

# Core Neighborhoods

## Districts revamp past projects, conceive new ideas

Downtown is alive with activity these days centered in three core districts. Downtown Center Plaza, San Pedro Square and the South First Area (SoFA) are busy undergoing physical changes, planning promotions, and infusing new life into familiar favorites.

The Downtown Center Plaza merchants have been hit hard by the announced closure this fall of area stronghold, Woolworths. Members, led by DCP Chair **Janis Schneider**, are working with city and Redevelopment Agency officials to make replacing the venerable variety store a priority. Zanotto's Family Market opened late last month on Second Street, which is a more positive sign for retailers.



**Downtown Farmers' Market**  
**Date:** Every Thursday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. through November 20  
**Location:** The Pavilion parking lot at the corner of First and San Fernando Streets  
**Profile:** Over 30 local certified growers, bakers and gourmet food purveyors offer seasonal fruits and vegetables, organic produce, cut flowers, fresh-baked goods and much more.  
**Admission:** Free  
**Sponsors:** KICU TV-36, Metro and the Redevelopment Agency sponsor this year's market.

Merchants in the DCP negotiated a new partnership recently, and are nailing down details to become part of the popular Christmas in the Park display in nearby Plaza de Cesar Chavez Park. Look for festive lighting and holiday trees decorated to the theme of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Fountain Alley will be spruced up early next year with new paving, landscaping, garbage receptacles and bicycle racks. Other plans for the area include new public restrooms inside a permanent kiosk at the Fountain Alley parking lot.

Streetscape construction is a familiar sight to members of the San Pedro Square (SPS) Association, with neighborhood plans expected to come to fruition late this month (just in time for hockey season). A key improvement is the completely rebuilt sidewalk widened to accommodate European

style patio dining on the west side of San Pedro Street. Members, driven by committee leaders and restaurateurs **Blake Crane** and **Armond Tiano**, are finalizing details for the Square's grand re-opening on October 10.

The SPS committee is making a concerted effort to build a new image for the historic neighborhood. Their new logo and ad campaign are intended to set the area apart as a unique downtown hot spot. Patrons of the Square's fourth annual Brew Ha Ha will get a sneak peak at the enhancements later this month when the two day celebration of



**San Pedro Square Brew Ha Ha**  
**Date:** September 27 & 28, noon to 7:30 p.m.  
**Location:** San Pedro Street between Santa Clara and St. John Streets  
**Profile:** Brew Ha Ha features two stages of non-stop standup comedy along with musical entertainment. Over 20 northern California breweries will offer beer tasting with food served by neighborhood restaurants.  
**Admission:** Free  
**Sponsors:** San Pedro Square Brew Ha Ha is presented by Metro and SunTrips, along with media sponsors KICU TV-36, KRTY, KFOX, KARA, KSJO, LIVE 105 and KEZR.



**SoFA Festival**  
**Date:** September 21 from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m.  
**Location:** South First Street between William and San Carlos Streets  
**Profile:** SoFA offers three stages of live music on the San Carlos, Gore Park and San Salvador stages, performing arts, strolling entertainment, unique arts and crafts, interactive games, hands-on art projects, Kids Park and special events inside SoFA clubs and galleries.  
**Admission:** \$4 in advance, \$5 day of show, First hour (11 a.m. - Noon) Free  
**Sponsors:** The 1997 SoFA Festival is presented by Miller Brewing Company, with additional support from Metro, KICU-TV 36, KOMA and LIVE 105.

lager and laughter revisits the neighborhood September 27 and 28.

The revamped SoFA Festival has merchants ironing out last minute logistics on the more family-friendly festival September 21, the same day the new Silicon Valley Marathon runs through downtown. A neighborhood brochure is also in the works, highlighting the area's dining, arts and entertainment venues. "It is exciting to see the neighborhood unite for this joint marketing effort," says **Steve Borkenhagen**, owner of Eulippia, "to further the goal of developing a district identity for SoFA." Brochures should be available later this year.

As for cleaning up the appearance of SoFA, seven merchants are participating in a cooperative waste disposal program, to compensate for a lack of indoor space to house adequate garbage facilities. The Fox Theatre has been heavy on the mind of SoFA business and property owners as well, as its future will dramatically impact the neighborhood. The Redevelopment Agency is currently negotiating with the San Jose Symphony to determine the feasibility of converting the Theatre into a concert hall, with budget proposals expected to surface this fall. The Fox passed a first hurdle by getting high marks in an acoustical study.

## The Downtowner



■ Only two weeks remain to take in the four story replica of Cirque du Soleil's main character, Quidam, at the Pavilion. Preserve your Cirque du Soleil memories on film by bringing the family down to pose with the headless traveler. At the unveiling ceremony of the statue last month, one curious passerby was reassured by SIDA Executive Director **Scott Knies** that the big guy does indeed sport underwear underneath his knee length coat. Apparently, the Mercury News photographer assigned to the gig wondered about this as well, placing a photo of two installation workers, heads buried in Quidam's overcoat, on the front page of the local section the following day.

■ A perfect summer evening outdoors in St. James Park, framed by a canopy of trees and lit torches, was the unlikely setting for SIDA's 10th anniversary party on August 22. The well-attended event did fall short of the 43,000 estimated by police (and overheard by pizza mogul **Chuck Hammers**) but the 200 guests in attendance stayed in the park well past sunset — a first time experience for most. A generous supply of food and drink flowed, although one board member commented the dinner line was slower than Loaves and Fishes. Once all the guests were seated,



**Steve Borkenhagen** of Eulipia started the program... supposedly a series of two-minute remembrances by the former presidents of SIDA. Instead of reviewing the past decade and sharing anecdotes of downtown's progress, the speakers conspired to abandon the program and launch into a surprise roast of Executive Director **Scott Knies**. The roast began with founding president **Dan Pulcrano** of Metro Newspapers being shouted off the stage, and went downhill from there. The program was rescued at the end by Councilmembers **David Pandori** and **Margie Fernandes**, whose words were amusing and touching, respectfully. The real surprise of the party was not how nice St. James Park worked as a dinner dance venue, but board member and downtown attorney **Dave Thomas'** band, The Rhythmatics. Playing their first official gig, the white-collar R & B group jammed until 11 p.m., stopping only when the police gave the cut sign.

## SIDA News

**Annual meeting:** Mark the calendar now for SIDA's annual members' meeting on October 10. Members will cast their votes to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors, as well as hear a financial report for fiscal year 1996-97, and a summary from SIDA President **Abi Maghamfar** on the activities of the Association. Committee chairpersons will outline the projects and initiatives their committees have worked on over the past year. Bring questions and ideas for the direction of the association in the coming year.

**St. James Park initiative gains momentum:** Over 60 community stakeholders gathered at the San Jose Athletic Club in late July to exchange ideas about the future of St. James Park. Downtown residents, business and property owners, social service providers, historic preservationists, city and development staff, and police officers participated in a lively discussion on what the park should look like, and identified some potential roadblocks to progress in the area. Consensus at the meeting's conclusion was that the next step should be a review of the 1985 St. James Park Master Plan, to determine what elements of that process should be incorporated into the new vision.

The next meeting has been set for September 16 at 3 p.m. at the former San Jose Athletic Club, now known as Silicon Valley Capital Club Athletics. All interested downtowners are encouraged to participate. Please RSVP with **Noelle Kneil** at SIDA.

## General News

**Light rail alignment decision delayed:** The much anticipated decision on the fate of the downtown connection to the proposed Vasona light rail line is temporarily on hold, reports **Jim Lightbody** of VTA. The constitutionality of the Measure A funding which would finance the Vasona project, along with other transportation improvement projects in Santa Clara County, is currently being challenged in the courts. The legal battle could extend into 1998, but transportation officials would like to select a downtown alignment by the end of the year. Transportation officials will decide whether to link the Vasona line to

■ 19 percent work in downtown San Jose

■ 30 percent visit the museums/arts groups in downtown San Jose between three and six times per year, 36 percent visit at least seven times

■ 25 percent dine in downtown San Jose at least three to six times per month, 27 percent dine at least seven times

■ 39 percent are American Express cardholders

■ 72 percent would be encouraged to fly American Airlines because they support San Jose's arts and dining

This cross promotion has become a model for arts groups around the nation wishing to establish partnerships between businesses and the arts.

**San Pedro Square:** Be on the lookout for the San Pedro Square neighborhood's new tagline appearing in several local publications and on light rail and bus boards: "San Pedro Square — The downtown place to be." The new marketing campaign is intended to help usher in the new look of the neighborhood, currently finishing up construction. The committee selected October 10 for the Square's official grand re-opening celebration. Details will follow in next month's issue.

**Downtown Operations:** Captain **Ralph Torres** announced that the Police Department has reconsidered plans to reassign downtown foot patrol officers to other areas with higher crime rates. Officers **Mark Muldrow** and **Kenny Williams** will serve another six month assignment walking the downtown beat. Members also discussed the sudden disappearance of the port-o-lets in the Fountain Alley parking lot, coinciding with the opening of Zanotto's Family Market on South Second Street. An agreement was subsequently reached to reinstall the port-o-lets near the dumpsters at Gordon Biersch, at least until the completion of the Fountain Alley streetscape project early next year, which will include public restrooms

Captain **Dan Ortega** reported on plans for the 16 de Septiembre celebration this month, to prevent a repeat of the problems which followed this year's Cinco de Mayo festival. On-site liquor sales will be closely monitored, and many merchants have agreed to limit or temporarily halt the sale of alcohol altogether during the festival and its aftermath. Wristbands will be used at the event to help monitor alcohol consumption. Ortega also reported that officers from the Department of Alcohol Beverage Control will join over three hundred local enforcement officers to monitor activities during and after the celebration.

## Promotions & Events

**Farmers' Market:** The annual Zucchini cook-off competition returns to Farmers' Market on September 4. Competitors from Chachos, Stralia Grill & Cafe, Iguanas, China Wok, Sports City Cafe, The Pagoda, The Fountain, Waves Smokehouse & Saloon and Emie's Delights will vie for the votes of a distin-

guished panel of judges including Councilmembers **David Pandori** and **John DiQuisto**. SIDA President **Abi Maghamfar**, Mercury News Food Editor **Carolyn Jung** and local cookbook author **Peggy Sallon**. May the best squash win.

The season's crispiest apples and Asian pears will be available for tasting on September 25. The Downtown Farmers' Market is open every Thursday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the lot adjacent to the Pavilion steps, on the corner of First and San Fernando Streets.

**Music in the Park:** SIDA's Board of Directors will host a VIP tent for the final Music in the Park concert of the series, **Buckwheat Zydeco**, on September 4. Friends of SIDA will congregate behind the fountain in Plaza de Cesar Chavez park between 5 and 8 p.m. to help celebrate the conclusion of Music in the Parks ninth annual series.

Total attendance for the nine week series is expected to reach 35,000, with especially large crowds showing for the **Boney James** jazz performance on July 24, and **Pete Escovedo's** Latin jazz rhythms August 21.

**Official Visitors Guide:** The 1997-98 edition of the Official Visitors Guide (OVG) is now available. In its fourth year, the Guide includes a 12 page Downtown Arts & Dining (DAD) section featuring many of downtown's performing arts groups, museums, and fine restaurants. Distributed to 300,000 convention attendees and downtown visitors, the OVG is produced in cooperation with the San Jose Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Business Journal.

Copies of the OVG are also being included in merchandise bags at the Cirque du Soleil concessions tents. Cirque patrons are directed to the DAD section by a customized Quidam bookmark, another element of the historic partnership between Cirque du Soleil and SIDA.

The DAD Section of the OVG has also been reprinted as a separate 20 page brochure, with 50,000 copies targeted for special distribution by downtown performing and visual arts groups throughout the 1997-98 arts season. In addition, the DAD guides will be placed at the airport, area hotels, and other locations frequented by visitors. Julie Chapratis has copies and more information.



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Editor-in-Chief: **Scott Knies** Exec. Editor: **Noelle Kneil**  
SIDA Online: <http://www.sj-downtown.com>  
Interact San Jose: <http://www.sanjose.org>

28 N. FIRST ST.  
SUITE 201  
SAN JOSE, CA 95113  
408-279-1775



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■ 43 percent are either a member or subscriber to a San Jose museum or arts group