

# Next step to recovery

Downtown has begun another important phase in its economic recovery from COVID.

The next milestone is the return of live entertainment and attractions on weeknights, with an expected result of more people enjoying the city's core area. Weeknight activity has been slow to return to anything approaching pre-pandemic levels.

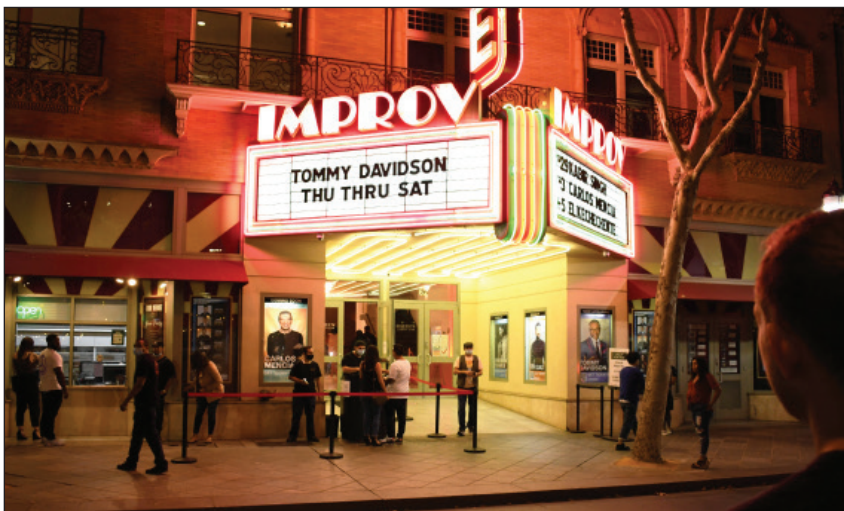
"I assume business will increase as more visitors come downtown," said **Kevin Biggers**, chief strategist for San Jose Made, which curates the stores at MOMENT on San Pedro Street. "It will be interesting to see what type of impact we can observe in October and before the holiday shopping season comes around."

Thousands of fans will again fill SAP Center for Sharks games beginning this month. Once the regular season starts, 22 home games are Monday through Thursday nights.

"Bringing thousands of fans back to SAP Center and to downtown San Jose for hockey games, concerts, family shows, and other events will inject a much-needed boost to our downtown restaurants, bars, and hotel rooms," said **Jonathan Becher**, president of Sharks Sports & Entertainment. "These event attendees generate a significant economic impact for our many local businesses and help to keep many of our residents employed."

The Convention Center reopened Sept. 24 with the Beyond **Van Gogh** immersive exhibit in the South Hall. Open 62 days and 12-13 hours per day, the unique multimedia experience is expected to draw thousands from all over the region through Nov. 14.

"Beyond Van Gogh is a welcome art experience in our downtown neighborhood that connects the San Jose McEnery Convention Center and the SoFA District," said **Frances Wong**, director of marketing and communications for Team San Jose. "This means there will be increased foot traffic and economic impact to the surrounding community and small businesses."



*Improv has enjoyed plenty of 'On-Nights' since reopening in late June.*

Theaters and stage performances are back, with many venues requiring proof of vaccination from ticket holders. Broadway San Jose returns to the Center for the Performing Arts with the much-anticipated "Hamilton," Oct. 12-31, with 10 dates Tuesday-Thursday and 24 shows overall.

The San Jose Civic Auditorium has mostly weekend concerts scheduled (**Air Supply** on Oct. 8; **Wilco** on Oct. 16), with a smattering of weeknight events, including "Por Que los Hombres Aman a las Cabronas?" on Oct. 13, **John Cleese** on Oct. 18 (same night **Amy Grant** is at the California Theater), and **Chelsea Handler** on Oct. 21. Symphony Silicon Valley returns to the California Theater Oct. 2-3 for its first performances in 18 months with a program called "Celebration."

Local performing arts venues are excited to have the lights back on.

City Lights has returned to the stage with "Coded" (through Oct. 17) by San Jose State faculty member **Kristen Brandt**. Originally pegged for the 2019-20 season, the CLTC-commissioned work hosted two preview shows in March 2020 and then "Coded" was canceled on opening night due to COVID. The inter-

view with City Lights' **Lisa Mallette** of the rollercoaster ride her troupe went through to get "Coded" back on stage, conducted on the eve of the re-opening Sept. 16, is to the right.

San Jose Stage is thrilled to welcome their audiences back for a fully live and in-person five-show season themed "Resilience," starting with "The Great Leap" by **Lauren Lee** Sept. 29-Oct. 17 (thestage.org). The Tabard Theatre Company goes live Oct. 8-31 with the "Turn of the Screw" by **Jeffrey Hatcher**, based on the story by **Henry James**. Hammer Theatre is now scheduling; it will host the City of San Jose's Cornerstone of the Arts awards Oct. 8.

The Improv held its Grand Re-Opening June 24.

"Our guests, our talent and our staff couldn't wait to see comedy again," said **David Williams**, Improv general manager.

The Improv has also added mores shows Monday-Thursday, he added. "Typically we call them 'Off Nights' but as of now, with all the demand, they are very much 'On Nights,' including our very own Open Mic Night."

The events have a residual effect on small

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## Artist reflects on long road back to stage show

As the world premiere of "Coded" was set to be performed in front of a live audience — picking up from where it had left off 18 months earlier — City Lights Theatre Company Executive Artistic Director **Lisa Mallette** talked about the anguish of COVID, its impacts, and to the joy of reviving performing arts. More details at [cltc.org/coded](http://cltc.org/coded).

**When coronavirus first started, how long did you think it might be until your shows would return?**

I think we all thought it would just be a few weeks. I laugh at myself for thinking that now, of course. It took a minute for the reality of this virus and what it would mean for the world to sink in.

**What was your feeling in June when the state went off the tier system?**

My feelings were optimistic about the future, but I did not want to immediately throw a parade or do a cartwheel, and I certainly did not want to move up our plans of opening in September. I honestly did not feel like the grand reopening of everything was going to last the way we all wanted it to, and we, as a team decided to sit tight, continue with our September plans and watch and see.

**Any worries about the virus variants?**

The variants are most definitely throwing a wrench into things, but we cannot stay shuttered forever. I think we need to find a way to serve our community and continue to create our art and tell our stories with this virus among us, in a safe way. I do not think it is going anywhere anytime soon, so we need to figure it out. We are not expecting to be selling out right away, and a lot of things need to adjust, obviously to keep people as safe as possible, but we need the arts more than ever right now, so it is time to come home.

**And now your show is coming to fruition ...**

Ticket sales are not up to the before-time, but we expected that. There is a lot of excitement from the folks who feel ready to come back into the theater, however, and that is an indication we are doing the right thing for them and ourselves. Hopefully, as we move forward, more and more people will feel ready, and in the meantime, we will offer on-demand recordings in addition to in-person productions. There are a ton of nerves intertwined with so much joy - the emotions are almost overwhelming. The pandemic helped us all remember not to take things for granted. Being back, creating together again with my staff and artists after being away from them for so long has been incredible. I appreciate every moment, every problem we have to solve, the perfect imperfections, seeing things come together and grow through tech week, learning how to do our jobs again - it has been magical.

**The lights went off in March 2020 after two performances of 'Coded.' Most of the cast and crew is back. How is it on the eve of the first performance?**

After a year and a half, and such an amazing and tech-heavy story, we have had a lot of moving parts to pull together. I am always amazed and filled with gratitude when I see how many people come together around a common vision and work together to bring it to life. What a joy it is to do what we do, and it is not easy.



*Lisa Mallette*

## Google preservation effort has emotional impact on one San Jose family

When Google announced plans to preserve a number of historic buildings in its Downtown West mixed-use development, including three Victorian-era homes on West Julian Street, the **Colbeck** family took notice.

The maternal grandparents of San Jose natives **Doug and Mark Colbeck** owned one of the homes, 563 W. Julian, for more than 30 years. Their mother, **Inge**, was born in the home in 1911 and grew up there with her siblings, **Mabel and Herbert**.

Although Mark, a retired insurance adjuster and Doug, a retired park ranger, never lived in the home, it holds a special place in their hearts whenever they drive by it.

Today, the houses sit directly across from the expanse of parking lot behind the SAP Center.

The homes at 559, 563 and 567 W. Julian St. were built in the 1880s and 1890s out of redwood logged in the mountains west of San Jose. Although they haven't qualified for national or state historic registers, locally the three buildings as a cluster are significant as representative of

the residential character of their neighborhood in the late 19th century.

In the early 1900s, the home was "out in the country" and not part of downtown. **Gustav and Ella Jorgensen**, the brothers' grandparents, lived in the home at the turn of the 20th century. Gustav worked as a lumber stacker in the lumber yard across the street. That yard served as a source of materials for **Sarah Winchester**, who never stopped building her mansion during her lifetime.

Inge regaled stories about Mrs. Winchester riding by in her carriage and of more modern times when the San Jose Light Tower served as a beacon of prosperity. Ella's brother **Chris Sonnicksen** wrote her many letters, some containing checks, sent to the Julian Street address. Chris was a well-known and respected explorer, prospector, farmer and freight company owner in the Alaskan Yukon Territory.

Inge went on to college and became an executive secretary for Crocker Bank before marrying Mark and Doug's father, **Gilbert Colbeck**.

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## SJDowntown.com 4.0 ready for users

The go-to website for downtown information is now new and improved. San Jose Downtown Association has launched an updated version of sjdowntown.com

“The new site tells the story of downtown, the story of SJDA and the story our businesses,” said **Rick Jensen**, Communications Director. “The site aims to inform the diverse audiences engaged with our downtown, including residents, students, employees, visitors, event attendees, and, of course, business and property owners and potential new owners, developers and investors.”

The new website syncs up with the business listings in SJDA's database. Businesses – if you see that your business is missing, please let us know in an email to [sjda@sjdowntown.com](mailto:sjda@sjdowntown.com).

“We worked hard on that part to bring it up to speed with all the changes happening downtown,” said **Archana Dalglish**, web lead.

“We also improved the top-line and footer navigation so that users can find what they are looking for,” Jensen added.

New featured pages include a review of SJDA's Street Life projects, commissioned murals by SJDA and PBID; and a page for kids and families. A new districts page features business information and historic buildings in SoFA, Historic, San Pedro Square, St. James and Little Italy districts.

A PBID Renewal page walks users through the process to bring Groundwerx and other essential programs back for another 10 years.

Pragmatic functional and strategic pages of interest include: Downtown is hiring, a virtual job board to help our businesses hire staff; a traffic and construction page outlining possible detours; strategy pages about SJDA's vision and policy goals; and maps of proposed developments and available commercial properties.

Each page has a link to SJDA's social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Linked In.

Some pages are still works in progress. New pages are planned for the next several months. Since 1993, SJDA has updated and launched a new site on average every seven years. This is the fourth iteration of sjdowntown.com, which was first called sj-downtown.com.

## Business News

**Cult favorite and hidden gem:** Gameshop Downstairs. 124 E. Santa Clara St., is San Jose's spot for retro video game, comics, and trading cards.

“Our customers tell us we are a cult favorite and a hidden gem,” said **Hannah Yo**, marketing manager. “People from across the Bay Area and even farther inland travel hours just to visit our store because, as far as we know, we are the only retro video game store that actively imports video games, video game consoles and other related accessories from Japan.”

Inventory includes retro consoles, games and accessories from NEO GEO, NES/SNES, Sega Genesis, PS1/PS2/PS3, and more. Gameshop Downstairs also has thousands of back-issue comic books along with graded slabs, in-box figurines, bulk and rare trading cards, and Anime VHS/DVDS and Manga book section.

Their page at [instagram.com/gameshop.downstairs](https://www.instagram.com/gameshop.downstairs) is both a webstore and online video game history museum.



**Employees mix it up with customers and show off the Johnny Cash section at Cash Only.**

**Cash bar:** Cash Only has opened at 78 E. Santa Clara St. The new Bay Area Honkytonk bar features beer, whiskey and cocktails. **Cash Bouren** is owner and operator. The jukebox wall pays tribute to **Johnny Cash**. Visit @CashOnlySJ on Facebook.

## Next step

business, Biggers said.

“San Pedro Square gets noticeably busier during conventions, SAP Center events and Sharks games,” he said. “The high-pedestrian-traffic-generating events in downtown raise the overall awareness and exposure to the stores. Customers may be compelled to return later to visit the stores when they have more time to shop.”

Downtown enjoyed the energy and buzz of outdoor festivals throughout the summer, including Music in the Park, San Jose Jazz Summer Fest, Jubilee Wellness Festival, Viva Calle, SoFA Street Fair and recurring events South First Fridays and STREET MRKT, Every Friday gatherings, and the Downtown Farmers' Market.

“I have seen an influx of customers during the time we are open during festivals and events since we are right on Santa Clara Street,” said **Hannah Yo**, media marketing director for Gameshop Downstairs. “The most notable change for us is the influx of SJSU students since in-school classes are being held again.”

Uncertainty caused by the coronavirus and its variants has slowed the return of office workers – the next critical step in downtown's economic recovery. Until workers regularly return to their offices, weekday pedestrian traffic remains light.

Next month, the Sonic Runway public art installation of Burning Man fame will encore in front of City Hall. Downtown Ice and Christmas in the Park also return after an absence during the 2020 holiday season. Each of these attractions will be open daily.

## Groundwerx Employee of the Month

**Second family for Ramirez:** With his can-do approach and dedication to personal growth, **Joel Ramirez** has emerged as a Groundwerx leader on downtown's streets, one of many reasons he was named September's Employee of the Month.



**Joel Ramirez**

When he started working as an ambassador at Groundwerx two years ago, he was reserved and shy, he admitted. “Now I've become more open,” he said.

For Ramirez, one positive has led to another.

“I've become more familiar with other roles outside of my own on the team and have

taken it upon myself to take on extra projects to help everyone in the company and throughout downtown,” he said.

Part of his personal growth happened during an extraordinary path to San Jose. Born in the Philippines, Ramirez moved to Southern California in 2001 and to San Jose in 2015 to attend college. Before Groundwerx, he worked in people-oriented positions: in sales at a ballroom dance retail store, as a barista at Starbucks and helping residents in an assisted living facility.

He's finding a home at Groundwerx.

“I love the fact that having this job has helped me develop in areas that I am lacking in,” he said.

“Our downtown businesses are gems,” said Ramirez – a burger-and-fries man who ranks The Shop by **Chef Baca** and Original Gravity among his favorite places to eat. “Some of the businesses I frequent such as Nirvana Soul and The Shop give me a reason to come back even after work. They are not only good places to eat but give back to the community in the form of events and food donations, which makes me love downtown even more.”

The pandemic definitely impacted him and the downtown, but he presses on to remain positive.

“I've seen plenty of businesses I frequented close down permanently,” Ramirez added. “Businesses closing can mean there are less reasons for some people to visit downtown. But, there have been businesses that have re-opened recently, and new businesses open during the pandemic. That helps bring back the vibrancy we need.”

To Ramirez, the Groundwerx team is strong.

“The most unexpected part for me is that I did not only get my job when I joined Groundwerx, I also gained a new family, both in and out of the workplace.”

Ramirez' August stats: ♦ Business Contacts – 25 ♦ Graffiti Removed – 292 ♦ Wellness checks and social service referrals – 281. ♦ Fun fact: Joel usually staffs the Groundwerx bike kiosk each Friday at the Farmers' Market.

*From Front Page*

## 563 W. Julian *From Front Page*

One treasured picture outside of the house is of Inge and Herb holding their cat, **Mulligan**, in front of the detached garage. Inge once drove the family car, a Velie, through the back wall of the garage.

The homes on Julian are empty and behind iron fencing now, but not yet up on stilts for their future move along South Autumn Street to a new location just north of the VTA Light Rail line.

Google is still working through the exact timing for the move, said **Michael Appel** of Google's global communications and public affairs office. The homes will be relocated together when the Creekside Walk area of the project is developed, he said. Creekside Walk will extend along the east side of Autumn Street from West Santa Clara Street to just south of the VTA tracks.

Meanwhile, **Ricardo Benavidez** of Google and **Casey Mcbrian** of CRBE Property Management of Google arranged for the family to see the interior of the Julian Street home this summer.

The Colbecks look forward to hearing more.

“We'd be very interested in attending the relocation of the house when that occurs” Doug said.

The Colbeck family is glad Google intends to give the house a second life.



**Herb, Inge and Mulligan the cat pose on the driveway in front of the garage at 563 West Julian St.**

“We know that the house is part of our history,” Doug said, with his brother Mark adding, “Our friends think it's a great story.”

**Ed. - More pictures at [sjdowntown.com/563-west-julian](https://www.sjdowntown.com/563-west-julian)**

## SJDA Annual Meeting

**Join SJDA on Friday, Oct. 8 at 8:15 a.m.** to hear the “State of Downtown,” financial reports on the assessment districts and the popular lightning-round two-minute committee summaries.

Register to attend the meeting at [tinyurl.com/oct08mtg](https://tinyurl.com/oct08mtg). Upon registration, you will receive a link providing access to the Zoom webinar. Space is limited. The meeting will also be streamed live on Facebook.



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## More Business News

**Punch King Fit for use: Mauricio Mejia, Gabe Scarpelli and King Lei** have turned the former Hart's Department Store warehouse at 299 Bassett St. into a boutique gym.

Punch King Fitness

opened Sept. 1 featuring state-of-the-art Rogue equipment, free weights to challenge

even the most serious of bodybuilders, and a mix of boxing, cardio and martial arts classes led by certified coaches and staff in a functional fitness area.

Free on-site parking makes Punch King Fitness convenient for everyone, including neighboring residents in the North San Pedro area. Check [punchkingfitness.com](https://punchkingfitness.com).

**Roots bound:** San Jose Chamber of Commerce is back. Over the past two decades, San Jose Chamber was called the Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce and the SVO, or Silicon Valley Organization. The intent of the organization has remained the same, said **Derrick Seaver**, president and CEO: “to continue to connect you, represent your interest before government and promote the community.” The Chamber's office is at 1010 W. Santa Clara St. Visit [sjchamber.com](https://sjchamber.com).

## From the Archives

**10 years ago – October 2011** – SJDA hosted its 25th Anniversary Celebration and fundraiser in the San Jose

Armory. Under the direction of Board President **Art Bernstein**, the event recognized SJDA's tactics and initiatives that led to an improved downtown.

**15 years ago – October 2006** – At the Annual Meeting, SJDA commemorated 20 years since its incorporation. A statement made in 1986 by **Chuck Hammers** still rings true: “The role of downtown business is to put life back into the city.”

**20 years ago – October 2001** – The first BHADy awards were issued to RiverPark Tower 1 and to **Dick and Donna Gordon**, who had owned and maintained the 10-unit 1926 apartment building at 470 S. Third St. for 25 years. The awards were the precursor of the Design Review Committee's Golden Nail Awards and presented by the Beautification, Historic Preservation and Architectural Design (BHAD) Committee for making significant improvements to downtown's built environment.

**25 years ago – October 1996** – The Sharks shared the San Jose Arena the entire 1996-97 season with the Golden State Warriors while extensive renovations were made to the Oakland Coliseum Arena. The Warriors finished their one year in San Jose in last place with a 30-52 record.

## DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

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