downtown Ice returns to the Circle of Palms for its 25th anniversary season of ice skating from Nov. 19-Jan. 9.

One of the premier holiday experiences in San Jose, Downtown Ice features a one-of-a-kind circular ice rink, inviting visitors to skate around 32 palm trees. The season will see the return of community-led events like Schools on Skates, as well as new programs such as the Silent Skate Party and Musical Mondays presented by Broadway San Jose.

Across the street, Christmas in the Park also returns after a one-year hiatus brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It’s wonderful these two San Jose holiday traditions are back and part of our downtown recovery,” said **Julie Carlson**, SJDA marketing director.

A few changes are in store this season. Tickets for one-hour sessions at the ice rink must be purchased in advance at [downtownicesj.com](http://downtownicesj.com). General admission tickets are \$19 with skate rental

included in the cost of admission. A portion of ticket proceeds benefit Kristi Yamaguchi’s Always Dream Foundation. Locker rental, skate helpers, gloves, socks and water are also available.

Hours this season are 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m. from Nov. 19–Dec. 17; 10 a.m.-11 p.m. from Dec. 18–Jan. 2, 2022; and 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Jan. 3–9, 2022.

All skaters must comply with the rink’s current COVID safety policies. Please check the Downtown Ice website for the latest policies and guidelines.

Willy Bietak Productions will take care of day-to-day operations of Downtown Ice in San Jose as well as rinks at Union Square in San Francisco and downtown Sunnyvale.

As part of its 2020 Stabilization Plan which puts SJDA’s focus squarely on clean and safe downtown conditions and other priorities, the association is transferring operational responsibilities and working on the rink in partnership with Bietak Productions.



*Downtown Ice returns this season. The Opening Celebration will be Nov. 22. Photo by Greg Ramar*

“This is a big change for SJDA, but we are devoted to our strategic plan and doing everything we can to get through these difficult times and support downtown recovery,” said **Katia McClain**, SJDA president.

Kristi Yamaguchi Downtown Ice will host a number of special events and holiday festivities at the rink this season. The Opening Celebration is Nov. 22 at 5:30 p.m. A “Silent Skate” is programmed for Dec. 16 at 7 and 8:30 p.m. On Mondays at 5:30 and 7 p.m., Broadway San Jose presents Musical Mondays.

A Humane Society Silicon Valley Event will be held Dec. 4. Also, private parties are available on select Mondays and Tuesdays at the 5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. sessions.

“We are excited to bring the magic of outdoor

skating back to the Bay Area with ice rinks in unforgettable, picturesque locations,” says **Willy Bietak**, president of Willy Bietak Productions. “No matter your age or skill level, the San Jose skating rink will offer a diverse lineup of events and skating experiences for the community to create festive memories this season.”

Sponsors of Kristi Yamaguchi Downtown Ice are First Tech Federal Credit Union, Alaska Airlines, Google, **John & Timi Sobrato** Charitable Fund, SWENSON, Urban Catalyst, City of San Jose – Office of Cultural Affairs, Broadway San Jose, Sjaak’s Organic Chocolates, NBC Bay Area, Telemundo 48, KTSF, Clear Channel Outdoor and Bay Area News Group.

In addition, The Gourmet Hot Chocolate stand returns next to the rink in the Circle of Palms.

## Run virtually for good causes

For the second consecutive year, the 2021 Applied Materials Silicon Valley Turkey Trot and 2021 Santa Run Silicon Valley will run virtually.

“Our primary concern is the health of our community, and we remain committed to producing a dynamic event that builds camaraderie and a sense of shared mission,” said **Ahmad Thomas**, CEO of Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

Proceeds from the Turkey Trot aid vulnerable communities in Silicon Valley. The Santa Run benefits Christmas in the Park and Downtown Ice holiday events, plus Reading Partners.

The theme is to run separately, yet together. The Turkey Trot is 5- or 10-kilometers to be run between Nov. 25-28 and the Santa Run is a 5K run between Dec. 19-25.

All Santa Run participants will receive a holiday-themed race shirt, Christmas ornament medal, and Santa beard race wrap (for the first 1,000 registrants). Design your own course and complete your run in a race shirt or dressed as your favorite holiday character, and share your results and photos with other runners. Register at [runsignup.com/Race/CA/SanJose/SantaRunSiliconValley](http://runsignup.com/Race/CA/SanJose/SantaRunSiliconValley).

## SoFA motel slated for homeless housing

Without any prior outreach to the downtown community, the San Jose City Council took a surprising action to potentially locate a permanent homeless housing project in the middle of SoFA.

On Oct. 5, the City Council unanimously authorized the city to apply for the state Homekey Program grant, which will partially fund the purchase of four hotels and construct housing on a vacant site already owned by the city.

City staff responded to a second round of Project Homekey funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development through the federal American Rescue Plan Act. The state has a total of \$200 million designated for Bay Area sites and has promised to respond to applications, which opened Oct. 1, within 45 days of submission.

With no direct engagement to San Jose Downtown Association or SoFA, one of the hotels included in the city’s application is the 72-unit Pacific Motor Inn at 455 S. Second St.

Startled SoFA business and property owners called their own outreach meeting Oct. 13 to discuss the proposed \$18 million purchase of the Pacific Motor Inn for permanent homeless housing. More than

a dozen people expressed concerns about the fragility of the SoFA business ecosystem; an over-concentration of similar projects near SoFA; the loss of an affordable hotel used by artists and convention attendees on a budget; the appropriateness of the location given night clubs on the same block; and the lack of respect for the longstanding investment and vision for SoFA as an arts, entertainment and cultural district.

It was also surprising, noted **Nathan Ulsh**, SJDA Director of Policy and Operations, that city staff provided no data on how the Pacific Motor Inn or the nearby South Hall – both used to provide temporary shelter for the homeless during the pandemic – impacted the surrounding SoFA community.

Project Homekey addresses homelessness across California by providing funding for cities and counties to acquire properties that can be converted into low-income housing for homeless individuals and families also at risk of medical conditions caused by COVID-19.

City staff plans to submit its Project Homekey grant application totaling 540 units for the five locations by Dec. 1, said **Rachel VanderVeen**, deputy director of the city’s Housing Department.

## SJDA proposes Clean Community Fund

San Jose Downtown Association has called for establishment of a Clean Community Fund that targets cleanup of the messes caused by the unhoused in San Jose and Santa Clara County.

“Think about the amount of trash each of us accumulate and throw away or recycle in a day, or the number of times we use the restroom,” said SJDA Executive Director **Scott Knies**. “Those living on our streets, trails, creeks and freeways are generating trash and relieving themselves, too, and many without access to proper facilities.”

The Clean Community Fee would be assessed as a percentage of each homeless contract funded by the County of Santa Clara and City of San Jose. Knies suggested 10 percent.

“We know that much more than 10 percent of our unsheltered population suffers from mental illness,” Knies said. “We have a need and an obligation to clean up after those who continue to live in our

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## Clean Fund

*From Front Page*

public spaces.”

According to the last Santa Clara County homeless census and survey conducted in January 2019, 25 percent of the 9,706 total homeless counted are chronically homeless, living outdoors in parks and encampments (34%), vehicles (18%), and structures not meant for habitation (13%). Further, 42 percent say they suffer from psychiatric conditions, 35 percent from alcohol and/or drug abuse, 33 percent from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 10 percent from traumatic brain injury, according to the latest survey results.

The Clean Community Fee would not be used to reduce current homeless housing and service contracts, but added to it, Knies said, in recognition of the need to both provide housing and clean up for those who don't have housing yet, or are considered “service resistant” and continue to live outside.

Making his comments at SJDA's Annual Meeting on Oct. 8, Knies expressed frustration and exhaustion at the “never-ending and never-seems-to-get-better nature” of dealing with daily messes not only downtown, but countywide.

“The homeless are not the only victims of our unhoused crisis,” he said.

Groundwerx services downtown, paid for by downtown property owners, already include pressure-washing, hot-spot cleaning, disinfecting public furniture, picking up garbage and removing biohazards left in public. Groundwerx ambassadors also make contact with those sleeping outside and ask them if they require assistance and are willing to be connected to social services.

The fee should begin as soon as possible while the county and city continue to operate with federal American Rescue Plan funding, Knies said. Once the federal money runs out, the Clean Community Fee could establish a sustainable funding source to help cities countywide maintain sanitation and hygiene services for their most vulnerable homeless populations.

SJDA members plan to meet with City Councilmembers and Santa Clara County Supervisors about the concept over the next few weeks, Knies said.

**SJDA disperses Abierto funds:** San Jose Downtown Association recently helped the City of San Jose distribute Abierto Program funds to seven non-profit organizations. Abierto (Italian for “open”) celebrates the City's re-opening since the state went off the COVID-tiered mandate system in June.

Mayor **Sam Liccardo** designated funding for projects throughout San Jose between August 2021 and June 2022 to support arts

organizations, public space activation and events. SJDA, along with Filco Events, San Jose School of

Arts and Culture and San Jose Jazz, processed some of the funding and provided logistical support. The City's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department used the remainder of the funding for Viva Parks and Viva Calle programming.

SJDA formed a selection committee of board members and staff to award these seven grantees:

- ◆ Arts Build Community, \$20,000, to activate storefronts with focus on women artists
- ◆ Curatus, \$20,000 for South First Fridays STREET MRKT since August and SubZero in June 2022
- ◆ Friends of Hue, \$17,363, for a photo exhibit by 10 different artists in the City Hall Rotunda
- ◆ School of Visual Philosophy, \$14,000, for upcoming Second Saturday events on the Alameda
- ◆ SJSU Department of Humanities and the Arts, \$30,000, on a series of activities: music hike in Alum Rock Park; mobile creative workshops and exhibitions downtown; poetic postcard-making workshops and telling of pandemic shelter-in-place stories in Circle of Palms
- ◆ Stage One, \$15,000, for a short-film series downtown
- ◆ Urban Vibrancy Institute, \$20,000, to pay artists at its Every Friday events through October.

## Downtown News

**Light at the speed of sound:** Sonic Runway will return to City Hall plaza starting Nov. 5 and will be on view through 2028.

“Sonic Runway is an audio-reactive light-art installation



that converts audio signals into patterns of light that shoot down a corridor of arches at the speed of sound,” according to artists **Rob Jensen** and **Warren Trezevant** and designer **Stockhausen**.

Sonic Runway first appeared at Burning Man. The Office of Cultural Affairs and Burning Man Project brought it to San Jose City Hall plaza Nov. 3, 2017 to March 9, 2018.

This new version of Sonic Runway has been rebuilt for longevity and includes new programming features.

Opening night includes performances by San Jose's Brazilian percussion and dance ensemble Bloco do Sol, live DJs and food trucks. Go to [SonicRunway.com/videos](https://SonicRunway.com/videos).

**Crane fees:** The City Council agreed on a plan to charge developers a fee for construction cranes that exceed height limits and result in losses for aircraft taking off from San Jose International Airport.

When flying cross-country or cross-ocean taking off to the south toward downtown, some airlines may need to deplane passengers to reach their own weight guidelines. When and if that happens while a construction crane is above max building height limits, the developer responsible for that crane will have to pay once passenger impacts claimed by the airlines are verified by airport staff, the Council decided Sept. 28.

“It's a fee that is as fair as we could make it,” said SJDA Executive Director **Scott Knies**. “We tried it up to the potential actual costs.”

The airlines will need to submit a report showing how much weight they took off the airplane and the costs, including flight vouchers and hotel stays for impacted passengers. The airlines estimated that they lost \$2.8 million in 2019 because some cranes needed to expand above maximum building heights. A few recommendations to developers will keep the costs down:

- ◆ Utilizing crane “jumps,” which keep the cranes lower and then gradually grow taller as their high rise project tops out;
- ◆ Scheduling the cranes to be at their highest from April-September when planes less frequently take off to the south over downtown.
- ◆ Minimizing the number of days the cranes need to be above the building heights. Under the new crane policy, developers do not need to pay fees for the first six months of their project.

To get their money refunded, the airlines will need to put their assessments in writing, the City Council decided.

**SJSU housing plan takes another step forward:**

The **Alfred A. Alquist** State Office Building at 100 Paseo de San Antonio has been deemed state surplus real estate, paving the way for San Jose State University to buy the 1.64 acre site and convert it into housing for staff, faculty grad students and students with families.

Gov. **Gavin Newsom** signed SB 828 on Sept. 16.

The bill authorizes the Director of General Services to dispose of surplus state property if the property is not needed by another state agency.

The Alquist building is one of four buildings statewide designated as surplus. Former state Sen. **Jim Beall** and Assembly member **Ash Kalra**, both representing San Jose, put together a deal that would allow the university to acquire the land from the state. In 2020, San Jose State revealed a plan to build up to 1,200 units on the property.

## Business News

**Two Dai-Thanh markets:** The **Hua** family, owners of Dai-Thanh Super Market, 218 S. Second St., has purchased properties in two San Jose locations where they plan to expand their operations when the current location goes into development.

Urban Community bought the Dai-Thanh SoFA site as part of a proposed three-tower residential project.

The Hua family purchased two properties on the corner of Monterey Road and San Jose Avenue and another property, a former Michael's at 2040 Tully Road at Quimby Road across from Eastridge Mall. The Huas plan to convert the existing structures into Dai-Thanh Super Markets. They hope to open the

## Groundwerx Employee of the Month

**Jesse Velo**, Groundwerx Employee of the Month for October, lets his work do the talking for him.

The soft-spoken Velo has been cleaning streets since Groundwerx started, joining the cleaning crew on Feb. 14, 2008. Known for its employee retention, Groundwerx has four original staff still working after 13 years and Velo is one of them. He is also one of nine employees with more than 10 years of experience with Groundwerx.

Velo epitomizes the Groundwerx crew member who takes tremendous pride in keeping downtown clean.

“Our team has grown a lot since I started, which helps us to focus on a cleaner downtown,” said Velo, who made his way to Groundwerx after moving from his hometown of Manila, The Philippines, in 1996 and working for TSA at San Jose International Airport.

“I love meeting people and being out in the field,” he said. In September, Velo met Mayor **Sam Liccardo** and got a picture with him. Nobody could tell who was more excited — Velo to meet the mayor or the mayor getting a picture with a Groundwerx star.

“Mayor Liccardo told me



he loves what Groundwerx does for downtown,” Velo said.

Velo is a consistent over-achiever. In the last month, he removed 1,900 pounds of trash and debris from sidewalks and public right-of-way; cleaned 398 public litter cans; took away more than a ton of trash from public liter cans; removed 35 pieces of graffiti; and cleaned 330 block faces in the downtown district.

“Jesse approaches every situation with positivity and a smile,” said **Brian Dehart**, Groundwerx operations supervisor. “You can see he truly cares about making downtown a better place when he interacts with co-workers, business and property owners and the general public.”

Velo shows empathy for businesses and hasn't stopped taking his family to dine at Old Spaghetti Factory. “Downtown was empty for a while. We are slowly starting to see more people at restaurants now,” he said.



**Jesse details downtown.**



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Tully Road address first. According to the family, their new investments continue their dedication to their customers and the people of San Jose.

The popular family-run grocer has been at their SoFA district location since 1985.

**Hella yes!** Hella Good burgers and shakes opens Nov. 1 at San Pedro Square Market, 89 N. San Pedro St. Owners **David Mulvehill**, **Stacey Fogolin**, **Genna Carr**, **Anthony Jimenez** and **Freja Evans** keep it simple. The menu includes hella doubles, hella vegans, hella cheeses, vanilla soft serve and hand-spun milkshakes.

“Our mission is to serve straight-forward burgers and shakes in an awesome environment,” said Carr, director of advertising and design for Nouveau Hospitality Group. “Our burgers are made with premium ingredients and our shakes are made with hand-scooped real ice cream.” Visit [hellagoodjsj.com](https://hellagoodjsj.com).



**This burger is good.**

## From the Archives

**10 years ago – November 2011** – The San Francisco Planning + Urban Research Association – commonly known as SPUR – brought its urban planning, design and place-making skills to San Jose.

**20 years ago – November 2001** – In the aftermath of 9/11/2001, downtown's economy took a major hit driven by a 35 percent drop in air travel at SJC. SJDA coordinated

an “Escape to San Jose Week” in November, suggesting a center city stay-cation featuring downtown hotels, restaurants and cultural activities.

**25 years ago – November 1996** – The federal government signed a memorandum of understanding with SJDA to pay a fee for SJDA services, equivalent to what other businesses paid in the Business Improvement District. It was the first such agreement ever signed in California.

## SJDA Year-in Review Meeting

**Hybrid meeting Dec. 10 at 8:15 a.m.:** A favorite tradition of SJDA members returns Dec. 10 when the Year-in-Review public meeting wraps up 2021 on the big screen of the Hammer Theater, presents the Golden Nail Awards and fetes board members who have reached the end of their terms.

For the first time, attendees can choose how they want to participate. They can show up in person at Hammer Theatre Center or watch from home or office on Zoom or Facebook. Both ways, the meeting begins at 8:15 a.m. To register, please go to [sjdowntown.com/who-we-are](https://sjdowntown.com/who-we-are) for further instructions.

## DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

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