

Letter From the President

Looking after our well-being in times like none other

Katia McClain is the Managing Principal for Northern California for Steinberg Hart and San Jose Downtown Association Board of Directors President. This letter is condensed from her remarks at the SJDA public meeting held Dec. 11.

When I started the year as President of the Board, I never thought words like “pandemic,” “shelter in place,” “co-morbidity” or phrases like “Zoom me after this,” or “how are you involved in achieving social justice” or “no Downtown Ice Rink” would be part of every meeting at SJDA since March.



Katia McClain

To say that 2020 has been a tough year is an understatement. As a leader of an architectural firm, we saw our downtown construction projects face challenges with stop notices and supply issues related to Covid. I never thought I would have to see the progress of one of my projects – the Miro Towers construction – live on TV during the protest in front of City Hall in response to **George Floyd’s** killing.

In a creative industry where we normally make models and display renderings of our projects so we can gather around those images to discuss design possibilities, we had to reinvent ourselves using software and tablets and connecting through tiny cameras on top of our screens.

If it is hard to do business through Zoom, I can’t imagine how difficult it is to learn algebra, or teach literature, or receive health care through a video meeting, or not having access to the world outside your house because you don’t have a computer and internet.

Steinberg Hart and several other businesses had to move out

of CityView Plaza in the middle of the pandemic and my regular business lunches at Mezcal or Sushi Confidential changed to Zoom meetings with pixelated clients and staff.

I love my husband and my 85-pound black lab dog, but I miss other people. The best time I have had in the last nine months was during my volunteer work at Cesar Chavez Elementary School in the Mayfair neighborhood, where we distributed food to kids and families in need. After a couple of weeks, the families started to recognize us behind our masks and I felt a connection with the community and my fellow volunteers.

That experience reminded me of Mexico City, where I grew up with all its traffic, noise, music, street vendors . . . My suburban house is pretty quiet these days, but I feel fortunate to have a home.

What has been highlighted this year is the importance of looking after our own health and well-being. Even after running a couple of miles twice a week, I have gained weight. I then exercised, followed a diet, lost weight – and gained weight back again. After all, I am happy to report that for my own well-being, there are always chocolate chip cookies in the house and I love them more than ever!

Back to SJDA, our stabilization plan provided us with direction for the coming years and our priorities of a clean and safe downtown and support for our small businesses became even clearer.

I look forward to continuing my work with the organization, the Board and Executive Committee, volunteer groups, and staff – employing the principles of equity and inclusion, innovation, and action for implementation.

Even with all the challenges of 2020, it has been amazing to see what we have been able to accomplish by working together.

Golden Nail Award goes to urban alley

The S-shaped Alley at San Pedro Square that creates a fresh and inviting connection between San Pedro Street and Almaden Avenue was recognized for its outstanding design and placemaking at the San Jose Downtown Association’s Dec. 11 public meeting.



The Alley at San Pedro Square mixes new and old into its winning design.

SJDA’s Downtown Design Committee honored the builder and architect of the mid-rise apartment building called Modera on San Pedro Square with the Golden Nail Element of Distinction Award.

On one side of the alley is the newly constructed building by Mill Creek and on the other are the back patios of several historic buildings fronting Santa Clara Street whose delightful outdoor spaces serve businesses such as Five Points and The Brit. Together they frame the alley – both in materiality and activation – with the comfortable charm of San Pedro Square.

Judges were impressed by the alley’s walkability, connectivity and the way it promotes socialization, said **Brian Corbett**, Studio Director at Gensler and chair of the Downtown Design Committee.

“The new alley adds to the already-successful San Pedro Square district,” Corbett said. “By drawing in people and spurring interaction, this is exactly the kind of public space we need in San Jose.”

Don Peterson, Senior Managing Director of Mill Creek Residential, accepted the award on behalf of developer of Modera San Pedro Square.

“We are pleased to bring additional housing to downtown,” Peterson said. “We had hoped that this signature element of our project would enliven and enrich an already focal point of San Jose.”

Rob Steinberg, chairman of SteinbergHart, accepted the award on behalf of his architecture firm.

“I’m pleased with how the alley turned out, including the inviting entry on South Almaden with column detail supporting the overhang,” Steinberg said, adding his appreciation for the project’s scale and how elements of the residential building step back from the alley.

“The texture, palette colors, accents of the tile, the railing pattern and the variety of materials really add a richness to what I believe will be a great urban space in downtown San Jose.

“The only thing missing is the people, and they are coming,” Steinberg added.

Modera has already attracted two new restaurants and an urgent care facility into retail space along its side of the alley.

“That is proof that great places attract people and new investment,” Corbett said.

Each year for more than two decades, the Downtown Design Committee has rewarded projects that contribute excellence and vibrancy to downtown’s built environment with the Golden Nail.

Go to sjdowntown.com’s home page to find the link to view the meeting. The award ceremony begins at 35:40.



The alley bends around the Modera and historic buildings in San Pedro Square.

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Meal delivery fees capped

San Jose restaurants are spared high fees when their customers place delivery orders after the San Jose City Council and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors each unanimously approved emergency ordinances capping those fees at 15 percent on Dec. 15.

A temporary delivery fee cap proved necessary to help already suffering restaurants now restricted to pick-up or takeout business by County and State orders Dec. 6 through at least Jan. 4.

Delivery companies had been charging up to 30 percent of the food order to make a delivery, much to the chagrin of local restaurants forced to close their inside and outdoor dining operations due to the surge in Covid-19 cases in the county.

Downtown restaurant owners **Ryan Summers** of Good Karma and Pizza Flora, **Jenneke DeVries** of Pizza Bocca Lupo in San Pedro Square Market, **Jennifer Echeverria** of Habana Cuba in SoFA Market, and **Adolfo Gomez** of Mezcal and el cafecito told the Council their daily sales are dwindling and “now is the time we need a push.”

“We’re hemorrhaging,” Summers said. “Some of our doors are going to close permanently. This would help to sustain the downtown economy.”

Though their ordinances were passed simultaneously on Dec. 15, it has since been decided the Santa Clara County ordinance supersedes the City of San Jose’s version. Here are some important provisions to note:

- ◆ The ordinance went into effect Dec. 19.
- ◆ The provision caps fees for third party app delivery services at 15 percent but the apps can still offer restaurants optional services that would increase fees.
- ◆ Apps are not allowed to take the reduced fees out of the tips or other compensation for the delivery drivers.
- ◆ Fees for takeout orders facilitated through an app are capped at 10 percent of the total order price.
- ◆ There is no end date on the County provision; it will last as long as the County’s public health emergency order is in place or restaurants re-open for indoor dining at 100 percent capacity.

“Our restaurants are hanging on by a thread,” Liccardo said. “They are keeping people employed. The governor said, ‘We can see the light now, but we’re still in this tunnel.’”

Business recommendations for survival: The Greater Downtown San Jose Economic Recovery Task Force of local businesses organized by City Councilmember **Raul Peralez** sent a final set of 15 recommendations to city, county and state officials to assist in economic survival amid the pandemic.

The recommendations included:

- ◆ planning for long-term outdoor business operations;
- ◆ providing tax relief, fee waivers and financial assistance programs;
- ◆ reevaluating paid parking programs during the pandemic;
- ◆ leveraging existing professional networks to spread marketing and promotional programs that includes strong consumer-safety messages and arts and non-profit community efforts;
- ◆ capping third-part delivery service fees at 15 percent;
- ◆ supporting to-go alcohol legislation;
- ◆ utilizing places of worship and community spaces to serve as incubators for struggling businesses.

Take a look at the recommendations at sjd3.com/dtsjrecovery/.



Hyland House of Sushi opens in San Pedro Square Market.

Take the ‘Hy’ road: Hyland House of Sushi graduated from pop-up business and caterer into a permanent space in San Pedro Square Market, opening Nov. 19. Use hylandsushi.com to order appetizers of baked mussels, coconut shrimp, poke nachos and spicy garlic edamame, signature rolls, classic rolls, nigiri and sashimi.

Late-night cookies: Nationwide shipper **Insomnia Cookies** plans to open a new bakery at 42 S. First St. in Paseo Court on Jan. 4. **Insomnia** offers 16 types of cookies, plus Cookiewiches of ice cream with cookies or brownies and Bigwiches with icing and cookies. True to its name, **Insomnia** is open to 3 a.m., subject to local governing during COVID-19.

Headquartered in Philadelphia and New York City, **Insomnia Cookies** has 170 U.S. locations, and San Jose is the company’s tenth in California. Cookies ordered online will be routed to the San Jose shop, from which they will be delivered “warm and delicious,” said **Adriana Palombit**, west coast marketing manager.

Order through insomniacookies.com, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram ([InsomniaCookies](https://www.instagram.com/insomniacookies)).

Scott’s expands choices on the paseo: Scott’s Seafood House has expanded its operations downtown, adding Scott’s Chowder House next door to its restaurant on Paseo de San Antonio at First Street.

Chef **Sammy Reyes** has included some items from the Seafood House, but the draw will be the award-winning chowder plus newly crafted soups like seafood gumbo and smoked salmon chowder; salads including kale Caesar; small bites such as Hawaiian poke and ceviche; rolls of lobster, crab and shrimp; and specialties like lobster grilled cheese sandwich, shrimp po’boy and Dungeness crab tater tots. The menu is perfect for the present grab-and-go dining climate. **Steve Mayer** is owner. Check scottschowderhouse.com.

Third time’s a charm, too: Carlos and Fernanda Carreira have opened their third San Jose eatery and second downtown – Petisco’s at the corner of South First and San Salvador streets in SoFA. The Carreira’s, who own San Jose’s first Michelin-starred restaurant Adega in Little Portugal and Pastelaria Adega on Santa Clara Street downtown, are now preparing Portuguese dishes on small plates meant for sharing in a casual setting.

The menu on petiscosadega.com has dishes divided into categories including “leaves and legumes,” “shells and claws,” “tentacles and scales,” “feathers and bones,” “in the bread,” and “sweet endings.” Currently open for takeout and delivery, they will be part of SoFA’s sidewalk and parklet outdoor dining scene once that becomes available again.

Central bank: HSBC bank has opened at Market and Santa Clara streets. The international bank – one of the world’s largest -- serves personal, business and corporate customers. It is one of 15 offices in California. Check business.us.hsbc.com.

Sandwiches and treats: Jamie Whitmire expanded her Holy Cannoli operations into the former Second Story Bakery space on East Santa Clara Street at the beginning of 2020 and has struggled due to the pandemic. Her specialties are the Italian classic dessert, cupcakes and cakes. Her menu includes coffee, breads, pastries, and breakfast and lunch sandwiches.

Like so many of our businesses, Whitmire gives back by feeding the homeless, farm workers and their children. She provided Halloween treats and Christmas stockings for more than 3,000 people. Order takeout in person or online at holycannolisj.com.

Al Fresco program widens: Downtown businesses continue to expand the Al Fresco program, despite the temporary halt of outdoor dining due to the recent surge of Covid-19 cases in Santa Clara County.

Restaurants along San Fernando Street are building

New community engagement position filled:

Eric Glader is SJDA’s first Community Engagement Director. His position was created to align with SJDA’s Stabilization Plan which prioritizes supporting businesses.

Glader will build relations with business and property owners, engaging them with SJDA and PBID programs and services. He will also develop and manage SJDA’s membership program and do some partner development for the association.

Glader co-founded the downtown Ship Kits program and grew it into a Covid-19 success, supplying food and toiletries to 130,000 people in need during the pandemic and 1 million pounds of produce to local food programs.

“I am inspired by the downtown community and how everyone is willing to help any way they can,” he said. “Everyone has a vested interest in surviving themselves and making sure their fellow neighbors come out the other side, too. Through this community building and participation, we will emerge healthier than ever.”

He has 20 years experience at Care2.com, where he helped nonprofits including American Cancer Society,



Eric Glader



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UNICEF and Amnesty International find digital donor supporters. He earned a bachelor’s at UCLA and master’s in business and electronic commerce at Vanderbilt.

Downtown News

VTA reports on safety pilot along Transit Mall:

VTA staff told the VTA Board at a meeting Dec. 3 that the safety measures they added to the Second Street Transit Mall worked to keep pedestrians and bike and scooter riders off the trackway.

Their data reveals that the installation of railings, signs, tabletops and bike racks to delineate the trackway from the sidewalk resulted in fewer jay-walking incidents, no increase in pedestrians on the trackway, eliminated unpredictable crossings, and no incidents of people hopping over the railings.

VTA staff reported that businesses along Second Street between San Fernando and San Carlos streets were worried at first that they might see a drop in business, but instead saw more foot traffic with people using the tabletops pre-Covid. During Covid, the tables are bonus for businesses who keep them clean for users taking out food, staff reported.

From the pilot program, VTA staff believes more safety features and fewer pedestrian diversions along the entire Transit Mall will help to speed up trains through downtown. Staff will share the results of the program with downtown stakeholders in coming months.

15-foot long outdoor dining parklets in parking lanes between Second and Third streets for Chacho’s, Social Lady and Cinebar when it reopens and Market and First Streets for Mezcal and Rookies Sports Lodge.

They should be ready to serve customers when outdoor dining resumes in 2021. San Pedro Square, Paseo de San Antonio, South First Street and Post Street already have Al Fresco / parklet spaces. The Al Fresco program has been extended until June 30, 2021.

Students return for fall 2021 semester: San Jose State University and all California State Universities (CSU) plan to have students return to campus for primarily in-person coursework starting in the fall semester of 2021.

Though the coronavirus is surging, CSU believes the progress on vaccines is causing optimism that students can return to enjoy the campus experience in late-August. The university is also contemplating more campus activities during the summer session, but can’t make that decision just yet.

“It’s critical that we provide as much advance notice as possible to students and their families, as we have done previously in announcing our moves toward primarily virtual instruction,” said CSU Chancellor **Timothy White**.

The current 2020-21 academic year continues virtually.

From the Archives

15 years ago – January 2006 – The roster of stores at the new San Jose MarketCenter on Coleman Avenue included Target, Marshall’s, Michael’s, Office Depot, Cost Plus World Market, PetSmart, Trader Joe’s LL Hawaiian

Barbecue, Game Stop, Chili’s, Panera Bread, Jamba Juice, Starbucks – all of which remain open today.

20 years ago – January 2001 – After the UA cinema complex at Second and Paseo de Antonio suddenly closed down (and before Camera Cinemas took over the space), Redevelopment Agency Director **Susan Schick** blamed the closure on the building’s antiquated design, not on the state of downtown.

25 years ago – January 1996 – San Jose State University closed San Carlos Street between Fourth and Tenth streets, through the heart of its campus, turning the former city street into a pedestrian-only greenway with palm trees, lighting, decorative concrete and grass.

30 years ago – January 1991 – SJDA advised its members of the city’s new ordinance requiring downtown’s Unreinforced Masonry (URM) buildings to be strengthened within four years. This was in response to the state’s URM building Law of 1986 and the Loma Prieta earthquake of October 1989. The city approved millions of dollars in incentives, grants and subsidies to assist building owners with the mandatory retrofit work.

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

Downtown Dimension is published monthly by the San Jose Downtown Association, a nonprofit organization established in 1986 to serve Downtown businesses.

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