

Downtown West revealed

Google community benefits include small business

Google's development agreement with the City of San Jose outlines a community-created vision for transforming 80-acres into a transit village and central social district on the westside of downtown.

Four days after releasing the plan on April 5, **Alexa Arena**, Google's San Jose development director, offered the company's first public presentation of the agreement at a SJDA virtual meeting, showing exuberance for the efforts to date and excitement for the future project.

"The sky's the limit," she told more than 370 attendees on streaming media, describing an unprecedented city-building project that integrates neighborhoods, nature, equity and economic growth.

While the project's 7.3 million square feet of office space, 4,000 housing units (25 percent affordable) and 15 acres of parks and open spaces have grabbed most headlines, Arena highlighted how the Downtown West plan will strengthen neighborhoods by directly investing in initiatives co-created by community members during a two-year public outreach process.

One initiative will focus on small business resiliency, entrepreneurship and ways to help small businesses make Downtown West a home.

"What small businesses bring to the city is enormously important to us," Arena said. "We're going to care about the whole of the community as we look at what businesses want to bring in and how we can help support them."

Google will work directly with businesses on the ground floor design of Downtown West to ensure their proximity is central to the project's new open spaces. "We want to make sure the intimacy is at the right scale of retail and small business use and understand how to cluster that in an interesting way," she added.



The first buildings to go up will be in "The Meander" zone (inset) just south of Diridon Station.

Half of the developable parts of the site will go to non-office uses – housing mostly – but 500,000 square feet is planned for "active" spaces that add "intrigue and engagement" to Downtown West. Those spaces include food, drink, retail, cultural, arts and education uses. Google is in a position to embrace creative financial structures for these active uses.

"We can think of interesting crowd-funding models with micro-investments in local entrepreneurs, art spaces, small kiosks, rotating art programs and other contributions in lieu of rent," she said. "All of those come into play as we think about how we get this ground right and make it of San Jose."

As part of the development agreement with the city, Google is starting a first-of-its-kind \$150 million fund for housing, education and job access that will be directed by community members over the next decade as the project builds out. "The goal is to make everyone feel invited," Arena said.

Google's total community benefits contribution will be \$200 million. When asked by SJDA President **Katia McClain** how the Downtown West project might affect the cultures of both the city and Google, Arena complimented the process thus far but emphasized this is just the beginning.

"We have an opportunity with this project to think about equity and inclusion, how we work, how we show up, what is our mindset

going into work, how we incorporate that into Google and technology – things like climate action," Arena said. "Working within the local equity community in particular has been a great example of where those exchanges come to life. So we need to keep working on that and leaning into that opportunity."

Zulma Maciel, Director of the new City Office of Racial Equity and SJDA's second speaker on April 9, liked what she heard.

"How wonderful to have heard from Google how meaningful community engagement is a reliable research methodology," Maciel said.

Downtown West will strive to create a "15-minute city" where work, home, shopping, entertainment and recreational uses are all situated within a 15-minute walk. The project also will invest in a greener future in terms of net-zero emissions, ecology and mobility infrastructure – in essence, the equivalent of removing 4,100 cars from traffic and powering 1,500 homes using solar energy.

"COVID changes our thinking to creating an area of great urbanism and immersive ecology. That juxtaposition is extremely important," Arena said.

The development will likely put the first shovels in the ground in a zone known as "The Meander" just south of Diridon Station off Montgomery Street, giving the CalTrain parcels in front of the Station and BART construction room to expand.

"Starting south creates breathing room for the transit while being proximate to the station," Arena said.

Google estimates the project eventually will generate \$79 million in projected annual property taxes and \$24 million into San Jose's general fund annually. Construction taxes will amount to \$58 million and an initial \$16 million in school fees. When finished, the project could account for up to 25,000 direct jobs.

The City Council is scheduled to discuss the agreement May 25 and vote to accept it June 8.

SoFA welcomes Farmers' Market

The San Jose Downtown Farmers' Market presented by Excite Credit Union in association with Kaiser Permanente opens its 29th season May 7 in a new location on South First Street between San Salvador and William streets in the heart of the SoFA District. Except for the Fourth of July week and Thanksgiving week, the market will be open every Friday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. through Dec. 17.

More than 15 vendors are expected to be at the market each week, selling fresh California-grown fruits and vegetables. Shoppers can also find fresh-cut flowers, breads, fish and other gourmet foods. Alongside the farmer and specialty food stands will be the works of multiple local artisans.

The walk to the market averages less than 10 minutes from any point in the downtown. VTA stops are less than two blocks away – at the Convention Center and at the Paseo off First and Second streets. Parking is available at the Second and San



Carlos Garage – free for the first 90 minutes.

"The local farmers and artisans are looking forward to returning to a new location and selling to regulars as well as new customers from surrounding neighborhoods," said **Donna Butcher**, SJDA events and promotions manager. San Pedro Square businesses requested the Farmers' Market relocate to accommodate Al Fresco dining along San Pedro Street. The weekly set-up and take-down after the street was closed in July last year proved difficult both for businesses and market vendors.

New presenting sponsor Excite Credit Union has two branches in San Jose – in Blossom Valley and on Curtner Avenue. Check excitecu.org. Kaiser

Permanente, which has multiple South Bay locations, returns as associate sponsor. Visit kp.kaiserpermanente.org.

Market websites are sjdowntown.com and pcfma.com. Find more info on SJDA's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts.

All hail Groundwerx employees of the month

Groundwerx, the primary service program of the San Jose Downtown Property-Based Improvement District (PBID), recognizes outstanding staff members who keep downtown clean and safe.

The Employee of the Month for March is **Jesus Franco**. With Groundwerx since 2009, Franco is a master at removing graffiti from even the toughest materials such as marble and sandstone. Last month, he cleared 79 cases of tagging. Also, he removed 83 bags of garbage (collectively weighing more than a ton), cleaned 397 blocks and 1,826 street fixtures. A veteran of the program, he is popular in the Groundwerx home office and on the street, where he is quick with his jokes and enjoys sharing experiences with co-workers and the public.

In February, **Mariah Barragain** was feted and shared the secret to her success as safety ambassador: "I smile and greet everyone. Being happy is the best way to be, even under pressure."

Her February statistics included 42 connections with businesses to explain services or respond to a call for service; 35 wellness checks with unsheltered individuals who may need medical attention, temporary shelter or PPE kits including masks and hand sanitizer; and 232 removals of small graffiti tags. Barragain started with Groundwerx in August 2020 and went full time in February. January's Employee of the Month was clean team member **Sandy Gomez**, who

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MOMENT shops grow into public space success and retail destination

Open since 2018, 44 percent of customers at the MOMENT shops on San Pedro Square visit the stores every week, and another 43 percent visit monthly, according to a recent study by urban design firm Gehl, commissioned by the Knight Foundation.

Destination retail in downtown San Jose? That's a staggering revelation for an idea that was first broached in 2015 by the San Jose Downtown Association in an application to the Knight Cities Challenge initiative. Originally called San Pedro Squared, the proposal intended to activate "the other side" of San Pedro Street with micro retail where the city-owned parking garage created half-a-block of dead space along the sidewalk.

"We were bold. We weren't afraid. We were willing to experiment," said **Chris Thompson**, the Knight Foundation's program director for San Jose.

The Knight Foundation provided the initial grant funding to SJDA in 2015. Other funding was added from the City of San Jose Department of Transportation and the Property Based Improvement District. SJDA contracted with local maker experts SJMade to lease and manage the spaces.

As soon as the storefronts appeared, they had an immediate effect on San Pedro Square's vibrancy that has grown beyond expectations, even during the pandemic.

Gehl studied seven projects funded by Knight Foundation in four cities across the country — Akron, Detroit, Philadelphia and San Jose — to find out what made them successful, calling the study: "Adaptive Public Space: Places for People in the Pandemic and Beyond."

"MOMENT proved that micro-retail could work in San Jose, which is important as the city revitalizes the SoFA District and Google plans to build a nearby campus," Thompson said. "By placing this project adjacent to San Pedro Square and the downtown Farmers' Market, MOMENT was able to capitalize on the traffic generated by both, while becoming a draw in its own right."

Since opening three years ago, workers, diners and event-goers have increasingly showed a willingness to carry with them the items they purchased at the MOMENT shops, Thompson said. As a result, MOMENT grew from a place with sole proprietors doing everything and sometimes unable to keep their shops open when San Pedro Square was at its busiest to a place where the owners were able to hire help and really figure out the retail strategy and mix of goods that sold best.

The influx of residences around the square added to MOMENT's growth as its own destination.

The closure of San Pedro Street for Al Fresco dining not only helped restaurants suffering from business loss due to COVID-19, it also enhanced MOMENT's visibility and usability, Thompson said.

In addition, the MOMENT entrepreneurs have a much lower barrier to entry and the ability to experiment with their business model and retail mix.

"Over the years there were many proposals about redeveloping the ground floor of the garage facing San Pedro Square," said **Scott Knies**, SJDA executive director. "It took the Knight Foundation grant to finally move us to do it."

Downtown News

Al Fresco program safe for 2021

With sights set on eventually making Al Fresco business operations permanent in San Jose, the City Council agreed unanimously to extend the outdoor dining and retail program until Dec. 31.

The City put Al Fresco dining on a fast track last May in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, giving restaurants and retailers a lifeline toward staying in business during the outbreak. Taking advantage of San Jose's Mediterranean climate, the program has proved popular with customers who enjoy the outdoor dining experience and feel safer outside. In addition, the Al Fresco program has "added a new vibrancy to the streets and sidewalks of our city," said Councilmember **Raul Peralez**.

Since its inception, business owners have expressed how important the program has been in keeping their businesses alive during the pandemic. Because of more severe restrictions indoors, restaurants need the outdoor space for customers. Hair salons, art studios and dry cleaners have also taken advantage of the program.

The memorandum for the original exemption was set up to move the expiration date back to September, but the Council agreed with requests from the Downtown Association to push it back to the year's end.

Outdoor spaces being used by businesses include private and city-owned parking lots, public sidewalks, parklets, parks, plazas, private property and street closures. About 200 businesses citywide have taken advantage of a simplified city process to self-register for the Al Fresco program. Two of the three street closures in the city are downtown: along Post Street between First and Market streets and San Pedro Street between Santa Clara and St. John streets.

For now, the City is waiving fees to participate in the Al Fresco program. Check sjeconomy.com for details.

Business News

This is Spot. Good Spot: Owner **Thoi Trinh** and managing partners **Sammy Sok** and **Ivy Li** of Good Spot, 386 S. First St., promise good food, good drinks and good company at their new SoFA establishment in the former Swinging Hookah location.

The gastro-lounge offers a unique small-plate menu and large selection of curated wines, beers, spirits and hand-crafted and batched cocktails. The set-up is divided into sections the owners describe as "a fine-casual dining



A Good Spot to take your time in SoFA.

will sneak up on you when you least expect it." Also, their On the SoFA outdoor lounge is open on weekends for now. Follow them on Instagram and Facebook @goodspotsj.

Boba science: Tea Villa, 150 S. First St., has turned Bubble Tea into a science.

"The vision of Tea Villa is to reinvent what bubble tea should be for current and future generations," says its website at tea-alley.com.

The expansive menu allows customers to try fusion drinks, milk teas, forest trees with mint leaves on top, fruit teas, and drinks with jelly and boba toppings. Tea Alley also offers complementary food dishes.

Founded in Milpitas in 2016, the San Jose store represents Tea Villa's first expansion.

Chicken sandwiches and beef tacos: Southern California-based Poultrygram has opened its first Northern California location at The Improv, 62 S. Second St. To help customers manage the "perfect chicken sandwich" of 12 herbs and spices, the website also offers six easy steps to eat a sandwich. Nashville Hot and Hot A.F. spice up the original chicken sandwich.

Poultrygram has a sibling concept called Resident Taco at The Improv, selling barbacoa beef tacos and quesadillas, and Resident Taco Everything Salsa. Check poultrygram.com and residenttaco.com.

The golden one: Golden 1 Credit Union has moved its downtown branch from 185 Park Ave. to 4,100 square feet at 2 Pierce St. on the ground floor of The Pierce apartments in the SoFA district. Like most businesses formerly located in CityView Plaza, Golden 1 had to find an alternative space pending the plans by Jay Paul Co. to redevelop the CityView site. Golden 1 serves customers with checking and savings, credit cards and loans, planning and investing and financial wellness. Check golden1.com.

New owners at OJK: OJK Architecture, 97 E. St. James St., has new owners — **Sarah Vaccaro**, a principal at the firm, **Leah Alissa Bayer** and **Kate Conley**. **Jerry King**, FAIA, the firm's founder, will help for the next year with the transition. All share King's alma mater, Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo, and plan to carry on his legacy to "increase quality housing and strengthen our communities." Check ojkarch.com.

Smooth moves:

♦ **Hoge Fenton:** Hoge Fenton expects to move across the street from its longtime 60 S. Market St. location to 55 S. Market St, Suite 900, on May 17. The move allows the firm to be more efficient with its space — it doesn't need a library, word-processing center or file storage in these digital times. The firm leaves a space of 28,000 square feet on two floors into one floor of 23,000 square feet. The new lease covers 11 years. **J. Hampton Hoge** and **Lewis Fenton** started Hoge and Fenton in 1952 and was an original tenant 35 years ago at 60 S. Market. The multi-service and community-minded firm, which dropped the "and" in its name somewhere along the way, also has offices in San Mateo and Pleasanton. **Dan Ballesteros** is managing partner. Visit hogequenton.com.

♦ **CreaTV:** CreaTV plans to move from its long-time location at 225 W. Julian to 38 S. Second St., last occupied by TechShop. The non-profit media center has an agreement to lease 18,000 square feet on the ground floor and basement and expects to make the move in 2022.



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Jay Meduri, left, and Little Italy's Josh Melander agree to bistro's move.

CreaTV currently utilizes 9,000 square feet of the Davidson building. Developers Westbank and Urban Community have plans to revitalize the six-story, 56,415-square-foot Davidson building as part of its Arbor project.

♦ **Poor House Bistro:** Poor House Bistro announced plans to move the entire family restaurant business, building included, into a space between Henry's Hi-Life and the under-construction Little Italy cultural center and museum. The move planned for later this year makes way for Google's planned development.

The restaurant will be renamed Famiglia Meduri's Poor House Bistro, and the menu will include the familiar Cajun favorites as well as some new Italian dishes, said owner **Jay Meduri**. Meduri's grandparents lived in the home, built originally near San Jose State University. They moved the building to its present Autumn Street location in the 1950s. The bistro opened in 2005.

Meduri favored making the move to staying put and enduring a 10-year build-out around him. Visit poor-housebistro.com.

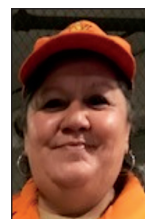
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Jesus Franco



Mariah Barragain



Sandy Gomez

Groundwerx

From Front Page

racked up some impressive numbers: 183 bags of trash collected, equal to 4,750 pounds; 377 blocks cleaned; and 448 street fixtures and 250 trash cans wiped down and disinfected.

Her husband and son are at San Jose State during the week facilities department worker and civil engineering student, respectively. She celebrated her first anniversary with Groundwerx in March.

The Employee of the Month feted in December was **Mirko Veraja**, an original Groundwerx employee when services commenced in January 2008. The hard-working pressure-washer handled 198 "code reds" needing immediate cleaning of the sidewalks.

Asked what has changed since he began working with Groundwerx 13 years ago, Veraja replied: "There are a lot of new buildings since I first began. And downtown is much cleaner now."



Mirko Veraja

From the Archives

10 years ago — May 2011 — SJEats reported thousands of customers attended their event in April with 10 different food trucks along West St. John Street.

15 years ago — May 2006 — SJDA launched "Downtown Online," a weekly email of events sent to almost 7,000 subscribers on Wednesdays so they can make weekend plans downtown.

20 years ago — May 2001 — SharkByte Art was launched as a public art project with 100 life-sized fiberglass sharks to be displayed for three months on downtown before being auctioned off to benefit non-profit organizations and arts programs.

25 years ago — May 1996 — **Julie Carlson**, nee **Chapralis**, joined SJDA staff as Marketing Director.

30 years ago — May 1991 — SJDA President **Georgie Huff** reflected upon the Association turning five years old as an opportunity to re-evaluate direction and emphasize the importance of downtown stakeholders sharing the same vision; joining together in decision-making; articulating strengths and weaknesses as a downtown; and enlarging representation of important ideas and resources that can help affect downtown's growth.

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

Downtown Dimension is published monthly by the San Jose Downtown Association, a nonprofit organization established in 1986 to serve Downtown businesses.

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