

Parking changes afoot

The City Council unanimously approved a series of pivotal changes to the city's parking program on June 23 and authorized City Manager **Dave Sykes** to determine the appropriate timeline to implement the changes as COVID-19 continues to demand flexibility in an ever-changing business and social environment.

Highlights of the parking program changes and rate adjustments include:

- ◆ Replacing the antiquated Downtown Parking Validation Program with a 90-minute free parking period for all visitors parking in participating city (ParkSJ) garages.
- ◆ Adjusting incremental parking rates beyond the initial 90-minute free period to \$1 per 15 minutes, and setting daily weekday and evening/weekend maximums at \$25 and \$10, respectively.
- ◆ Introducing a new program providing discounted monthly parking (50% off) to any downtown employee making less than \$20 per hour. Participation in the discounted monthly parking program will require bi-annual proof of qualifying wage and employment at a business with a downtown address.

"Parking is always a very complex issue, but these solutions are creative, efficient and equitable," said **Scott Knies**, SJDA executive director. "The 90-minutes free parking applies to all – from the ground floor storefront to second floor-and-above offices. And every business and customer who has hassled with the validations won't be sorry to see them sunset."

The validation program has been around in different forms for 30 years, primarily serving downtown retail businesses and offering up to two hours free validated parking in city-owned parking facilities.

"It has always been difficult to explain and market," Knies added. "Customers would park in private garages and expect restaurants to validate their parking, but that garage wasn't in the validation program so both the customers and businesses would be frustrated."

Well before the coronavirus outbreak, the City Department of Transportation parking staff and downtown Councilmember **Raul Peralez** reached out for feedback from businesses using the existing Parking Validation Program. In meetings with the Historic, San Pedro Square and SoFA districts, businesses told SJDA that, in general, about 80 percent of their customers stayed less than two hours when visiting their businesses and that an employee parking discount program for their front-line staff would be beneficial.

Under the new program, a downtown visitor parking in one of the city's participating ParkSJ garages would pay \$2 for a 2-hour stay. By ending the validation program, the businesses currently enrolled in the program will save collectively \$250,000 they've been paying for its implementation.

Sykes will determine the best time to implement the changes. Since March 19, as COVID-19 disrupted lives throughout the Bay Area, the City of San Jose suspended all parking operations and enforcement activities citywide. The city's actions resulted in free parking at all on-street parking meters and in city-operated lots and garages – and a financial impact of \$3.8 million in lost revenue to the city so far.

Santa Clara County's health orders resulted in the closing of about 85 percent of downtown San Jose businesses, some permanently. The quick responses from the city's parking team to offer free parking and deprioritize parking enforcement has really helped a downtown

community struggling to reopen during the pandemic and resulting economic crisis.

"Kudos to the city for acting so swiftly in mid-March," Knies said.

These parking program changes and the recent Parking Access and Revenue Control equipment upgrades completed just prior to the COVID-19 outbreak will minimize customers' points of contact while parking in Park SJ garages, said city Parking Manager **Arian Collen**.

Two additional relief efforts were part of the parking program changes approved by City Council.

The City has multiple long-term parking agreements with a number of downtown entities including several hotels, the Superior Court and large downtown employers like WeWork, Mercury News and Harvest Properties, plus car share, taxis, and valet zones. The City Council agreed to allow the city manager to renegotiate certain portions of these agreements with a series of options including possible deferral of fees for up to six months without interest; waiving fees up to 50 percent for up to six months; and extending contract lengths for up to six months.

City staff will also begin evaluating a potential parking citation fee amnesty program which could temporarily waive any late fees or penalties that have accumulated on outstanding parking citations. Under the rules of the amnesty program, those with outstanding citations would have three to six months to pay only the original fine amount owed. Currently, approximately \$26 million in outstanding parking fines and fees are owed to the City. Parking officials are expected to return to City Council with an amnesty program recommendation in August for their consideration.

Letter from the President

Toward a more just and vital city

Downtown is different from where we were a month ago, but in reality, a lot has happened in our country for a long time and our eyes and ears have been opened like never before. Now they cannot be shut.



Katia McClain

We can't discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin or because someone looks different from us – this has to stop.

It is a shame that some of the rallies and protests turned into vandalism and looting, but racism in its many subtle and overt forms is never acceptable.

For us at the San Jose Downtown Association, our job is to help our downtown be clean, beautiful and eventually vibrant again; to keep supporting our local businesses through this pandemic that is not over; and to find ways to contribute making our society more just and vital.

The first steps are already in place: fundraising to help our local businesses, supporting the local artists to provide temporary art murals, and continuing to maintain our downtown through the essential work of our Groundwerx team. Additional action items will come in the coming months supporting our storefronts and the overall downtown community in creative ways; implementing communications and promotion strategies to integrate and bring people outside of downtown to the city's core; and connecting with our partners at the City of San Jose and other organizations to work toward one goal: make downtown San Jose a destination for all.

Artists send strong messages

Artists volunteered their time and skills to paint murals and messages evoking societal change onto plywood used to board up doors and windows of downtown businesses during weeks of civil unrest throughout June.

Some of the murals were on wood covering damage caused downtown after May 29 protests in the wake of the May 26 death of **George Floyd** in Minneapolis at the hands of a police officer.

Local Color started its Rise SJ project with murals at Good Kharma and Elyse Restaurant.

The big day of painting was June 3, initiated by Local Color and supported by San Jose Downtown Association, which paid for materials and paint and brought in 25 volunteers to assist the artists. Local artists' contributions were volunteer – emotionally charged by recent activities and wanting to express themselves publicly.

They put together 17 murals – nine alone along Common Grounds on Second Street. Two windows at Mezcal received artistic treatment. So did Local Color itself on First Street, Pizza Flora on First Street, the Ritchie Commercial Building on Santa Clara Street, SJDA's building on North First Street, SPUR's offices on First Street and the CORE building on both of its facades off First and Market Streets. The community at large was able to add to a mural June 8 on the Market

Street side of CORE.

Messages included: "Break the cycle," "George Floyd / San Jose

We do care," "Change systemic racism," "Power to the People," "San Jose Solid," "Silence is Violence – Speak Out," "BLM," "Progress through struggle," "San Jose Love," "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," and "Hope / Rise / Change."

Almost a month later, some of the art works

have already been removed as downtown buildings reopen and the continuing protests are peaceful. Originally intended to just go away, every effort is now being made to preserve them if possible for a potential future downtown installation.

In addition, artists continue to approach business and property owners on their own, making their own arrangements for new murals and messages.

"I was glad to be a part of the Rise SJ project," said **Marie Millares**, SJDA street life manager, "and working with the artists who took their time, talent and courage to bring their voices to downtown storefronts. It was important to bring those messages out."



Temple majority owner Tim Le holds his 'Downtown Recovery' check (see Back Page) in front of one of many message murals that also cover up damage from the protests.

Downtown Foundation News

Relief for 18 damaged businesses: Eighteen businesses received \$1,700 apiece to help defray the costs of property damage and looting sustained during **George Floyd** anti-racism protests, mostly during the weekend of May 29.

More than \$30,000 in “Rebuilding Downtown” funds were donated to San Jose Downtown Foundation and citizen-initiated GoFundMe campaigns originated by **Ashton and Farran Chevallier** in partnership with **Archie Garcia** and **Abdul Momeni**.

“The vast majority of the street level businesses downtown are small and locally owned shops, many of which are owned by people of color,” Ashton Chevallier said. “**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** reminded us that the ‘riot is the language of the unheard’, so when our downtown was caught in the crossfire of the demonstrations, we felt it was important to support both our community and the protests as strongly as possible.”

“Small business owners should always help and support each other,” Momeni added. “We are in this together no matter where we are located in the community.” Momeni owns the Studio 34 salon near Oakridge Mall and has been closed since March 17 due to the coronavirus.

Both thought of asking the community to support a fund to remove the financial burden of the damage caused on the businesses by protestors and the pandemic.

With \$16,435 donated to SJDF and \$14,210 donated through GoFundMe, the funders teamed up to cover the 18 businesses that applied for assistance. Several other downtown businesses were damaged as a result of the protests, however, their home offices were taking care of the repair expenses for them.

Businesses, already suffering from the shelter-in-place and economic crisis caused by the pandemic, greatly appreciated the assistance.

“Thank you so much,” said **Dan Phan**, owner of Miniboss. “We’re getting the window replaced sometime this week. This is really helpful for us because insurance wasn’t an option — we have a \$5,000 deductible for property damage.”

More than 200 people donated to the cause between June 1 and June 23, The Foundation’s campaign alone attracted 41 donors who gave between \$25 and \$5,000.

“The amount of money we were able to raise so quickly truly is a testament to the strength of our community,” Ashton said. “We’re more proud than ever to be: San Jose.”

“These are unfortunate times for everyone,” added **Nathan Ulsh**, SJDA director of policy and operations, who started in his position May 25. “It was great to see the response from individuals wanting to help our storefront businesses.”

Businesses receiving assistance included: Chacho’s, CubaMex Sandwich Shop, Elyse Restaurant, Flames Eatery and Bar, Forager, Grace Deli and Café, Guggenheim Entertainment/ 3 Below Theaters, Hotworx, Local Color, Mezcal Restaurant, Miniboss, Mumbai Local, Picasso’s Tapas, Pizza My Heart, Rec Room, The Ritz, Smoke Eaters and Temple.

SJDA News

SJDA’s new policy and operations director: **Nathan Ulsh** joins San Jose Downtown Association as director of policy and operations.

Ulsh moves to San Jose after working in Sacramento where he served as executive director of the Franklin Boulevard Business Association and Franklin Neighborhood Development Corporation the past four years. Along the way, he gained accredited expertise in microeconomics.

His past experience leading a PBID organization will translate well into helping SJDA’s fledgling Downtown Community Development Corporation and executing capital improvement projects. He will oversee business development, street life and operations services as well as parts of SJDA’s advocacy and policy development initiatives.

SJdowntown.com now in 21 languages: Each page of the SJdowntown.com website now features a “Translate” button. Click on the button, and the site translates into Chinese (simplified), English, Filipino, Hmong, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese and more.



Nathan Ulsh



Best practices

The *Queztzalcoatl* statue demonstrates how to properly wear a mask, now required when doing business statewide. More than 55,000 social media users viewed a post of this photo of rogue public art enhancement posted on SJDA’s Facebook (@sjdowntown) and Instagram (@sj_downtown) pages.

“Google makes it easy and the translations are more accurate now,” said **Autumn Young**, interim managing director. “We want all visitors to our site — and to downtown — to feel welcome.”

Farmers’ Market July schedule: The Downtown Farmers’ Market in San Pedro Square is open each Friday (except July 3) from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Protocols are in place to keep everyone healthy and safe. Check PCFMA.org, sjdowntown.com, Facebook and Instagram.

Business News



The *Plantlush* sign goes up on East Santa Clara.

Plantlush comes to life: The opening of Plantlush on June 5 at 124A E. Santa Clara St. was like no other. Owner **Leandra Jordan** explains:

“Despite the delay in opening due to COVID-19, I still was not ready to open on June 5. The week leading up to opening had protestors and police walking up and down our street and into our not-yet-opened store.

“I realized then that my shop was part of the community and a safe space for those looking for respite. It was a green space in the midst of concrete and chaos. I decided to go forward and open the first day I could legally do so and so far the community response has been very encouraging.”

Plantlush is self-described botanic boutique. Jordan sells “unusual and easy-to-grow” indoor and outdoor plants, accessories and gifts.

With the delay in opening, the plants she was nurturing grew big and strong, so she opened with an impressive inventory. The store will host workshops when they are allowed. Check Facebook @plantlush.

Downtown News

Nine steps to recovery: The Greater Downtown San Jose Economic Recovery Task Force has nine recommendations for the center city’s economic recovery and the safe reopening of businesses.

Convened by Councilmember **Raul Perez**, the task force of 40 small businesses and community organizations met 30 times over five weeks in April and May to come up with its recovery plan. The City Council will consider approval June 30 and the plan has already received \$100,000 in the FY2020-21 city budget for implementation. The impressive report includes many pragmatic recommendations:

- ♦ Creating a “Compliance Ally” to assure proper safety measures are taken during business re-openings;
- ♦ Allowing temporary delivery/pick-up zones for businesses; waiving parklet fees and other creative uses of public right-of-ways;
- ♦ Implementing the “Al Fresco Streetfare” pilot program;
- ♦ Creating a robust marketing campaign that highlights how customers can feel comfortable downtown, that businesses are open, and that everyone can enjoy a new way of public life.
- ♦ Establishing a multilingual information hub that goes beyond the Internet;
- ♦ Advocating for tax and fees relief, Alcohol Beverage

10 new Downtown Doors

The San Jose Downtown Foundation selected 10 new Downtown Doors from 98 art works submitted by area high school students before COVID-19 sent students and teachers home to study for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

The 10 doors will freshen the downtown environment as businesses reopen and some employees return to work.

“As businesses begin to recover from the COVID-19 virus, we want downtown looking vibrant with art,” said **Ramona Snyder**, SJDF board president. “With funding already secured we moved forward with half of the Downtown Doors program for this fiscal year.”

In its 17th year, the total number of Downtown Doors installed in the center city has reached 302. Downtown Doors have occupied 110 sites located mostly on busy pedestrian routes throughout the downtown core. Original student artworks are digitized onto vinyl coatings that are attached to service doors and utility boxes.

“Downtown Doors provides young artists the opportunity to publicly express themselves,” Snyder added. “Students of all ethnicities and demographics have been posting their messages of change and hope downtown for 16 years now.”

The 10 new artists are: **Oscar Diaz**, Bellarmine College



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Jay Paul Co. will be able to develop and activate the project’s critical corner site at Park Avenue and Almaden Boulevard. The City Council denied giving the Brutalist-style former Bank of California and Family Courthouse historic “landmark” status, also on June 16.

From the Archives

10 years ago – July 2010 – High-speed rail officials proposed only one option for the train through San Jose: an aerial structure paralleling Highway 87, flying above I-280 into Diridon Station seven stories above street level.

25 years ago – July 1995 – The New Century Commons building, 56 S. Second St., had a window-breaking ceremony instead of a ground-breaking. Mayor **Susan Hammer**, Councilman **David Pandori** and building owner **Jim Fox** hurled bricks through the plate glass of the former Allen’s Furniture showroom. The building was being rehabbed for mixed-use retail and apartments.

30 years ago – July 1990 – Downtown’s free Music in the Park concert series in Plaza Park began its second season, switching the music from noon to evenings, and from Fridays to Thursdays.

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

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