

Mental health “State of Emergency” focus at SJDA homelessness forum

Two days before the April 15 SJDA public meeting on solutions to homelessness, a female Groundwerx ambassador abating a graffiti tag was assaulted by an unstable individual on South First Street. The employee was thankfully unharmed in the incident, however, it provided more evidence that mental illness and substance abuse are major contributors to what County Supervisor **Susan Ellenberg** has called a “public health crisis.”

More than 200 people attended the hybrid SJDA Public meeting (in person and live streamed) at the Tabard Theatre to hear from Ellenberg and County Behavioral Health Division Director **Soo Jung** about the new AOT (Assisted Outpatient Treatment) program launched in February, which has already received 300 referrals.

“Removal of a mentally ill person from a situation by law enforcement is short-lived and doesn’t solve the problem,” Ellenberg said in her presentation. “Individuals with recurring mental health and substance abuse challenges need intentional, collaborative, wrap-around care so they no longer pose a threat to their own safety and to the safety of those around them.”

AOT works like this: when law enforcement encounters or receives a call about someone experiencing a mental health emergency, an AOT triage team is contacted and initiates outreach and engagement. The AOT team is made up of mental



Jacky Morales-Ferrand, City of San Jose Director of Housing, spoke at SJDA event April 15.

health professionals and social workers who are experienced in working with the mentally ill. They can encourage people in crisis to agree to receive voluntary treatment services with a much higher success rate than uniformed officers, who are often seen as a threat by individuals experiencing a psychotic episode.

Currently, if police take the step of arresting someone for a misdemeanor offense (rather than citing and releasing them on site — which happened in the Groundwerx assault incident), individuals taken

to the jail facility on misdemeanor charges are being released there rather than held in custody.

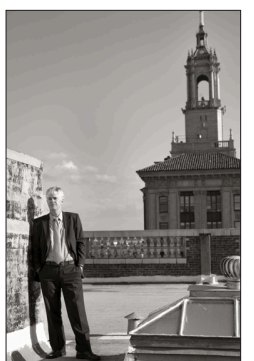
The main goal of the program is to interrupt the cycle of repetitive psychiatric crises and resulting hospitalizations, incarcerations, and homelessness for people with the most serious mental health problems who struggle to engage in services.

It is important to note that any citizen can report a person in mental distress to the AOT team by calling 1-800-704-0900, and selecting option #7.

City of San Jose Housing Department Director **Jacky Morales-Ferrand** also spoke at the public meeting and provided an update on the city’s efforts to purchase the Pacific Motor Inn motel property in SoFA for permanent homeless housing. Ferrand-Morales reported the city has not yet made an application to the State of California for Homekey funding as they are still in negotiation with adjacent property owner Westbank and homeless housing developer PATH to create a larger mixed-income residential project on the site.

Scott Knies: The Podcast

Outgoing Downtown Association CEO **Scott Knies** sat down for an interview with Content Magazine publisher **Daniel Garcia** to chat about river rafting, fencing, poetry, and a little about how the SJDA came to be formed in 1987 by a small group of embattled downtown business owners. It’s a good listen, as are all the downtown arts leaders interviewed in the Content Podcast series streaming on content-magazine.com.



PBID renewal will expand the Groundwerx program throughout downtown.

Don’t forget to vote

The Spring election season is in full swing, and SJDA’s Property-Based Improvement District (PBID) renewal ballots have been mailed. This is the opportunity for property owners to vote for a new term, boundary changes, new services, and an expansion of the popular Groundwerx service.

Ballots were mailed directly to property owners in the district from the Office of the City Clerk and must be returned no later than 1:30 p.m. on June 7, 2022, via USPS (postmarked by June 1), or can be hand delivered to the Office of the City Clerk at 200 E Santa Clara Street.

For questions on the ballot document, please contact Thomas Borden, City of San Jose Department of Public Works, (408) 535-6831. For questions about the PBID renewal process, proposed service additions and changes, contact: **Chloe Shipp**, Director of Public Space Operations, cshipp@sjdowntown.com.

May is #dtsj Loves month

The San Jose Downtown Association has launched a social media campaign in the month of May that encourages people to post pictures of food from local restaurants and cafes to be entered into weekly drawings. The #dtsjlove campaign includes four weeks: May 1 to 7 is “Tacos and Burritos,” May 8 to 14 is “Coffee, Tea and Boba,” May 15 to 21 is “Sweets and Treats,” and the last week of the month is “Sandwiches.” The event will be promoted exclusively through social media channels, such as Instagram, TikTok and Facebook and businesses in each weekly category are encouraged to display a poster in their place of business.

Five winners each week will win \$100 in gift cards to downtown restaurants. At the end of the month, two more winners will be drawn to win \$200 in gift cards.

The promotion was the brainchild of Marketing Director **Julie Carlson**, who hopes to expand to more small business categories later this summer.

Share the #dtsjlove

Win gift cards to downtown businesses

May 1-7: Tacos & Burritos

May 8-14: Coffee, Tea & Boba

May 15-21: Sweets & Treats

May 22-28: Sandwiches

Downtown News

Next three years of streets: Several downtown streets are included in the City of San Jose's street maintenance program for this year, 2023 and 2024.

Julian Street between Market and Autumn streets is scheduled for maintenance later this year. A portion of Fourth Street between St. James and Santa Clara streets must still be maintained according to the 2021 plan. The strong rains at the end of last year hit before the maintenance teams could get to that section of Fourth Street.

In 2023, the city plans to repave Market Street from St. James to Reed streets, including around Plaza de Cesar Chavez. In 2024, both Almaden Boulevard and First Street are scheduled to receive maintenance.

Streets needing the most maintenance are generally located in residential areas around the city. Maintenance could involve work to curbs and infrastructure, street sealing or resurfacing. In addition, streets may be marked using current best practices for safety and bikeways.

The city has 1,552 miles of neighborhood streets and 967 miles of "major" streets, including all streets mentioned above. To see if the city plans maintenance of a specific street, check sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/82499.

Construction begins on Rotary PlayGarden expansion: Seven years after the completion of the Rotary PlayGarden, San Jose's first all-inclusive playground, construction begins on its expansion. The original



The Rotary PlayGarden at 438 Coleman Ave.

PlayGarden was a \$6 million centennial initiative led by the Rotary Club of San Jose, with an additional \$2 million secured through Santa Clara County and the City of San Jose for the expansion. Construction of the expansion is managed by the City of San Jose and is scheduled from May to October 2022. The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy actively manages the PlayGarden in partnership with community volunteers and members to support maintenance, programs, and staffing of the play space. To date, over 850,000 have visited the Rotary PlayGarden.

Business News

ParkStash to the rescue: San Jose State University alumni **Sameer Saran** and **Hooman Bolandi** have developed ParkStash, which serves as the "Airbnb of parking." The app allows owners of private parking lots and driveways to rent out extra spaces to people who can reserve an available parking spot from their phones.



Sameer Saran

Saran, born in India, and Bolandi, from Iran, built an app that ensures that students will have a place to park when they arrive for class. Since opening for business in summer 2018, more than 350,000 transactions have occurred on ParkStash.

Many of those are in available parking spots near the university, such as Antioch Baptist Church, Com Ga Nam An and Vegetarian House restaurants and family-owned businesses – in partnership with San Jose State.

"The pandemic forced us to be more creative and we now see new ways to grow that we never thought of," Saran said. New ideas include reducing Co2 emissions and integrating the app into EV charging systems.

"Now we're becoming an intelligent parking asset management platform," Saran added.

For more info, check findparkstash.com.

Time for Doner: Doner Silicon Valley has opened at the increasingly busy Fourth- and Santa Clara streets intersection, at 17 S. Fourth St., ready to serve Miro residents and employees returning to City Hall. Doner SV presents a simple but elegant menu of falafel and foods

whose roots were founded a century ago in Greece and Turkey. Choose from beef and chicken gyro cooked in the style of a doner kebab on a vertical rotisserie. Or try the traditional falafel plates with rice, fries or salad, plus classic baklava for dessert. Visit donersv.com.

Eat like you're on vacation: Island Taste Caribbean Grill is now open on Santa Clara Street, just across the street from City Hall, serving up authentic dishes from Ja-



Diners at Island Taste

maica and Haiti, all made from scratch. Owners **Marc and Dorianne St. Fleur** are New York City transplants and children of Caribbean immigrants who relocated to San Jose in 2019 and wanted to find a way to infuse their Caribbean roots into the Bay Area. Chef **Imani Manning** is the mastermind behind a menu which features traditional island staples like Jamaican Jerk Chicken and Haitian Griyo, as well as fresh takes on old favorites like Oxtail tacos and Island fried rice. The menu also features unique vegan options like coconut curry garbanzo beans and Rasta pasta.

Fox Tale creates stir on Santa Clara Street: Fox Tale Fermentation Project at 30 East Santa Clara St. held its soft opening over a full week in April – often resulting in lines out the door of patrons eager to try the specialty beers, fermented foods and non-alcoholic beverages like Kombucha tea. The business bloomed from the combined entrepreneurial dreams of two people with similar



The Fox Tale crowd

goals. **Wendy Neff** has been experimenting with food fermentation for 12 years as part of her job leading the Superfoods program at Facebook headquarters along with teaching nutrition and cooking classes throughout the Bay Area. Her partner, **Felipe Bravo**, is a professional brewer whose resume includes working at some of Northern California's most acclaimed microbreweries. His beers are inspired by nature, stories, people, and culture. Still in the soft opening phase, go to foxtalefermentationproject.com for up-to-date information on hours of operation.

Tequila-sipping at San Pedro Square: Alma Tequileria is now open in San Pedro Square Market, offering a wide selection of Tequila, Mezcal, Sangrita, and Mexican beers. Signature cocktails were locally inspired with



Alma's divine bovine

names like "Matador San Pedro," "Lady Peralta," (after the adjacent Peralta Adobe) and "Jalisco Fly Over," which is a nod to their location in SJC's flight path. Even if you're not a fan of Agave-based liquors, it's worth a visit to Alma to see the decor which includes beautiful murals – inside and out – paper flowers, and even an artful bovine lording over the space from an elevated perch above the entrance.



Axe-Men owners Sara Sed and Matt Bird

The axe-men cometh: Axe Throwing is in full swing at the Axe-Men Throw House in the former Voodoo Lounge space at Second

Groundwerx Employee of the Month — Luis Martinez



Luis Martinez

helpful approach allows him to access areas that are commonly blocked by encampments or loitering. When Martinez approaches a loitering hotspot, the people on the street move aside to let him clean because they recognize him and know they will be treated with respect.

Now that Martinez has established trust with folks along his route, he can clean problem streets with greater efficiency and he now gives pointers to other Groundwerx crew members looking to do the same. His team attitude and patience make him a true standout after only four months on the job.

In his spare time, Luis enjoys attending big events at the Convention Center like ComicCon, Wizard World and the Heroes and Villains Fan Fest (where he once saw Marvel Comics creator **Stan Lee**), and is counting the days until he can attend Fanime Con later this month.

sjdowntown.com/groundwerx

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION



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and Santa Clara Streets. On a recent Saturday, dozens of people were learning the sport with the help of "axe-perts" who are on hand at all times to coach visitors on technique, and the new sport is clearly hitting the bullseye with downtowners.

Signia by Hilton opens: The former Fairmont Hotel is officially reopened and rebranded as Signia by Hilton, a new luxury hotel concept. Gone are the marble floors and columns, replaced with rich wood tones and contemporary fixtures and decor. Check out the hotel's



Signia by Hilton GM Jimmy Safraz and Director of Sales & Marketing Catherine Hendricks

new signature restaurant, Aji, a Peruvian-Japanese fusion fine dining experience under the supervision of executive chef **Hans Lentz**, whose culinary career has taken him from Hawaii, Chicago, Miami, Istanbul, Egypt, Dubai, and now to San Jose.

From the Archives

10 years ago - May 2012 – The PBID and SJPD joined forces to provide Enhanced Downtown Secondary Employment services involving two off-duty police officers talking to pedestrians and businesses, keeping channels of communications open with on-duty patrols and watching out for misdemeanor crimes.

15 years ago - May 2007 – City Heights, downtown's first residential high-rise held its grand opening, offering 15 different floorplans ranging from 782 to 1,365 square feet with condos priced from \$465,000. City Heights was developed by Swenson, which was then called "Barry Swenson Builder."

20 years ago - May 2002 – The City Council decided that BART's path to and through downtown San Jose would be under Santa Clara Street in a subway.

25 years ago – May 1997 – Customers shopped downtown in May and received a free potted chrysanthemum on Mother's Day if they spent more than \$25. The 70 participating businesses claimed the "Mums for Mom" promotion brought in an additional \$10,000 in sales.

30 years ago – May 1992 – San Jose Museum of Art held a "100 + one" anniversary dinner to celebrate the old wing's 100th birthday and the new wing's first birthday.