

The Heart City of the City

DOWNTOWN

City

Pumping life into downtown retail

Every great city has its core district. It is a gathering place. A place to walk. A place to be seen. A place to shop. Downtown San Jose has the beginnings of several distinctive strolling districts, but none of them is yet complete.

A new retail and parking plan, put together by the Downtown Association and the Redevelopment Agency, chooses one district and recommends finishing it — with specifics on creating “an experience,” design elements, financial incentives and hassle free parking.

“This is more than just a retail strategy,” said SJDA President **Malcolm Bordelon**. “It’s really about strengthening the heart of our city.”

By creating a main destination street and completing the center of the city, Bordelon said, these initial investments will radiate out to adjacent streets and surrounding downtown districts.

Bordelon credited Mayor Susan Hammer and City Council members with giving strong direction in June that became the impetus for the new plan.

First and Second Streets between Santa Clara Street and San Fernando Street were selected as the focus area. Known as the Transit Mall or Downtown Center Plaza, this historic area is widely accepted as San Jose’s traditional center.

“This is our city’s core,” said **Chuck Hammers**, chairman of the Retail Task Force. “This is where a lot of San Jose’s heritage is located; where the trolleys pass; and where our most interesting buildings are concentrated.”

The retail strategy calls for building upon downtown’s strengths: beautiful old buildings; diverse commercial, office and residential uses; interesting alleys, courtyards and “surprise” public spaces; vintage open air trolleys; lots of good restaurants; a clean and safe atmosphere; and proximity to strong urban anchors such as the arena, university, convention center, hotels, museums and arts venues.

“A shopper is just as interested in a shopping experience as in shopping itself,” Hammers said. “We are planning a visually

exciting environment so that for a shopper, it feels like an adventure of ‘What am I going to find next?’”

The task force report recommends ways for downtown to create such an experience:

- Require contiguous storefronts on both sides of the street — no “gaps” of unreinforced buildings, blank walls or empty lots.

- A clearly defined district, with corner elements outlining its boundaries and a unifying theme, such as motion detector fountains and other water features that play off the area’s historic artesian wells. A descriptive and memorable name, such as the “Fountain Alley District,” is recommended to give the area a distinct identity.

- Attractive tree-lined streets framing a central promenade with meandering arteries (Post Street), paseos (Fountain Alley) and “surprise” spaces, like El Paseo Court, which connects First Street with the rear courtyards of Bella Mia and Gordon Biersch.

- Imaginative design guidelines for both new and rehab construction that will result in no two storefronts looking alike.

- Encouraging remarkable public spaces that are active with cafe seating, kiosk uses, street performances and the city’s best people watching.

- Blending new development into the area, especially in Fountain Alley and the San Fernando Street corners, that provides ground floor retail frontage and complements the existing buildings in scale and architectural quality.

- Letting private market forces fill the district by targeting public financial investment on preparing spaces for occupancy.

- Building additional parking structures adjacent to retail areas to free up surface lots for development, and provide customers with free parking options (see related story).

The retail plan concept was approved by the Redevelopment Agency Board, on September 29.

The plan is an updated version of SJDA’s “Prescription for Retail Revival,” which recommended a strategy for “closing the gaps” downtown and was presented to the City Council in October 1995.



El Paseo Court is a favorite shortcut for customers in the Fountain Alley district.

Free parking, three new garages planned

A dramatic new public parking strategy that will build more than 3,300 new spaces and provide free parking elements was unveiled September 18 at SJDA’s special Board of Directors meeting. RDA Parking Program Coordinator **Abi Maghamtar** reported the parking plan will go hand in hand with the new retail proposal.

In the plan’s first phase to begin this fall, free evening and weekend parking would be offered in the City’s three existing parking garages — Market/San Pedro, Third Street (at St. James) and Second and San Carlos Streets — and two RDA-owned lots at San Carlos/Market and San Fernando/Third Streets.

A total of three additional garages are planned in phase two. The Redevelopment Agency will build a garage just north of the new San Jose Repertory Theater at Second and San Fernando Streets. A total of 2,000 spaces will be added, 1,000 of which will be public parking. At Fourth and San Fernando Streets, an 825-space structure will go up, some of which will serve the new Civic Plaza Complex and City/University library. These two facilities are planned to be open by mid-2001.

Once these two new structures are in place, the proposal recommends two hours free daytime parking in all public parking facilities with elimination of the current validation program.

The City’s Parking Fund will pick up the tab for the third garage, a 1,500 space facility in the SaFA District, an area long identified as short on parking spaces.

“This is a historic plan for downtown,” said Downtown Parking Board Chairperson **Mike Elzey**.

The parking plan was approved along with the retail proposal at the September 29 meeting of the Redevelopment Agency Board. For more information on the parking plan, contact **Scott Knies**.

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Building a place for kids, too

There is an old Cal Stevens song that I heard recently ("Where do the Children Play") that reminded me about the importance of parks and recreational activities in a child's life. As we move forward in the development of our downtown with big buildings, hotels, retail, parking and housing, let's remain committed to enhancing the livability of our city by making sure there are safe places for the children to play, to learn and to grow.



Malcolm Bordelon

I began thinking about the role parks and similar "play" places played in my own upbringing. I have almost always lived near a park, at least one I could walk or ride a bike to. They were places to meet friends and neighbors, to build relationships and a sense of community. I recall ball games and frisbee in Houston and Dallas; playing on swings, monkey bars and round-a-bouts with cousins and friends down the street from my Grandmother's house. When I lived in Europe, I sailed miniature boats on a pond in Paris, rowed boats on a lake in a Versailles park and even played softball against a "visiting American" team.

Parks have always been important to me from childhood, through teen years and on into adulthood. They are an important part of my life with my children now. Days at the park provide a great opportunity for families to spend time together. And children also learn how to get along with other people and how to develop their own relationships. Psychologists have long professed the importance of "play" in child development. We need to make sure that we create the community space for this crucial developmental stage.

Parks and open spaces enrich the city's quality of life for all of us, but most importantly for our kids. The effort to increase the resident population downtown by building more housing units will further enhance the need for park land. Most agree that getting more families to live in downtown is crucial to its long-term success.

I'm pleased to see that San Jose is committed to creating open space and parks, like the Arena Green with the carousel and planned lot-lois as well as other developments like tennis courts along the Guadalupe River. It appears there is also a consensus to work toward re-establishing St. James Park as a community gathering place. Plaza de Cesar Chavez, while a great venue for concerts, is also a nice place to spend a lunch hour in the sun, catching up with a friend and watching the children enjoy the cool water of the fountains.

A flourishing downtown that we can all be proud of is more than buildings and commercial success. Downtown must also provide an improved quality of life for everyone, especially our children.

SJDA NEWS

Council approves BID amnesty program: The City Council has agreed to forgive penalties and interest generated from unpaid Business Improvement District (BID) fees by approving a one-time amnesty program. Assessors whose fees first became due between October 1, 1995 and September 30, 1998 must take advantage of the program by December 18, 1998. Businesses may pay past fees in full or request an installment plan to satisfy the fees without penalty.

All three BID's in San Jose — Willow Glen, Japantown and downtown — are included in the amnesty program, which will run simultaneously with the City's business license tax amnesty program. BIDs are benefit assessment districts allowed under state law and approved annually by the City Council. The downtown BID, established in 1988, is administered by SJDA. For more information, contact **Patti Bentley** or visit the web site at www.sjfinance.org.

Annual members meeting October 9: Members will cast their ballots for the 1999 Board of Directors at the Annual Membership meeting. Up for re-election are: **Erik Chue** of Copyman, **Dan Doherty**, owner of Dos Locos Cantina and Mission Ale House, attorney **Michael Hurley** with Silver, Kalz and Hurley, **Bill Moore** of the San Jose Water Company, **Janis Schneider**, owner of R & J Jewelers, current Board Vice President and Pizza a Go-Go owner **Chuck Hammers** and current President **Malcolm Bordelon** with the San Jose Sharks.

Other nominees include downtown resident **Dennis Hickey**, Garden City Construction owner **Jim Salata**, Forest City Marketing Director **Janice Zajac**, Bella Mia restaurateur **Bill Carlson**, and the owner of Hammer and Lewis, **Mary Velez**.

Elections will take place on October 9 at Bella Mia Restaurant at 8 a.m. A financial report will be given by Treasurer **Todd Elliott**, and President **Bordelon** will

present the state of the Association. Committee chairpersons will also provide updates on committee activities for the past year. The meeting will conclude by 9:30 a.m. and is open to the public.

Downtown Today: Just opening a business, wondering about the Downtown Association, or have some questions about your surroundings? Join SJDA Executive Director **Scott Knles** on October 27 for an introduction to all things downtown. Continental breakfast is provided and guests are welcome. The bi-monthly Downtown Today meetings are held at the Downtown Association offices, 28 N. First Street, Suite 1000 from 8:15 to 9:30 a.m. RSVP to **Patti Bentley**.

Jara for WCNA: Commentators at the World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous (WCNA) conference last month kept the downtown coffee houses flowing in September, thanks in part to the Jara Connection coffee promotion, led by the Convention and Visitors Bureau and SJDA staffer **Kim Smith**. The 25,000 attendees received maps and frequent shopper cards to direct them to 19 coffee spots during their four days downtown. Participating businesses reported increased sales, as much as three times their normal figures.

Promotions & Events

SoFA district feted: The special blend of culture and commerce that comprises SoFA (South of First Area) was celebrated September 20. Highlights of the seventh annual music and art festival included opening performances by local band contest winners Hope Child, Horchata and Chicken Coupe de Ville. Special thanks to event sponsors Miller Genuine Draft, Metro Newspapers, KICU-TV 36, Live 106.5 and Mix 106.5. The SoFAC Community Fund and ARIS, Aids Resources, Information & Services, served as the event's beneficiaries.

Brew and laughs reprised: The San Pedro Square Brew Ha Ha came to downtown's most historic neighborhood on September 26 and 27, courtesy of Metro Newspapers, KICU-TV 36, KFOX, Mix 106.5, KFDG,

KSLD, KARA/KATV radio and Black Mountain Spring Water. A portion of the proceeds went to the History Museum of San Jose and the San Jose Downtown Foundation. 15,000 festival-goers enjoyed beer tasting and stand-up comedy by top local and national comedians, including **Carlos Alazraqui**, the voice of the Taco Bell chihuahua, returning to the Brew Ha Ha for his third year.

Farmers' Market feast: The fourth annual Zucchini Festival on September 3 was the place to sample innovative recipes from some of downtown's finest restaurants. Top honors went to **Doug Vardetti** from the Fairmont's Fountain restaurant for his pickled zucchini with curried fruit chutney. Spiedo's entry, stuffed zucchini with zucchini dip tied with Cheacho's zucchini and walnut stuffed taquitos for second place. KCBS radio food critic **Narsai David**, San Jose Mercury News food editor **Carolyn Jung**, author and restaurateur **Jesse Cool**, SJDA President **Malcolm Bordelon** and Councilmember **John DiQuisto** were on hand to choose the winners.

The Downtown Farmers' Market at The Pavilion takes place every Thursday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. through November 19 in The Pavilion parking lot, at the corner of First and San Fernando Streets.

Hard Hat alert

Construction scheduled for the West Santa Clara Street streetscape project between Market and First Streets, has been delayed until next spring. Basements will be backfilled, trees planted, utility boxes sited to the curb line and sidewalks replaced. The work will take place on both the south and north sides of Santa Clara Street.

Improvements to the median at Park Avenue and Market Street are now under way, with completion expected in time for the Halloween opening of the new Tech Museum. The Almaden Boulevard median improvements now under construction will be finished in late November.

Committee Roundup

Downtown Operations: Officer **Doug Grant** reported on progress with the new STOP Program, intended to curb trespassing on public and private premises in the downtown. The new program allows property owners to file a letter with the police department authorizing enforcement of trespassing laws on private property in the owner's absence. Call **Noelle Knell** for more information, or to obtain a copy of the letter.

Ron Northouse reported on changes being considered to signal lights at Market and Santa Clara Streets. Due to a number of pedestrian accidents, the Department of Streets and Traffic will add protected left turn phasing on Market at Santa Clara in the north and south directions early next year. Protected left turns in the east/west direction will also be considered if the number of accidents is not reduced. Protected

left turn phasing is scheduled for the signal at Market and San Fernando Streets in summer 1999.

The installation of the first two Automatic Public Toilets, in Plaza de Cesar Chavez and St. James Park should take place in late October, as soon as the final permits are secured, according to RDAs **Bob Ruff**. The unit planned for Fountain Alley has been temporarily suspended so that its installation can coincide with future construction projects in the area.

Downtown Facts

When the nighttime hot spots are at their peak, an additional 8,065 people are downtown.

Capacity in downtown's Entertainment Zone businesses:

Agenda	720	Gordon Bierisch	396
B Hive	284	Lido Club	447
Cactus Club	225	Mirage	421
Cinebar	46	Seoul Seoul	422
Club Ecco	408	Studio 47	1,022
Club Ilex	195	Joons	299
Club Miami	609	The Usual	475
Club Vertigo	685	Waves	211
Fuel 44	180	Planet X	1,020
Total:			8,065

Source: San Jose Police Department

At The Convention Center

October 6-8

The Vision Show

Estimated attendance: 3,500

October 14-16

Trimble Users Conference

Estimated attendance: 600

October 14-17

MALC National Congress & Expo

Estimated attendance: 2,000

October 19-21

RF Design Conference & Expo

Estimated attendance: 3,000

October 25-29

'98 International Tandem User Summit

Estimated attendance: 3,000



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