

San Pedro Square

DOWNTOWN

Coming full circle

A fresh look and updated image make over historic district

A rebuilt street. Expanded sidewalks with outdoor café seating. A retooled district logo and hip ad campaign. All signify for downtown's oldest district the beginning of a new era. The San Pedro Square area, located between Saint John and Santa Clara Streets on San Pedro, has got a fresh look and merchants hope, a more appealing image.

Neighborhood identity

In the 1970's, San Pedro Square was the city's pre-eminent dining destination, boasting almost 1500 restaurant seats on the street. "San Pedro Square was the first restaurant/entertainment area in the city," noted Tom McEnery, property owner in the Square and former Mayor of San Jose. But public investment in the downtown at the time was scarce, and the Square's success at the time could be traced to the entrepreneurs of the neighborhood, who funded neighborhood improvements privately.

The term San Pedro Square itself was coined in 1976, through a collaboration of area businesses who commissioned artist Oliver Hurlley to design and install the district's signature entry sign. Thus, a neighborhood identity was born. The group also financed structural improvements to the street, and helped restore the Peralta Adobe.

These funds however, were not unlimited, and the 1980's saw the Square decline while other downtown neighborhoods were beginning to come into their own. Around this time as well, investment in the downtown resurfaced atop the city's agenda, and San Pedro Square businesses united for a piece of the pie.

Rebuilding for the future

Working with the Downtown Association, business and property owners in the Square prepared a plan to reinvest their neighborhood to keep pace with other downtown entertainment areas. Mayor Susan Hammer, Councilman David Pandori, and Redevelopment Agency Director Frank Taylor responded to the proposal, and the \$1.5 million San Pedro Square Streetscape Project was funded in this year's RDA budget.

The project's major benefit is a complete revamping of the street's public spaces, with expanded sidewalks to accommodate more pedestrian traffic and patio dining. New street trees, landscaping, benches and streetlights complete the neighborhood face lift.

While torn-up streets, dust and barricades isn't the best way to attract summer business, Keith Folkstead, General Manager of The Old Spaghetti Factory said "Construction has been minimally obtrusive." An area stronghold since 1972, The Old Spaghetti Factory will have expanded sidewalk space to bring in eight to 12 new tables on San Pedro Street.

Total seating capacity will expand by 364 chairs for outdoor dining. The neighborhood's goal is to bring the restaurants out to the street — conjuring up images of a quaint French square, where historic structures fit comfortably alongside more modern buildings. "What we're looking for is a mixture of the old and the new," says Doug Beizma, Council member of the Tied House Cafe & Bar.

Beizma, Council member of the San Pedro Square Association, believes that the back entrance of the square will help draw in others on the street, have helped to revitalize business operations through the streetscape project. Restaurant sales figures for the month of August, have been very strong, he reported.

"The Downtown Place To Be"

The neighborhood's new image and ad campaign started in July with the construction, and is intended to get people excited about the neighborhood's new look. Businesses hope the changes will make the Square competitive with South Bay hotspots like downtown Los Gatos, Lincoln Avenue in Willow Glen, and Palo Alto's University Avenue.

Customers will get an opportunity to check out the new San Pedro Square at its Grand Opening event, set for Friday, October 10, from 4 to 9 p.m. Patio dining will extend into the street, and strolling entertainment will allow people to relax on the restaurant patios, and enjoy complimentary appetizers from Square restaurants.

Looking forward

Businesses in San Pedro Square see the physical improvements to their neighborhood as a positive sign for the future prosperity of the area. Downtown's second Starbucks will open its doors later this fall at the Square's entrance. A.P. Stumps, an upscale restaurant from the same owners as Los Gatos Brewing Company, is slated for an early 1998 opening. Sotto Zero, a cafe featuring gelato and coffee is set to open next March. The off-Broadway play Tony & Tina's wedding, playing in the San Pedro Square theater (formerly The Last Laugh comedy club) later this month provides yet another indicator that the neighborhood's future is bright.

The Redevelopment Agency is currently negotiating to purchase the property adjacent to the Peralta Adobe to improve public access to the historic site. The Peralta Adobe on St. John Street is the oldest structure still standing in downtown San Jose, originally constructed over two hundred years ago. Also in the Square is the home of Thomas Fallon, dating from the mid 1850's.

News Alert

Light rail decision approaches

Transportation officials last month announced that further evaluation of the two Vasona line downtown alignment options revealed that the total cost of the San Fernando alignment would be \$21 million more than the Delmas alternative, up from \$13 million. Revised analysis also estimated construction time of the San Fernando option at three to four years, up to a year and a half longer than previous figures. The Delmas alternative, by contrast, would take one year to complete.

A public meeting on the alignment is scheduled for October 23. SJDA's Board of Directors will be taking a position on a preferred alignment at its Board meeting, November 14. The final decision is expected by the VTA Board on December 4. Call SJDA for details on alignment options, meeting times and locations.

If You Go

What: Public meeting on downtown alignment options for Vasona light rail

Where: Fire Department Training Station, 255 South Montgomery Street

When: October 23, 7 p.m.

Dimension

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SAN JOSE
DOWNTOWN
ASSOCIATION

President's Column

Changes and choices

Wow — I haven't seen so much activity in downtown San Jose since the 80's. Everywhere I go there seems to be a building project. And with so many more projects in planning I don't expect it to slow down anytime soon. It should keep the developers and the construction workers busy well into 1998 (also the car washes!).

Thanks to the healthy economy of the Silicon Valley, increased cash flow from property taxes for the Redevelopment Agency, private investment and strong public leadership, San Jose is the most dynamic urban renewal story in the country.

The San Jose Repertory Theatre is about to be completed on Second Street. The dome on the future home of the Tech Museum of Innovation looks grand. Paseo Vilias, an upscale luxury condominium complex next to Paseo Plaza, has broken ground. We have seen cracked sidewalks torn up and replaced on San Pedro and San Salvador in the last few months. And finally, we have a first rate grocery store downtown, Zancotto's.

There are also numerous projects in planning: expansion of the Fairmont Hotel; a rental housing development with retail space and underground parking at the site of the Jose Theatre; another housing/retail project across the street between Third and Fourth Streets and the Market Gateway apartments on the south edge of downtown. After Adobe's second building is completed later this year, it's anybody's guess where the next tower will spring up: One South Market Tower, at the corner of Market and Santa Clara Streets; or the second River Park Tower; or that housing tower at Park and Almaden; or any one of five RDA-owned parcels in the core or along the Guadalupe River.

Long-range planning is also going on. There is a study underway for the expansion of the Convention Center. A task force is working on the relocation of the City Hall to downtown and a joint City/SJSU library. The Vasona light rail connection to downtown may be five years away from carrying passengers, but critical decisions must be made now — like what is the train route through downtown. This will be a hotly debated issue in the months to come.

Changes are happening all around us in downtown. In this climate of rapid development, we share the responsibility for making important choices that will shape the future of the city. It is important for all of us to stay focused and involved.

SJDA News

Elections slated for Board members: At the annual meeting October 10, members will cast their ballots to determine the composition of the Board for the coming year. Current Board members up for reelection are: **Sue Cam** of Macanan Marketing, **Todd Elliott** of Vigal Coffee, **Dennis Fong** of d.p. Fong Galleries, **Saginaw Grant III** of Grant's Jewelers, **Don Kassing**, Vice President of Administration at SJSU and **Dennis Staggs** of Camera Cinemas.

Also on the ballot are five new nominees: **Sarah Green** of Computerific!, **Kitty Mahon** of Alta Fine Contemporary Clothing, **Dr. Mindy Pelz** of the Alternative Health Care Center, **Gerry Pighini** of the Paseo Plaza Homeowners Association and **Stephanie Schiro** of the San Jose Cleveland Ballet.

Elections will take place on October 10 at Bella Mia Restaurant at 8 a.m. Attendees will also hear a financial update and slate of the Association reports by SJDA President **Abi Maghamfar** and committee chairpersons.

St. James Park: Stakeholders gathered September 16 at the San Jose Athletic Club for the Second St. James Park Community Meeting. Following a presentation on the 1985 St. James Park Master Plan, city staff provided the group with some guidelines for further action. **Jim Norman**, Deputy Director of the Parks Department, pointed out that any recommendations for capital improvements to the park must take into account its historic character.

SJDA plans to meet with Mayor **Susan Hammer** to inform her of the growing support for improvements to St. James Park, and to ensure a voice for the public in the planning process. The Redevelopment Agency has \$200,000 in its current budget for park design work.

for meeting space and two floors set aside for retail.

Woolworths: Efforts to help get a major retailer to fill the Woolworth's store on South First Street have been slowed by the fact that the company is liquidating multiple locations at once, rather than selling them individually, reports **Francine Principe** of the Redevelopment Agency. Merchandise from other Woolworth's locations was shipped to the downtown store for sale, which has slowed off the closing of its doors until mid-October.

Jose decision postponed: A decision on the proposed housing development requiring demolition of all but the facade of the Jose Theatre was postponed at the September 16 City Council meeting. After two hours of testimony, the vote was rescheduled for October 21. A recommendation endorsed by Mayor **Susan Hammer** suggested city staff pursue a creative solution to the impasse before the Council reconsiders the issue.

Public meeting on proposed library: The Joint Library Advisory Committee is calling a town hall meeting to gather public input on Mayor **Susan Hammer's** proposed partnership between the City of San Jose and San Jose State University for a new Main Library. The meeting will take place on Saturday, October 4 from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the City Council Chambers. For more information, call 277-4822.

Promotions & Events

Cirque says adieu: Cirque du Soleil wrapped up its six week stint in San Jose last month. While the influx of more than 150,000 Cirque-goers was welcome to downtown entrepreneurs, so were the 132 Cirque employees, many who leased units at Villa Torino, on North First Street, while in San Jose. The Cirque folks blended well into the downtown scene, holding a cast party at Trials Pub, near their downtown digs, stocking up on groceries at the newly opened Zancotto's Family Market, and catching flicks at Camera Cinemas.

Camera Cinemas co-owner **Jim Zuur** reported that the worldly Cirque troupe responded to the "international flair" of the Cinemas. Set apart by that certain 'Je ne sais quoi,' Cirque performers showed up in numbers, especially on Monday nights, when they got their weekly day off. Favorite films included Career Girls, In the Company of Men, and Shall We Dance.

Farmers' Market: Competition was fierce at the Downtown Farmers' Markets third annual Zucchini Cook-off, September 4. The Fairmont Culinary Team took home top honors for **Tung Nguyen's** fried zucchini rolls topped with zucchini relish. This distinction earned the rolls a feature spot each night during the Fairmont's happy hour. First prize for presentation went to **Stallia Grill & Cafe**, which offered up its grilled vegetable Napoleon, a popular appetizer fea-

tured at the restaurant, and long time family recipe of owner **Chris Partlow**.

This month, join **Laurel Iverson** of downtown sandwich destination **Laurels Delights**, as she takes her turn as the featured Chef at the Market. **October's Chef** at the Market cooking demonstration will take place on Thursday, October 2.

Pumpkins in the Park: Guadalupe River Park & Gardens presents the second annual Pumpkins in the Park celebration in Discovery Meadow on Saturday, October 18 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Pumpkins in the Park is a free event featuring family entertainment and hands-on harvest time activities including scare-crow-making, pumpkin decorating and learning about the Guadalupe river's unique environment. Pick up your pumpkins at the giant pumpkin patch. For more information, call **Kathleen Muller** at 277-4744, xt.355.

Mark Your Calendar

Downtown Parking Board, October 1, San Jose Redevelopment Agency, 50 W. San Fernando Street, 15th floor, 8:30 a.m.

Marketing Committee, October 7, San Jose Arena, 525 W. Santa Clara Street, 9 a.m.

San Jose Downtown Foundation, October 7, Saratoga National Bank, 160 W. Santa Clara Street, 3 p.m.

EZ Committee, October 7, Club Vertigo, 175 N. San Pedro Street, 3 p.m.

Annual Members Meeting, October 10, Bella Mia, 58 S. First Street, 8 a.m. (Reservations required)

Downtown Arts and Dining, October 14, Johnny Rockets, 150 S. First Street, 2:45 p.m.

Downtown Today, October 21, Waves Smokehouse and Saloon, 65 Post Street, 8:15 a.m.

CBD Committee, October 28, San Jose Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, 180 S. Market Street, 4 p.m.

All meeting dates subject to change. Call 279-1775 to confirm meeting details.



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