

Urban effervescence south of downtown

Welcome to SoDA — the South of Downtown Area — an eclectic stretch of First Street, a.k.a. Monterey Highway, from Interstate 280 to Keyes Street.

“We’re gathering the troops, trying to make it an official district,” said **Jim Salata**, who moved his Garden City Construction office to 1010 S. First. “We have high hopes for SoDA.”

Salata credited architect **Steve McMillan** for coining the name.

“I’ve heard SoDA used before,” said **Erik Annonson**, manager at Camino Brewery at 718 S. First St., “but I think they should call it the Brewery District instead — the trail that starts at Uproar, then Camino and Clandestine on South First, Hermitage on Seventh and Strike on 10th Street.”

A mélange of hole-in-the-wall cafes, used car sales lots, tire shops, auto supply, flooring, appliance and furniture stores, barber shops and salons and other small businesses, SoDA’s buzz began two years ago with Camino and Clandestine’s openings within days of each other. People started thinking about the district in another way: downtown’s expansion is not just probable but inevitable.

“There’s a lot more traffic now and people on the street,” said

Armando Gray, manager of Rick’s Furniture, which has been on south First Street for 20 years. “People coming to the breweries, residents of The Pierce, Second Street Studios and Neo (across the street). We expect more when Sparq opens.”

With more residents moving into SoDA as well as the established SoFA district just on the other side of I-280, there are more customers in the neighborhood.

“There’s more retail now, which doubles the value of being here,” Annonson adds. “The people stopping to drop off or pick up their pets at Downtown Dogs may want to lay over and have a beer or get something to eat.”

The district has charm. SoDA’s landmark, Faber’s Cyclery, is being restored by Garden City. The Faber’s property includes an adjacent open lot where an active outdoor gathering space is planned. Salata also owns and holds fund-raisers at Studio 724 along the main stretch.

Next to Rick’s Furniture is one of the most unique businesses in the city: Break Stuff, a “stress therapy demolition center” at 860 S. First St. Other landmark businesses in the district include Lamas Western Wear, Idol Karaoke, Bruce Barton Pump Services, Chivas Grill in the old 5 Spot Drive-in, Burger Bar (5 for \$7.99) and Der Wienerschnitzel.

For every self-serve car wash and Wash ‘N Dry Laundermat, newer retail such as Agappliances, Hardware and Garden Supply, Inda Spec Solar Services and Glass House Smoke Shop are also



Camino Brewing manager Erik Annonson considers the SoDA district moniker a bit ironic.

making a go of it in SoDA.

Freshly painted murals have spruced up the neighborhood, but properties with razor wire, steel bars and fencing are also part of a district in transition, along with the occasional drug dealer.

SoDA is making progress, Salata said, especially in eradicating graffiti and cleaning up the area. He has commissioned a mural for the north side of his SoDA office that will show what the Monterey Highway looked like in 1876.

“I never heard of SoDA,” said **Juan Martinez**, owner of a party decorations business in the former Pasteleria Martinez space at 850 S. First. “I’ve known this neighborhood to be Washington.”

South First Street is the traditional boundary between the Washington Guadalupe neighborhood to the east and Spartan Keyes to the west, with SoFA and the downtown core to the north. Districts overlap here. The city’s

Biblioteca Latinoamericana branch library at 921 S. First St. also houses the Washington United Youth Center.

Martinez has noticed some growing pains during his two years on the street.

“There’s not enough parking,” he said. “More crosswalks are needed across First Street. And the city has no parking-street sweeping signs up everywhere, but they never sweep the streets.”

The area falls under the city’s Downtown Frame Area. South First and Second streets are zoned for ground-floor commercial uses that can rise five stories and outlying streets are zoned for multiple residences that can be built three stories high.

Since 2017, 14 parcels along South First have changed owners.

“There’s a lot of land off South First and it’s cheaper than downtown,” Salata added.

“We talk about this all the time,” Annonson said. “The Pierce, the Keyes apartments (Second Street Studios), Foundry Commons (on Fifth Street), the new hotel in SoFA — all are or will benefit us. And more is on the way.”

SoDA
SOUTH OF DOWNTOWN AREA

Letter from the President

Good building design includes local know-how

One of my first assignments as the new president of the SJDA Board of Directors was to answer several questions by the *Silicon Valley Business Journal* about the future of downtown.

As I said in the article, downtown is headed in the right direction. We have many irons in the fire, and now is the time to execute all those projects and plans.

It’s exciting that Jay Paul Co. jumped at the opportunity to secure a large office building at 200 Park Ave. and that Adobe is connecting their office towers via a bridge over San Fernando Street. These are the types of actions that will move us closer to realizing our vision of more people downtown.



Katia McClain

Another point that I made in the article is that we need to challenge downtown developers to use design and architecture talent to add nuance and quality to their buildings — and utilize the advantages of hiring local talent. Why do we reach outside the Bay Area and even California for architects to design our buildings?

When you experience the city every day, you know where people hang out, how pedestrians use a paseo, and which restaurant is always busy. Your morning commute is infused with the murals around the city, and your weekends are filled with events downtown.

This first-hand experience offers a unique perspective to inform how a building is designed, the materials used, and the experience that a ground floor space should provide.

For instance, the designers from my firm, Steinberg Hart, paid particular attention to the connection that Miro Towers has with City Hall at the ground level and views of the city from the floors above.

Similarly, for 200 Park Ave. and CityView Plaza, designers must understand how Park Avenue connects to Paseo de San Antonio, which runs all the way to San Jose State University, and how that path connects to the rest of the city.

And, projects like the reimagined St. James Park require input from people who have experienced the diversity of this community firsthand and understand the need for public spaces where families, young adults and seniors can gather, enjoy nature, and express their cultures.

My favorite walk downtown is along the Paseo de San Antonio because we embraced materials and colors for paving and crosswalks and art that you can touch and feel. I am confident that this experience will only get better when new retail and key projects like the renovated Camera 12 re-engage with the paseo.

My mother was a teacher, and in her mind, every moment was an opportunity to teach others. Following in her footsteps, I hope I can help elevate the design of new buildings downtown. I am not referring to a specific style or a massing design solution, rather, how buildings can catalyze businesses and ultimately, improve the quality of life downtown.

Downtown Events



CINEQUEST preview: Cinequest Film & Creativity Festival expects more than 110,000 attendees to its 20th anniversary festival March 3-20 themed “Elation.” Of 321 films screened during CINEQUEST, mostly at 3Below, California Theatre and Hammer Theatre Center, 122 will have women directors. Fifty-two countries will be represented. The festival includes Maverick Awards presentations to poet **Ruth Weiss** and actor **Hong Chau**, innovations and creativity forums in fashion, writing, comedy, dance, music and art. Virtual reality and augmented reality days are March 5-8 at California Theatre and KALEID Gallery. Nightly meet-ups occur before and after films.

The schedule will be available later this month. Go to Cinequest.org for the latest information.



Jazzing it up: San Jose Jazz Winterfest features more than 20 concerts Feb. 14-29 at Hammer Theatre Center, Café Stritch, The Continental, Art Boutiki and the Poor House Bistro.

Highlights include **Miguel Zenón** Quartet performing “Sonero;” **Quincy Jones** presents **Sheléa** with SJSU Jazz Orchestra; The Music of **Ray Charles** featuring **Clint Holmes**, **Nnenna Freelon** and **Kirk Whalum**; **Stacey Kent**, **Los Hermanos Arango**; and **Yuko Mabuchi** trio. Check sanjosejazz.org/winterfest for schedule and tickets.

Broadway San Jose’s 2020-21 season: Performances at the Center for the Performing Arts include: The Illusionists (March 24-25), Le Miserables (April 21-26), Riverdance (May 15-17), Come from Away (June 16-21), The Lion King (July 15-Aug. 9), 1776 (Sept. 29-Oct. 4), Jersey Boys (Jan. 8-10), Anastasia (Jan. 25-31), Tootsie (March 22-29), Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (May 4-9), and Rent (June 4-6).

Visit broadwaysanjose.com for ticket information.

Business News

Morton’s on the move: Landry’s will play a round of “musical restaurants” in the coming months, moving Morton’s The Steakhouse from CityView Plaza into its McCormick & Schmick’s restaurant space in the Fairmont Annex directly across the paseo from The Grill on the Alley.

Houston-based Landry’s owns both restaurants and about 60 other restaurant, hotel and entertainment concepts including Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., Rainforest Café, Cadillac Bar, Chart House, Claim Jumper, Joe’s Crab Shack, Rusty Pelican, Vic & Anthony’s and the Golden Nugget Hotels and Casinos.

Landry’s has not announced what’s next for McCormick and Schmick’s. An executive in the home office said that many of the McCormick and Schmick’s employees will transfer into the Morton’s operation.

CityView tenants relocate: Morton’s move is one of many as Jay Paul Co. prepares CityView Plaza for demolition and a rebuild into a three high-rise office building complex of 1.6 million square feet.

The *Silicon Valley Business Journal* has moved from 125 S. Market St. to 50 W. San Fernando St., fourth floor. The business newspaper had spent more than a decade overlooking Plaza de Cesar Chavez.

After 34 years, Scott’s Seafood will move into 200 S. First, the former Social Policy location in the Twohy Building. Our House is moving to 3129 Meridian Ave. in Willow Glen.

Steinberg Hart, Electric Cloud, Gensler, The Trade Desk, and Gates, Eisenhart and Dawson are still in 125 S.

Market. Peggy Sue’s and Golden One Credit Union still front Park Avenue. Kimley-Horn, Deimer and Wei, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Landmark and AECOM are still in 100-130 W. San Fernando St. And the Heritage Bank building is still doing business with offices of the Heritage Bank of Commerce, Alliant and Regus.

Other former CityView Plaza tenants and their new homes include: Dr. **Scott Feldmen** Optometry has joined I-Care Optometry, 3021 Meridian Ave.; Guggenheim Realty Group, 792 Meridian Way; IPLO – Intellectual Property Law Office, 1871 The Alameda; Mesirow & Fink, 160 W. Santa Clara St., Suite 1180; Mullen & Filippi law firm, 2105 Bascom, Suite 210; Ramsbacher Prokey, LLP, 111 W. St. John St., Suite 1200; Savioke, 160 W. Santa Clara St., Suite 800; Tenenbaum, Crowley & Brereton, Attorneys at Law, 10 Almaden Blvd.; U.S. Telepacific Corp (TPX), 55 Nicholson Lane; Van Tilburg, Banvard, Soderbergh AIA, 94 W. Santa Clara St., Suite 840; Year Up Bay Area, 150 Almaden Blvd., Suite 600.

University of San Francisco; Paul Mitchell, The School; and Specialties are closed.

Four of seven Modera retail spaces leased: Modera, 28 N. Almaden Ave., expects to start moving in resident tenants sometime in February, said **Mike Messenger** at Meacham Oppenheimer, who’s leasing the ground floor for owner Mill Creek.

Two ground floor tenants have already signed on at Modera: Carbon Health healthcare clinic and AT&T phone, television and internet devices, which will open retail spaces along Almaden Avenue, Messenger said. Both have applied for permits to improve their spaces.

In January, Serious Dumplings and Gyu-kaku both signed leases for the two spaces fronting San Pedro Square. Serious Dumplings will offer dumplings in a variety of shapes and flavors. Gyu-kaku is cook-your-own Japanese barbecue.

Messenger still has three 500- to 1,000-square-foot spaces available in a new paseo that winds between San Pedro Square and Almaden Avenue.



Urban Catalyst wants to add windows to Camera 12 building.

Camera 12 sells again: Urban Catalyst, the new owner of the Camera 12 Cinemas building on Paseo San Antonio at Second Street, will revitalize the space with offices over ground floor retail.

The building has sat vacant since the theater ran its last features three years ago.

Urban Catalyst bought the building from a partnership led by **Don Imwalie** of Imwalie Properties and included **Garry Dillabough** for \$24 million. In 2017, Imwalie completed complex acquisitions of the land under the building from the Successor Agency of the Redevelopment Agency (SARA) and the building itself from Forest City.

The new owner hopes to start transitioning the inside of the building this spring into 65,000 square feet of office on the second and third floors and 20,000 square feet of retail space at the ground level, which could include restaurant and entertainment options.

SJDA Board Member **Nick Goddard** of Colliers International, who has coordinated some of the top food-and-beverage locations in downtown San Jose, including Morton’s and Adegas Pasteleria, is the listing agent for the ground floor. Urban Catalyst is working closely with **Dillabough** and **Jeff Arrillaga** of Urban Community to recruit office tenants.

Downtown film-goers can still enjoy first-run features at 3Below Theaters at Second and San Carlos streets, Hammer Theater and at the IMAX dome at The Tech Interactive.

SJDA Public Meeting: Special Date

Feb. 20: The next SJDA public meeting will be Thursday, Feb. 20, from 8-9:30 a.m. and features a conversation with District 3 Councilmember **Raul Perez** at Tabard Theatre, 29 N. San Pedro St. Please reserve a seat by emailing sjdarsvp@sjdowntown.com.



Volunteers fill the gaps

Our City Forest, SJDA and more than 20 volunteers spent a recent rainy Saturday morning planting 12 trees along downtown streets where the previous tree had died or been removed. Species planted included London plane, pear, plum, emerald sunshine elm, Chinese pistache and jacaranda.

Downtown News

Hilton San Jose changes ownership: GEM Realty Capital, a Chicago-based real estate investment company, has purchased the Hilton San Jose, paying \$117.55 million for the 18-story, 353-room hotel adjacent to the



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Downtown Facts

2020 minimum wage:

Sonoma	\$12.50 (small employers)
Sonoma	\$13.50 (large employers)
Oakland	\$14.14
Richmond	\$15.00
San Jose	\$15.25
Cupertino	\$15.35
Los Altos	\$15.40
Palo Alto	\$15.40
Santa Clara	\$15.40
Mountain View	\$16.05
Sunnyvale	\$16.05
Source:	KRON 4

From the Archives

10 years ago – February 2010 – Seven downtown businesses held events and promotions to raise money for earthquake-ravaged Haiti.

15 years ago – February 2005 – The 1928 art deco Vintage Tower across the street from City Hall completed a \$2.5 million renovation. Owned by First United Methodist Church, the original medical and dental offices were converted to apartments in 1987, housing low- and very-low income residents.

20 years ago – February 2000 – In its seventh year of service, 71,525 riders took a free shuttle from downtown

San Jose Convention Center. Seller Han’s Holding Group of China has owned the property since 2017, when it paid \$87.3 million for it. The owners had begun a renovation in 2019. JLL Hotels and Hospitality handled the sale, which averages to \$333,000 per key.

The Hilton includes 18,375 square feet of meeting and event space, an outdoor pool over the front entrance on Almaden Boulevard, spa tub, fitness center, business lounge and Affinity restaurant.

AT&T sells parking lot: AT&T sold the parking lot at Post Street and Almaden Boulevard to local developer **J.P. DiNapoli** Companies for \$35.65 million. The site is nearly an acre.

The site went up for sale in April 2019. It has served as surface parking for employees of the adjacent windowless AT&T/PacBell building that holds telecommunications equipment for the company’s mammoth network.

Catch up on BID fees and businesses taxes: Downtown businesses can register or pay their late Business License Taxes (BLT) and Business Improvement District (BID) fees and the city will waive the penalties and interest. The city’s amnesty program continues through March 27 and covers October 2016-March 2020.

Payments can be made at Window 1 or 2 on the First Floor at City Hall, or call (408) 535-7055. More information at sanjoseca.gov/business-tax and sjdowntown.com/sjda.

to 148 arena events in 1999. Ridership to Sharks games outpaced riders to concerts and other events 2-to-1.

25 years ago – February 1995 – The St. John Street bridge over Guadalupe River was closed as a trial to consider the impacts of the closure on businesses during hockey game nights. Henry’s Hi-Life reported a 30 percent drop in business. The bridge was to be closed as part of the upcoming Guadalupe River flood control project and no replacement was planned.

At the Convention Center

Feb. 8 – Public Dance (15,000)

Feb. 12 – Watermark Women’s Conference (6,425) watermarkconferenceforwomen.org

Feb. 15-17 – NorCal Volleyball Association Tournament (3,200) ncva.com/girls/tournaments/presidents-day

Feb. 21-23 – CBD Expo (10,000) americancbdexpo.com

Feb. 22-23 – Home Show (4,500) homeshowsanjose.com

Feb. 23-26 – SPIE Advanced Lithography (3,385) spie.org

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

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Editor-in-Chief: **Scott Knies**

Editor: **Rick Jensen**

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