

Hello and good bye / Comments from incoming and outgoing CEOs at Annual Meeting

Stettinski plans to give his all

In his first speaking engagement as SJDA's new Chief Executive Officer **Alex Stettinski** thanked the board for "its trust in me and to bring the organization to the next level."

Stettinski, who took the Downtown Association's helm Oct. 3 after a four-year stint heading the Reno Partnership, acknowledged the work already done by SJDA and other downtown leaders and agreed with the points that Outgoing CEO **Scott Knies** made in his speech (see accompanying article), especially agreeing that a new Downtown economic development strategy plan is necessary.

"I'd like to work with the City of San Jose to create that document, join forces and get the job done," he said.

Stettinski said downtowns are the heartbeat of every city.

"If you look around not just in the United States but all over the world, the relevant, impactful cities all have a vibrant strong downtown," he said. "I will put everything I have – all my resources, my powers, my strengths, my relationships – to work to get that done in San Jose."



SJDA CEO Alex Stettinski, left, and Outgoing CEO Scott Knies, right, share a photo shoot for the Silicon Valley Business Journal article about the first leadership transition in SJDA's history.

Only in his second week, Stettinski said he is "drinking from a fire hose," busy getting to know board members, staff members, community leaders and groups that are impactful to downtown.

Since this is the first change at the top of the organization in SJDA's history, Stettinski brought

in a consultant specializing in CEO transitions to workshop with the staff in his third week.

"Everything else is really just exploring, assessing, researching and then putting the dots together so that I can develop a work plan for the immediate future for myself and for the organization," he added.

Knies covers next steps

In his final State of the Downtown address, San Jose Downtown Association Outgoing CEO **Scott Knies** outlined he worked on but did not complete during his 34 years leading SJDA.

"Now that the torch is being passed, I leave this unfinished business in your capable hands," he said, speaking to members inside the Hammer Theatre and streaming online Oct. 14.

Receiving a standing ovation before and after his speech, Knies touched on eight items:

- ◆ The city needs a downtown "construction czar" to coordinate projects with developers, contractors, subcontractors and utilities and be accountable to the community. One good example of where this will be needed is when Google and BART are both under construction at the same time.
- ◆ As downtown continues to recover from the "COVID hangover," downtown must turn its creativity up and create more vivid public spaces, reimagined paseos, excellence in its parks and special events. To become the place where people want to be, it also means strengthening core districts – San Pedro Square, SoFA, Little Italy,

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Downtown skates - this time on wheels

Downtowners are changing skates this holiday season.

Aloha Downtown Skate roller rink will replace Downtown Ice this holiday season, beginning Nov. 19 from the same location among the Circle of Palms. The downtown anchor holiday attraction is produced by Aloha Fun Center in partnership with SJDA and with funding from the City of San Jose. Google is presenting sponsor.

Tricia McNabb, who has managed the downtown rink for all its 26 years, thinks the switch from ice skating to roller skating is a good move. Perhaps that's because she recently bought a new pair of roller skates for herself, even before receiving word about the change.

"Like a lot of people, my sister and I were looking for something fun to do together during the COVID lock-down, and we both had loved roller skating as kids," she said. "Every year I would get a new pair of skates for my birthday, and now I'm continuing the tradition."

Apparently McNabb and her sister are not alone. A roller-skating page on social media platform TikTok has received more than 8 billion views after shelter-in-place mandates started in spring 2020, and now roller skating has had a resurgence in popularity.

"I used to skate recreationally in the Circle of Palms area and always thought it would be a great spot for a roller rink," said rink producer **Elizabeth Ruiz**, who also operates the Aloha Fun Center at Eastridge and was a former member of the Silicon Valley Roller Girls roller derby team. Ruiz says she is honored to have an opportunity to step into this high-profile urban space and bring her style of skating fun to downtown San Jose.

The design of inner and outer rings around 32 palm trees lit with programmable LED lights will be familiar to anyone who skated previously at the ice rink. There will be a DJ station, two areas for skaters to rest on benches between the palms, and retro design elements to play off a "roller disco" theme. The popular Snowman Hot Chocolate

cabin has committed to return this year.

McNabb pointed out that the most noticeable change will be the fact that the rink will be at plaza level, rather than on a raised platform.

"Not only will skaters be able to rest on benches right between the palm trees, but the trees themselves will appear taller and more majestic," McNabb said. Construction time is expected to take about three weeks, a reduction by four weeks compared to the ice rink. Construction started Oct. 31. Basic construction includes a Sport Court laid over a plywood base, plus "Jersey barriers" – also known as K-rail – providing the walls of the rink.

McNabb said she looks forward to working with the rink's neighbors at the San Jose Museum of Art, 50 West building and especially the Signia by Hilton hotel this season. "Last year, the rink was open but the hotel was still closed, and it definitely felt like there was something missing," McNabb said.

The cost to skate on the downtown rink will be \$20 for 90 minutes, including skate rental. Tickets can be purchased online in advance or at the rink. The roller rink will be open daily from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. weekends and from Dec. 17-Jan. 7. Weekdays before Dec. 17, the rink will be open from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., closing at 9 p.m. on Sundays and 11 p.m. on Friday nights and the night before Thanksgiving. The Opening Ceremony will be Nov. 22.

"The downtown rink is a friends-and-family tradition for many people," McNabb said. "We are optimistic that most of them will continue to skate downtown, in different footwear, and that new skaters – who were intimidated by the ice – will be more likely to lace up and take a spin."

The rink will stay open through Jan. 8. Rink information and hours can be accessed through sjdowntown.com or directly at alohadowntownskate.com.

Holiday event schedule

The Performing Arts Season is back in full-swing this month, with a live show being presented in virtually every theater downtown:

- ◆ Opera San Jose presents an encore presentation of "Cinderella," with prodigy composer **Alma Deutcher** making her conducting debut. Opens Nov. 12, California Theater.
- ◆ San Jose Playhouse presents "Sunday in the Park with George," a Sondheim musical. Opens Nov. 19, 3Below Theatres.
- ◆ "The Book of Mormon" returns to San Jose for eight performances over Thanksgiving week, presented by Broadway San Jose. Opens Nov. 22, Center for Performing Arts.
- ◆ City Lights presents "The Thanksgiving Play," a delicious satire on the challenges of being politically correct. Opens Nov. 17.
- ◆ CMT Rising Stars presents "The Wizard of Oz" musical, featuring beloved songs from the classic film. Opens Nov. 11.
- ◆ San Jose Stage presents a world premiere adaptation of **Frank Capra's** classic "Meet John Doe." Opens Nov. 23.
- ◆ Tabard Theatre's production of "Wait Until Dark," a taut psychological thriller, through Nov. 13.

Other special events this month include:

Applied Materials' Silicon Valley Turkey Trot returns this year to the streets of downtown on Thanksgiving. svturkeytrot.com.

World Cup viewing parties at San Pedro Square. The Earthquakes host viewing parties for 58 matches from Qatar on San Pedro Street. Early morning matches will be at Old Wagon Saloon & Grill and O'Flaherty's Irish Pub. Thanksgiving weekend features can't-miss action including USA vs. England, Argentina vs. Mexico, and Spain vs. Germany.

Christmas in the Park holiday traditions and Winter Wonderland amusement rides are open Nov. 25-Jan. 1. Visit christmasinthepark.com and winterwonderlandsj.com.



Volunteers dress up the decrepit Dr. Eu building at Second and Santa Clara streets in September.

Knies leaves list *From Front Page*

Historic District – and regenerating the spaces between them.

- ◆ Do something about neglected and deteriorating structures downtown, such as the buildings owned by **Dr. Eu** at Santa Clara and Second streets and the Church of Christ Scientist on the north side of St. James Park. “Other cities have figured out a way to aggressively fine owners of longstanding blighted buildings that are not maintained properly,” Knies said. “The accumulation of steep fines might be just the incentive owners need to let someone else try.”
- ◆ San Jose needs a new Downtown Plan. The last one was created 20 years ago. Questions about how Downtown West connects with the downtown core; how Diridon Station becomes a center of mass transit for the entire Bay Area; how St. James Park is reimagined; the future of Park Paseo; and other questions need to be strategically planned.
- ◆ Get help for those on our streets suffering from mental illness and drug addiction who are unwilling or incapable of accepting help. Until now, referrals have been voluntary; Knies suggests that care should be compulsory for those who can’t make such a decision. “The county must begin using all available tools, including involuntary treatment and conservatorships,” he said.
- ◆ Groundwerx is spending more and more resources cleaning up messes left by the unhoused population. Knies suggests the county and city establish a Clean Community Fee that sets aside 10 percent of every homeless contract they fund to help keep our communities clean.
- ◆ Keep utility boxes for traffic control and utility equipment off the sidewalks where they interrupt pedestrian flow. “Put them in adjacent buildings, parking garages, underground – anywhere but our sidewalks,” he said.
- ◆ SJDA cannot rest on its laurels and must continue to serve as downtown’s Department of Implementation. “We are the glass half-full people; we invite inspiration and help bring change – but our positivity is also pragmatic. We understand the privilege and responsibility we have as a leader in the downtown’s continuous evolution,” Knies said.

To watch video of SJDA’s Annual Meeting or read the full text of Knies’ speech, go to sjdowntown.com/sjda-public-meeting.

Business News



Ashton Toefield, right, and Bryan Jackson specialize in candles, mists and service at Ashy Aromas.

Aroma Therapy: Ashton “Ashy” Toefield combined professional and personal experiences to become an entrepreneur and start Ashy Aromas. His first on-the-ground candle bar opened in July in San Pedro Square Market, offering handcrafted soy-blend candles, which customers can make on their own or have filled by the purveyors.

Toefield, along with fellow Louisiana transplant **Bryan Jackson**, who calls himself a scentologist, offer a candle-making-made-easy three-step workshop involving choosing the vessel, the scent and pouring the candle. Experiences progress from Standard to Candle Lovers

to the Signature candle-making workshop for a group of friends, private parties or corporate events. Wine-tasting is part of the more intensive experience.

The origins of Ashy started in February 2020 – one month before COVID erupted and people were ordered to shelter in place -- when Toefield was transferred by Sprint from Louisiana to San Jose. Stressed by the outbreak and without family and friends, he found candle-making with aromas soothing and calming.

“Candle-making is a therapeutic process to me,” he said. “I’d set time aside for self-care and wasn’t considering turning it into a business until my friends started asking for more candles.”

Toefield started selling candles online on Etsy and at ashy aromas.com. Customers can join Ashy Aroma’s candle clubs and receive products, refills and other items monthly.

“I started receiving Yelp reviews that detailed what customers got out of candle-making, and how their experience relieved their stress from work. That’s when I took on more of an entrepreneurial mindset,” he said.

During his first year, he filled orders for customers in 43 states.

He asked his longtime friend, Jackson, who had already developed a line of colognes, to develop original aromas for Ashy. The menu of scents changes from month to month, but at any one time, up to 10 aromas offered are Ashy originals, Toefield said.

“We hope that our customers can identify an aroma that is unique and speaks to them,” Toefield said, noting one couple who created a “scent profile” for their newborn daughter’s nursery that the baby would always associate with.

Toefield, from Independence, La., a town of 1,800 with two stop lights and about 68 miles inland from New Orleans, endured Hurricane Katrina and the Great Louisiana Flood of 2016. He utilizes his experiences in Southern hospitality, as manager of Target stores and working with Sprint (now T-Mobile) with Ashy Aromas.

“We pride ourselves to enhance the customer experience like no other,” he said. “A smile goes a long way.”

Soft opening: Suerte Eatery opened in July on the Almaden Avenue side of San Pedro Square Market.

For now, owner **Carlos Perez** offers a limited menu of Mexican- and California-influenced artisan plates until the full kitchen is completed in the next few months and he can begin serving breakfast and tapas-style dinners.

Much of his menu is locally sourced.

“I come from farm country and most people don’t realize how much is grown around here,” said Perez, who also owns Loteria gourmet taco bar at San Pedro Square Market. “I want to give customers – many coming from out of town – tastes of San Jose and California.”

The current menu includes Marcona herb almonds, citrus-marinated olives, chorizo waffles, pork belly bacon guacamole, and chilaquiles nachos with Tinga chicken. Also available are chips served with guacamole and chipotle spread, a cheese board of local cheeses and house-made pinot jam, and a charcuterie board of cured meats and sauces.

Perez wishes all his customers “Buenos Suerte,” which means “Good luck” or Good Fortune.”

Check @suerteatery on social media.

A pair of MOMENTS: The MOMENT shops in San Pedro Square have two new additions, both of which picked up popularity online and on social media:

Tiny Keyboard Shop features custom keycaps and other creative and fun accessories for mechanical keyboards and custom mechanical keyboards curated by Tiny Makes Things.

“I started making keycaps to combine my love for keyboards with my passion for creating things,” said the owner who goes by the single name **Tiny**.



Carlos Perez opens his second Market eatery.



Tiny makes things.

Groundwerx Employee of the Month – Adam Stanislawek

To veteran Groundwerx pressure-washer **Adam Stanislawek**, the recent vote by property owners to extend and expand the Downtown San Jose Property-Based Improvement District proved to be very good news because it provides him job security.

“This isn’t a dream job, but it’s a good job with great people,” said Stanislawek, now in his eighth year with Groundwerx. As such, he pays attention to both small and big details asked of him.

As part of his path to becoming the latest Groundwerx Employee of the Month, Stanislawek showed up every day and “made sure not to be late” – not an easy task since he begins his shift at 4 a.m.

And he racked up some big numbers: 128 hours of pressure washing on 12 block faces and 76 urgent “hot spots”; 48 separate instances of assisting businesses; 200 pounds of trash collected; six graffiti tags removed; and 99 street furniture pieces cleaned. In addition, he gave directions a handful of times; assisted a blind person across the street and carried the groceries of an elderly person; and helped homeless individuals move their stuff prior to doing his washing.

He also covered afternoon shifts of Groundwerx crew members on vacation. Supervisors share regularly scheduled deployment with him daily, and once on the streets, he responds to high-priority cleaning areas from pan-and-broomers and the dispatcher. He prioritizes requests that come through the Groundwerx apps.

Born in Michigan and raised in Poland, Stanislawek became a jewelry craftsman. He moved to Seattle when he was 25 before moving to San Jose. Tired of working odd jobs, he looked for something more stable. He volunteered to work for Groundwerx while part of Downtown Streets Team. With past experience in construction and working with machines, he also has a hand in keeping Groundwerx machinery in good working order.

A big fan of live music and performances, Stanislawek can often be found at Old Wagon and Caravan Club.



Adam Stanislawek

sjdowntown.com/groundwerx apps

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

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“Maybe in the future I will make things outside of the keyboard hobby, but for now, keycaps!”

To check the keycaps out, go to the works page at tiny-makesthings.com or follow @tinykeyboardshop.

“Woofboard was born in 2021 with the mission to celebrate every occasion with our pups with dog-friendly charcuterie - aka barkuterie!” said owner **Lynna Choi** and **Puck**, her pup.

Treats are all-natural, preservative-free and contain minimal ingredients sourced from small businesses around the country. A variety of proteins, textures and flavors are available to four-legged friends. Toys and bandanas are also sold.

Visit woofboard.co for information about special events at MOMENT, including Friday “Yappy Hours,” follow @woofboard on Instagram and Woofboard on Amazon.



Lynna Choi and Puck

20 years ago – November 2002 – The number of retailers participating in the free-parking-with-validation program jumped from 80 to 176, thanks to an SJDA marketing program that provided free validation stamps for six months.

25 years ago – November 1997 – Patrons at the Market Street-San Pedro Garage were treated to free car washes by the San Jose Department of Streets and Traffic for putting up with the San Pedro Square Streetscape Project.

30 years ago – November 1992 – *Dateline: Downtown*, a monthly feature by SJDA in the *San Jose City Times*, reported consistent progress by SJDA’s Operations Committee including: improved signage and mitigation from construction projects; additional parking zones on Market, Santa Clara and San Fernando streets; and increased police patrols in key areas. “It is an effective forum for downtown businesspeople and residents to bring their concerns,” said committee chair **Steve Borkenhagen** of Eulipia restaurant.

Downtown Facts

SJC domestic + international passengers

FY 2021-22	FY 2020-21	% Change
9,813,775	4,226,239	132.2%

Source: **Norman Y. Mineta** San Jose International Airport. (Fiscal year is July 1-June 30)