Focus Area: San Pedro Square District

San Pedro Square is endowed with two special, complimentary characteristics; while one of the quietest neighborhoods in the District seemingly removed from the commercial activity of Downtown, it is home to one of the city’s most vibrant retail blocks and San Pedro Market, a bustling center of life. Situated between San Pedro St. and Little Italy, en route to Guadalupe River Park and the SAP Center, the San Pedro Square District has potential to become a key pedestrian link and, without losing its existing character, an appealing, mixed neighborhood in its own right. Already on the boards, development projects promise a growing residential population; likely supporting businesses and amenities will follow suit. In the meantime, however, the area suffers from a surplus of surface parking lots, neglected areas, and unattended sidewalks; these constitute a discrepancy between the highly valued anchors of the neighborhood, San Pedro St. and Market, and the rest, which seems mostly disregarded. Even its significant open space resource, Pellier Park, seems unconsidered and residual; this represents an unique opportunity.

To achieve its potential, the San Pedro Square District should be planned as a mixed neighborhood with commercial and residential land uses that support one another and the adjacent parts of Downtown. Given the extent of surface parking lots and limited supply of existing buildings, it is easy to imagine rapid development. Thus it is critical for that development both to address and expand the neighborhood public realm, to maintain its peaceful, informal quality, and to create meaningful pedestrian linkages to adjacent neighborhoods and anchors such as Little Italy and Guadalupe River Park. Among others, urban planning and design considerations should include traffic revisions to make North Almaden Blvd., West St. John St., and Notre Dame Avenue two-way to slow traffic and improve connectivity. In the short term, Street Life Plan projects focus on fostering east-west pedestrian activity, with crosswalks, Cool Posts, and art projects to suggest multiple routes across the neighborhood. Furthermore, the plan identifies two key sites—Pellier Park and the temporarily vacant lot at Almaden Blvd. and Carlisle St.—as open space opportunities for the developing neighborhood.

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CHAPTER 6

Focus Areas

San Pedro Square District

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1. create new sidewalk
2. convert street to 2-way
Pellier Park Gateway

A new design provides useful open space to a growing community and an attractive entrance to Downtown.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Dedicated to the founder of California’s prune industry, Pellier Park sits between West Julian Street and West Saint James Street, and comes to a point facing the 87 overpass at Notre Dame Ave. as well as the freeway’s on and off ramps. The park’s “point” essentially marks an entrance to Downtown San Jose; the current design acknowledges this with a large statue of Captain Fallon. Residential development flanks the park, and more will come. The park is an anonymous, undifferentiated, and unprogrammed open space bounded by large streets; it has little purpose or presence. However, with moderate improvements it can be transformed for aesthetic and recreational benefit.

The concept design includes new planting at the “point” and the park’s edges along the sidewalk curbs, and use of larger planting areas to frame new, distinct program areas provide a buffer from the streets; this creates a setting, with separation from the street, increased shade, and more attention on the existing Captain Fallon “local hero” statue. Ultimately, the success of Pellier Park relies on its value to people who will use and adopt it. Its design should balance its image as a gateway with its function and sustainability as a public space for the neighborhood.

GOALS

- Provide open space benefits to growing residential community.
- Visually enhance a major entrance to Downtown and promote the District’s Garden City identity.
- Improve the pedestrian experience along West Saint James and West Julian Streets.

DESIGN CONCEPTS

- Maximize replacement of existing concrete with garden planting and trees.
- Provide a garden environment at the west end of the site and existing sculpture, and active use areas such as a dog park and multiuse lawn.
- Use planting and topography to screen West Julian Street from the park spaces, and orient the lawn to the south.
Pellier Park Gateway site diagram

- Dog Park
- Local Hero
- Garden
- Julian St. Buffer
- Multi-Use Field
- South Facing Beach
Carlysle Interim Park

A new neighborhood park becomes a social center for a growing neighborhood.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The neighborhood west of San Pedro Square and Market has a unique quality of being quiet but surrounded by activity—between several places. As the neighborhood develops, with new residential buildings and growth from San Pedro Square, it will be important both to maintain that appealing quality, as well as provide a new, distinct social center.

Development of the City owned parcel at the intersection of North Almaden Boulevard and Carlyle Street affords the opportunity to bring gravity to a pedestrian network linking San Pedro Square, Little Italy, and SAP Center, and to provide neighborhood amenities for existing residents and new development. As well as the benefit of open space and vegetation, amenities might include a community garden, dog park, or site features to foster neighborly socializing. Carlyle Interim Park becomes the anchor of a developing Downtown neighborhood.

GOALS

- Activate and anchor the Carlyle Street path and connections west.
- Create new social center for the neighborhood.

DESIGN CONCEPTS

- The park provides open space services and amenities suited to the neighborhood
- Simple, cost effective, program-specific improvements support active use and adoption by the local community.
- Consider both long-term, permanent and short term, temporary improvements relative to viability and development opportunities for the site—including interim improvements preceding a permanent construction project.
after: Carlyle Interim Park is a social gathering place for the neighborhood.
Focus Area: Post Street

Post Street is unique to San Jose’s Downtown as it is situated mid-block, is short, and is not a through street; it terminates to the west at Almaden Boulevard and the east at First. Notably, Post Street’s urban qualities are significantly different than all other Downtown streets. In particular, the block between First and Market represents a possible future for the entire street. However, the potential neighborhood surrounding Post—bounded by Santa Clara and San Fernando—is at a tipping point with enough new development sites to re-cast the area as pedestrian friendly neighborhood; alternatively, plans could relegate Post Street to utility and service access only. Development projects should be planned and coordinated to achieve the brighter vision of a vibrant Downtown neighborhood.

Post Street between First and Market offers great charm, based on the small width and length of the street, its rich materiality, commercial facades and trees. Its midblock location and its relatively narrow width are the only attributes that are sustained as Post Street extends west from Market to Almaden Boulevard. However, if Post Street west of Market took on the charm of the block east of Market, the urban design of this street can be pivotal in defining a new distinct neighborhood. Post Street can be the central spine of a burgeoning neighborhood characterized by respite from the super blocks south of San Fernando and transition to the more fine grained character of the blocks to the north. Opportunities for definition of a new distinct neighborhood by thoughtful urban design are significant based on multiple development sites that flank Post Street and the adjacent small streets that can be improved such as Lightston St. and Almaden Ave. both between Post and Santa Clara.

Most illustrative of this potential is consideration of the redevelopment of the Greyhound site. New development at this location can contribute to a pedestrian friendly neighborhood; associated street improvements should reduce the width of Almaden Ave., provide new street planting, and continue the appealing qualities of Post’s most successful existing attributes, including its warm textured paving and trees. Dynamic programming and short-term, Street Life Plan projects on Post Street and adjacent small streets and spaces should be pursued to highlight and demonstrate the unique attributes and qualities of this potential neighborhood.
Focus Area: Circle of Palms Passage

Circle of Palms Plaza and the associated pedestrian passage offer a significant and unique public realm experience by their connection to First Street to the east and Plaza de Cesar Chavez and the pedestrian environment of Cityview Plaza to the west. The physical definition of the plaza and passage by surrounding buildings is very effective. These exterior spaces are complemented by the interesting architectural quality of the Museum of Art, the plaza’s palms themselves, and the edges of the open space enlivened by outdoor seating on three sides. The high quality of this existing space contributes greatly to the budding pedestrian passage network of the District.

Improvements can be made to the plaza and associated public spaces to enhance the image and identity of the area, as well as making a more hospitable environment for both public and private (commercial) outdoor seating and everyday use; furthermore, they can serve to extend the passage, suggesting a continuous pedestrian route from Cityview Plaza all the way to the garage at Third Street. Short-term, Street Life Plan projects complement the existing spatial structure of the plaza and passage. These include more visual variety and mitigation of the extensive paving and walls, definition of smaller spaces to occupy, and refined framing of outdoor seating areas, as well as added elements such as seating and planting, sculptures, and lighting. An inviting and memorable public space should be achieved.
Plaza Improvements

Downtown Streetscape Elements in Circle of Palms Plaza expand its potential as a primary public space for the District.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Circle of Palms Plaza is a substantial, valuable public space for the District. Like most successful plazas around the world it functions both as a route and as a place; people can move through it and they can stay. Much of its value derives from its flexibility; its open plan and large area accommodate a range of changing uses, like temporary and seasonal events. These characteristics also compromise it as an environment on a daily basis; its size and lack of features are not comfortable under typical circumstances.

The Plaza Improvements program includes several simple additions to Circle of Palms, which are not fixed and do not compromise its function as a open, flexible plaza. An impressive lighting design celebrates the palms and renders them a beacon to the plaza. Café seating areas at the plaza’s corners are defined by clusters of Downtown Planters, which suggest a comfortable sense of separation, small scale, planting, and shade where people congregate and sit adjacent to active building edges. Complementing these, Downtown Stages are arranged to provide social seating areas and, for events, performance areas. Downtown Shades and a Roaming Chairs program—movable chairs that are set out and taken in each day—make the plaza comfortable. All these elements can be rearranged or removed altogether for large events. Planters with integrated seating populate the Museum of Art steps; these provide a green edge and elevated place to sit. Collectively, these elements bring definition, human scale, and comfort to Circle of Palms plaza on a daily basis, to make it a more active, popular, and essential part of the District’s public life.

GOALS

• Activate the plaza; expand its potential on a daily basis.
• Create a unique environment for the District.
• Support the plaza’s programming and events.
• Encourage people to choose the Circle of Palms Passage as a preferred pedestrian route through the center of Downtown.

DESIGN CONCEPTS

• Showcase Downtown Elements (Planters, Stages, Shades, etc) and employ them to improve the plaza without changing its open plan or compromising its flexibility.
• Arrange seating, planting, and shade areas to support activity at building edges.
• Leave the Circle of Palms intact, free of fixed elements. Implement a lighting design that celebrates the palms.