

DOWNTOWN

1995 is shaping up to be a promising year

for downtown. Several major projects will be completed, including the United Artists cineplex, the new office tower for IBM and the first phase of the 132-unit Paseo Plaza condominiums.

Yet, 1995 will also be the year for the Downtown Association to focus its attention on three challenging issues that will have a long-term impact on downtown's economic viability — **housing, parking and retail.**

This month's issue of *Downtown Dimension* focuses on SJDA's housing initiatives. Future issues will cover parking and retail developments.

Housing

The most important ingredient for having a vibrant downtown is a strong residential population. Housing is the basic infrastructure that supports the stores, theaters, restaurants and other businesses that are necessary for creating a diverse and interesting downtown.

In 1992, the San Jose City Council recognized this fact by approving the Downtown Strategy Plan 2010 which calls for the development of 8,000 housing units by the year 2010.

This goal, however, is not being met by current levels of construction, and as it stands, the downtown housing market is under supplied.

Ryland Mews, downtown's first new housing development in several years, has helped; its first phase of affordably-priced condos sold out within months of its March 1994 opening, demonstrating to developers that downtown housing is financially viable.

Yet major developments continue to move slowly, with only the Paseo Plaza currently under construction. Other projects — including apartments and lofts — are stalled on the drawing boards or prolonged by soil cleanup issues.

In response to this deficit, SJDA has

formed a task force of downtown business leaders to assist local government and private investors in facilitating housing development.

"Despite the many fine groups committed to city-wide development of market-rate and affordable housing, until the Association stepped forward, there was no advocate specifically focused on downtown housing," said attorney Larry I. Wallerstein, who co-chairs the task force with insurance broker Dennis Teifeld.

Key issues currently being addressed by the group include:

- *Encouraging the development of both rental and ownership housing.*
- *Facilitating the construction of infrastructure, such as grocery stores, to support more housing.*
- *Reserving the \$4 million housing fund in the Redevelopment Agency's capital budget for future developments.*
- *Advocating for balanced housing, from luxury to affordable units.*
- *Changing the perception of affordable housing downtown.*

"We need affordable housing which would enable our firefighters, teachers and manufacturing employees to live downtown," Wallerstein said.

ADA Update

Businesses win debate over high platforms

Business and property owners on First and Second streets can now breathe a sigh of relief. The proposed construction of high platforms on the Transit Mall has been averted.

Transportation Agency board members and county staff recently agreed to protect downtown interests by labling the proposal to build high boarding platforms on the Transit Mall as a means of complying with the new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Instead, they have opted for low-floor vehicles for the county Light Rail system, a solution that complies with federal legislation by providing equal access for the disabled. All passengers, including those who use wheelchairs, will be able to board the trains directly from the platforms.

Transit officials shifted their support to low-floor vehicles after months of negotiations with Redevelopment Agency staff and SJDA members, who maintained that the high platforms — which measure over 6 feet tall with their guard rails — would hurt existing businesses and long-term retail recruitment efforts.

To accommodate this new solution, the Transit Mall's platforms will now only need to be raised slightly — to 14 inches — and this modification may not occur for another five to ten years when the new low-floor vehicles are added to the system. Light Rail will continue to run using the standard trains until it outgrows its existing fleet or older vehicles wear out.

The low-floor option will be presented to the City Council for approval this month and to the Transportation Agency Board, the regional authority for the Light Rail system, in March.

"We are greatly relieved," said Bill Ryan, project manager for Barry Swenson Builder which is restoring the Security building and other historic properties on the Mall. "This solution is a

victory for both the disabled community and downtown business."

Security Beat

Police Chief responds to SoFA concerns: Following a community meeting January 27 attended by San Jose Police Chief Lou Cobarruviaz, a neighborhood oversight committee was formed which will meet regularly with the Police Department and develop a plan of action for maintaining a safe, customer-friendly environment in the SoFA District.

The neighborhood group, led by Diana Paradiso of Blossom Floral, will

address mounting concerns of local business and property owners about youth-related issues, including loitering and graffiti, in the South First Street area.

"We want to deal with these problems now, before SoFA gets a reputation for being an unsafe place," said Paradiso.

Among the options under consideration include the formation of a neighborhood patrol made up of the off-duty officers already paid for by SoFA nightclubs.



The YWCA opened Villa Nueva in 1983 on Second Street which offers 63 upscale affordable apartments for families.



BID Report

New Newsletter: To increase communication with the downtown business community, SJDA has reformatted its quarterly publication *Downtown Dimension* into this new monthly newsletter. It will be sent to all downtown business and property owners, plus City and County officials.

Lighted trees to remain year-round: The decorative lights that SJDA hangs in the trees on First and Second streets each holiday season will now stay lit year round. The Association will maintain the lights, which are funded through the downtown Business Improvement District (BID) to enhance the Transit Mall's physical appearance and to make office workers and residents feel safer when walking the streets after dark.

Board of Directors: Following the general election held at last October's Annual Meeting, a new slate of officers and directors is overseeing the BID's programs and services for 1995:

Fil Maresca - President F&K The Club	Dennis Fong d.p. Fong Galleries
Annette Aguilar - Vice President AIMCO Parking	Michael George Melcho's
Abi Maghamtar - Treasurer Rue de Paris	Jorge Gonzalez George's Jewellers
Judy Stabile - Secretary Fallon House	Vicki Herf Melvin Simon & Associates
Herb Brigglin San Jose Sharks	Dennis Hickey Downtown Resident
Saginaw Grant III Grant's Jewellers	Iris Kabert Value Business Products
Susan Levin Law Office of Susan Levin	Don Kassing San Jose State University
Dan Orioff Orioff/Williams & Company	Tyler Kogura SJSU Student
Dan Pultrano Metro Newspapers	Rhonda Lackmann ALYA Fine Contemporary Clothing
Dave Thomas Law Offices of M. Dave Thomas	John V. Pinto John V. Pinto & Associates Realtors
David Walker Bank of America	Jackie Rose Bay 101
Larry Wallerstein Schneider & Wallerstein	Michael Rose Tapestry in Talent, Inc.
Sue Cam Macanan Marketing	Bill Ryan Barry Swenson Builder
Marcelino Castillo Casa Castillo	Ron Shaw Pacific Gas & Electric
Joan Corstiglia Turn of the Century Properties	Dennis Skaggs Camara Chamaes
Butch Coyne San Jose Repertory Theatre	Chester Wang Pacific Rim Financial Corp.
Cesar Delgado Resident	Paul Wysocki Wysocki Associates
Todd Elliott Vigal Coffee	

SJDA Meetings

Parking, March 7, San Jose Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, 180 S. Market St., 8:30 am

El Centro, March 8, Guadalupe Market, 45 Post St., 9 am

Board of Directors, March 10, Emilies, 545 S. Second St., 8 am
Continental Breakfast. RSVP required: 279-1775

Parking Advisory Commission, March 14, Traffic Operations, 2 N. Second St., #1000, 8:30 am

Alive After Five, March 14, Location TBA, 2:45 pm

San Pedro Square Association, March 15, Location TBA, 2 pm

The Downtowner



We bid a fond farewell last month to the *San Jose City Times*, the community paper that covered downtown news for the last four years. Published by **Metro Newspapers**, the biweekly filled an important need, providing timely information to the downtown community and City Hall that was not covered by other media outlets. *City Times* has now been reformatted to a weekly legal advertising piece mailed to downtown attorneys, but publisher **David Cohen** has left open the possibility of resurrecting the community news format in a few years if it can become more profitable.

Following a protracted battle with City and Redevelopment Agency officials over not meeting the conditions of its Conditional Use Permit, **Dimension's** nightclub on South First Street has closed its doors for good. Despite many format changes, the club was never able to get a foothold in downtown's successful nightclub market. For now, this enormous purple building remains empty.

Downtowners were thrilled to welcome back the **San Jose Sharks** — not only because they help to promote downtown as a regional attraction and make the cash registers ring on game nights — but also to put an end to all the gloom and doom media coverage that claimed the NHL lockout had turned downtown San Jose into a ghost town. Reporters neglected to cover a few facts: Only 20 games were lost over three and a half months; **Christmas in the Park** had its biggest season to date with almost 400,000 in attendance; the Convention Center was booked almost every week; the arts season was in full swing with blockbuster attractions like **San Jose Rep's 1940's Radio Hour**; the Arena continued to host high-profile events like the **Kenny G** concert; and many restaurants, like **Bella Mia** and the **Tied House**, were booked solid for weeks with holiday banquets. Sounds more like a boomtown than a ghost town.

Downtown Operations

SJDA lobbies to ease parking restrictions: SJDA President **Fil Maresca** is negotiating with City staff to re-schedule early morning street sweepings in the SoFA District in an effort to push back on-street parking restrictions to 3 a.m. Due to the current sweeping schedule, parking is restricted from 2-6 a.m., which results in frequent tickets for late-night patrons and employees.

Traffic signal modification on Fourth Street: In mid-February, crews will begin re-locating the traffic signal at Fourth Street and Paseo de San Antonio to align it with the adjacent pedestrian mall connecting downtown with SJSU. The work will take one and a half months to complete.

Downtown Developments

Just a month after opening, the newly-formed **Software Business Cluster**, headed up by director **Barbara Harley**, is off to a strong start, with 12 high tech start-ups setting up shop in its 2 North First Street space. A block away at 31 N.

Second Street, the **San Jose/Silicon Valley Center for Entrepreneurial Development** has recently opened as a business incubator for mem-

on a first-come, first-served basis, without regard to a building's location.

The program was started in 1988 as a way to create a more attractive retail core by encouraging business and property owners to upgrade downtown's older commercial buildings.

Neighborhood News

San Pedro Square

Innovative garbage collection program has helped to clean up busy neighborhood:

More than a dozen San Pedro Square businesses are participating in a successful joint venture which has dramatically improved the aesthetics of the square's Almaden Avenue side. Working with Waste Management, business owners removed the multiple garbage bins which were cluttered behind their establishments, consolidating them into a single trash/recycling collection area with daily pickups.

Streetscape on hold: Designs for the proposed San Pedro Square streetscape are currently on hold as the Redevelopment Agency re-evaluates its current fiscal year budget.

Last June, the Redevelopment Agency budgeted \$200,000 for fiscal year 1994-95 to fund preliminary designs for the street-level improvements on San Pedro Street which would include widening the sidewalks and adding trees and improved lighting.

Pending the Agency's current negotiations, the design funds could be removed from the current year and pushed back to a later year in the Agency's five-year capital budget plan.

Transit Mall

Beautification plans proceed: Transit Mall business and property owners have narrowed down their choices for how to use \$100,000 in Redevelopment Agency funds budgeted for aesthetic enhancements to the First and Second Street retail area. Topping the list are colorful banners designed by downtown graphic designer **Carlos Perez** of the **Pinnacle Company**. Also under review are planter boxes which will hold seasonal flowers.

downtown

dimension

Downtown Dimension is published monthly by the San Jose Downtown Association, a nonprofit membership organization established in 1986 to serve the downtown business community. Call (408) 279-1775 for information.

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