

Housing mix planned for SoFA District

The skyline along the southern apron of downtown will soon undergo the same kind of transformation the San Pedro Square area experienced over the last 12 years. Five new high-rise projects are planned for the SoFA District, joining 360 Apartments and The Grad (which welcomed its first residents last year), extending south from San Carlos Street to I-280.

Westbank's Orchard project consists of two sites at 300 South First and 409 South Second Street that are envisioned as an urban campus. The residential portion of the project consists of a single tower designed to respect and celebrate the distinct "wavy" roofline of the Botown Restaurant. It will comprise 540 units, rooftop amenities, extensive balcony plantings (thus the name), and a ground floor restaurant space.

The Orchard workspace will be a major development (1.39 million square feet) split into two 20 story towers connected by a skybridge podium. It will occupy the large site now known as the Valley Title lot on San Carlos, between First and Second streets.

Three separate residential buildings with an innovative path-to-purchase model comprise the first project for NABR, a developer who views itself more as a tech company than a housing developer. The triad of structures would provide texture at the skyline with the tower at the corner of Second and San Salvador at 23 stories, the Third Street tower at 21 stories and the up front building on the Second and San Salvador block at 13 stories.

Gateway Tower is a 300-unit affordable housing tower to be built at 470 South Market, using Measure A funds from the County. Local developer Core Companies is literally building this project in their own backyard — absorbing their longtime



Westbank's Orchard project on the Botown site at Second and San Salvador streets.

SoFA District office into the development. This project has been in the works for years and is the culmination of Core's commitment to bringing affordable housing to the area.

Two blocks south, the former site of Garden City Construction and the relocated Pallesen Apartments structure has been cleared and readied to break ground on a 23-story, 336-unit mixed-use residential tower with ground-floor retail. The developer is Boston-based SCAPE, a company specializing in building high-rise housing near universities and has projects underway throughout the country.

In order to preserve the historic nature of the site, bricks from the demolished Garden City

Construction building have been preserved and will be re-used in the residential lobby of the new building. There will also be exterior lighting features on the building that will significantly brighten what had been a dark corner of South First Street.

In the midst of all these development plans, SoFA was startled to learn in December — after the fact — of the city's intention to purchase the Pacific Motor Inn (PMI) at 455 S. Second for permanent homeless housing. The city purchase is dependent on state Homekey funding being approved and after the community raised objections to the lack of process the city delayed their Homekey application, allowing the city's selected homeless

housing developer, PATH, and Westbank to collaborate on the PMI project.

At a recent SoFA Committee meeting, **Andrew Jacobson** of Westbank and **Laura Sandoval** of PATH described their plans for a collaborative approach to bringing a mix of market rate, affordable, and supportive housing to the PMI property, adjacent to the Botown Restaurant site owned by Westbank.

Sandoval reported that the city has submitted a Project Homekey application for approval to convert the PMI to 72 permanent assisted housing units to serve people in transition for a period of about four months as they await placement into permanent housing.

Jacobson said he saw the PMI project as an opportunity to lead by example and asked for feedback on a very preliminary plan to joint venture with PATH on a two-phased development proposal incorporating both the motel and Botown Restaurant sites.

"Phase one would involve meeting the immediate need for supportive housing on the motel site while we plan and design a phase two project that can incorporate a mix of supportive, affordable, and market-rate housing in one cohesive master-planned development," Jacobson explained, pointing to several projects around North America that have successfully utilized this approach.

"Our goal is to design something that will meet the needs of the neighborhood, while paying respect to the unique character of the SoFA District," Jacobson added.

The city is expected to hear from the state at the beginning of June whether their PMI Homekey application has been funded.

Event season returns hotter than ever



The Legendary Wailers perform June 17 at Music in the Park.

Starting with **Sub-ZERO** June 3-4, this month kicks off a summer filled with downtown outdoor events. SubZERO is an artistic hi/lo-techno mashup where street meets geek, focused on emerging and present subcultures thriving in our region. It takes place on June 3 and 4 in the SoFA District from 5 to 11 p.m., overlapping with the South FIRST FRIDAYS art walk on Friday night. Expect to see multiple outdoor stages plus artists, performers and musicians celebrating the indie creative spirit and cutting edge culture.

Music in the Park is back with a full-season of concerts for the first time in three years, with a new producer, Mauricio Mejia, at the helm. The June 17 show features three of Jamaica's most important

reggae bands: The Legendary Wailers, featuring Junior Martin (Bob Marley's guitarist during the height of his success); Third World; and the Skatalites.

The second Music in the Park concert on July 15 will feature two icons of the 80's modern rock movement: Flock of Seagulls and Martin Fry's ABC on a rare U.S. tour.

Once an annual event, the **Viva Calle** street party is back for a "Parks to Roses" ride on June 12, this time extending from Backesto Park to Arena Green to the Municipal Rose Garden. Streets along the route will be closed from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and attendees are welcome to ride, walk, or run.

Starlight Cinemas returns with free family-friendly outdoor movies in Saint James Park. There is an animal theme to the line-up this time, which starts on June 25 with The Secret Life of Pets 2. The movies start at dusk, and attendees are invited to bring a blanket, chair, and well-behaved pets. Upcoming films are Babe on July 16, Zootopia on July 30, and Sing 2 on August 20.

The 32nd **San Jose Jazz SummerFest** is slated for August 12-14 and the line-up is looking strong. Already booked are Lee Fields & The Expressions, Durand Jones & The Indications, Stanley Clarke, Ledisi, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Raul Midón and Alex Cuba, Keyon Harrold, Cameron Graves, Omar Sosa Quarteto Americanos, Isaiah Sharkey, Nellie McKay, and Urban Renewal Project. Visit summerfest.sanjosejazz.org.

Chloe Shipp named SJDA Deputy Director

Director of Public Space Operations **Chloe Shipp** was promoted to Deputy Director May 25. In her new role, Shipp will lead on SJDA budget, policy and operations. She will continue to lead the PBID board of directors and will supervise management staff implement-



Chloe Shipp

ing PBID programs, including Groundwex services and unhoused mitigation efforts.

Shipp started her position at SJDA in September 2013 and has advanced over the years into positions with increasing responsibility. She earned her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Oregon and her masters in nonprofit administration from University of San Francisco. She is an officer of the California Downtown Association board of directors, sits on the International Downtown Association's (IDA) 2022 Top Issues Council on Homelessness and is a recent graduate of IDA's Emerging Leaders Fellowship program.

The SJDA Executive Committee and CEO **Scott Knies** recommended reinstating the Deputy Director position to enable a more seamless transition under the soon-to-be-hired new CEO, and the pending departure of **Nathan Ulsh**, Director of Public Policy and Operations.

SJDA Marketing Committee gets real

The SJDA Marketing Committee, chaired by **Frank Nguyen** of Academic Coffee, has been working on capturing the essence of downtown San Jose and developing a marketing approach to help reposition the center city in its recovery from the pandemic.

“We’re not exactly sure what form this exercise will take yet in terms of an outcome or specific set of deliverables,” said Nguyen, “but we do know that it is important to steer the narrative, rather than reacting to the negative energy resulting from a slow post-Covid recovery.”

In his book “Place Branding for Small Cities, Regions & Downtowns,” author **Bill Baker** cautions against trying to find a silver bullet or one-size-fits-all solution through branding:

Place branding is a team sport, best played with people of all ages and interests, with a healthy amount of compromise and a big dose of what's best for the common good. Unless staff and committee members can get beyond thinking in terms of logos, taglines and snappy campaign themes, then efforts to define and deploy a genuine place brand will likely fail.

With that mindset, the committee, made up of downtown business owners, residents, and SJDA staff, set out to answer the following questions:

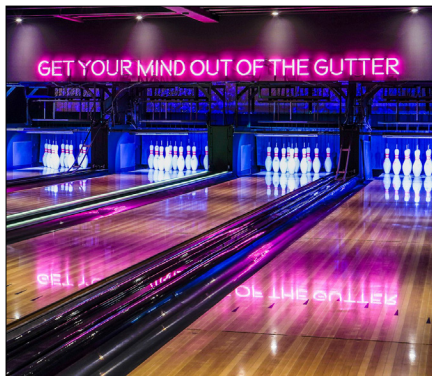
1. What are our strengths and weaknesses?
2. Are there negative perceptions that we can overcome through marketing and communications?
3. What are the competitive forces at play, and how do we stack up?

The committee noted that downtown San Jose is perceived by many to be unsafe because of crime and homelessness, and difficult to navigate due to traffic, cost, and parking concerns. Members also discussed that the negative perceptions do not match the reality. Downtown San Jose is — on balance — as safe, easier to navigate and more affordable to visit than other urban centers. The misperceptions likely exist because:

1. Downtown is constantly being compared to other more suburban areas in the South Bay, like Campbell or Santana Row. This is not an apples-to-apples comparison when you consider downtown's relative size, and all it has to offer. Downtown San Jose is the only real urban center in the South Bay.
2. The local media and social networks are eager to echo this narrative anecdotally for their own self interest.

Still, others know downtown as a fun place with many options for arts, music, restaurants, bars, events and festivals, and have found their own easy, convenient way to navigate around, for instance utilizing the free 90-minute parking in City of San Jose-owned downtown garages.

Business News



Bowling in San Pedro Square

San Pedro Social is a hit: After much anticipation and several pandemic-related false starts, San Pedro Social is now open at 163 West Santa Clara Street and already a hotspot. Besides a restaurant and bar, there's bowling alleys in the basement, plus arcade games, pinball, shuffleboard, skee ball, and hoops. (Yes, there is now a place to go bowling downtown!) There are even private karaoke rooms that can be rented by the hour, so only invited friends can hear any missed notes.

The restaurant features traditional comfort foods like New York style pizza, cubano sandwiches, entree salads and bowls; plus shareables like waffle fries, thick cut onion rings, chicken tenders and wings. The drink menu includes specialty cocktails like “The Dude’s Favorite,” which is a nod to a character from the cult film “The Big Lebowski.”



These positive perceptions are based on first-hand experience, and point to the unique aspects of downtown San Jose.

“If you don’t define yourself, someone else will do it for you,” said committee member and downtown resident **Mike Bohrer**.

Members offered a marketing strategy around downtown defining itself on its own terms: with honesty, conviction and plenty of passion. The unique strengths of DTSJ (diversity, arts, culture, history, authenticity, vibrancy) combine into an experience found nowhere else in the South Bay.

Downtown San Jose’s weaknesses are inherent to all large cities, but San Jose is aware and actively addressing them.

The committee agreed that in order for the message to be successful, it can’t be bland, expected, corporate, or insincere. In order to spark a dialogue, it has to resonate, inspire, and maybe even stir up a bit of controversy.

There was much discussion around downtown being “Real,” highlighting its authenticity, local culture, diversity and character—rough edges and all—and as a way to distinguish it from other more suburban South Bay options. “It’s not for everyone” was also discussed, quipping that if you don’t like authentic tacos, live music festivals or cultural arts, then downtown’s not for you.

Committee members are keenly interested in measuring outcomes for future marketing efforts. The theme has yet to be finalized, so stay tuned.

SoFA District a natural for new salon: Just opened at 613 South First is Natural Do, a membership salon and retail store offering hair care services and products specifically formulated for people with kinky, curly and wavy hair textures. They educate customers (or “curlfriends” as members are called) on caring for their natural textured hair to get the positive results they want, using products with organic-based ingredients essential for healthy hair growth.

Owner **Valonne Smith** also has a Natural Do store in Stockton and believes the second location in downtown’s SoFA District is a good fit for her vision of creating “a place where Curlfriends can embrace, accept and love their hair the way it is.”



“Curlfriends” at Natural Do

Groundwerx Employee of the Month — Stephen Crozier



Stephen Crozier

unhoused individuals he sees daily to see how they are doing, and if they are ready for a service provider referral.

Crozier employs a time management strategy to his Groundwerx job: finish his daily tasks before his first break so he can be available to respond to requests for the second half of his shift. Those requests usually are generated from cleaning ambassadors, who are most likely to be in need of an extra hand (or two). He says that lately he has been removing a lot of tags, and has gotten quite good at it. He recently removed a profane tag from the side of the 50 West building on San Fernando street in record time.

Crozier is an avid football fan, who has played for 14 years, starting on the Cupertino High School football team. He is still a loyal Raiders fan, even though they left the Bay Area for Las Vegas.

Born and raised in west San Jose, Crozier sees the importance of downtown to the entire region, and loves watching the construction on new buildings. When he’s not working, he enjoys spending time in the SoFA District.

 sjdowntown.com/groundwerx

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION



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From the Archives

10 years ago — The cement bases at the entry of San Pedro Square were repainted with portraits of the people who had a historic connection to the area: **John McEnery, Sr.**, former president **Harry S. Truman**, former mayor **Albert J. Ruffo**, Bank of America founder **A.P. Giannini**, prune pioneer **Louis Pellier**, and winemaker **Paul Masson**.

15 years ago — Owners representing more than

half of the property downtown agreed to establish a Property-based Improvement District (PBID) to provide clean and safe services. On June 12, the City Council voted to support the formation of the PBID and called for an election of downtown property owners, which they set for August 7, 2007.

20 years ago - May 2002 — **Mayor Ron Gonzales** and the City Council agreed that BART should be built under Santa Clara Street and include three downtown stations: Civic Center Plaza, Market Street and the Arena.

SJDA Public Meeting on BART downtown

June 10, 2022 | 8:15 a.m.
In-person at the Tabard Theatre
(or via livestream)

Come hear the plans to bring a subway through downtown San Jose: the tunneling methods, the timeline, the partnerships, the construction mitigation, the two DTSJ stations, the transit-oriented development and the community engagement. Valley Transportation Authority officials will present details on the project and respond to questions.



sjdowntown.com/sjda-public-meeting

