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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Historic District makeover courtesy downtown property owners

SAN JOSE – Downtown San Jose looks better today thanks to property owners who have pooled their resources to add flowers, lights and planters. South First Street between San Fernando and Santa Clara streets and Post Street from Market Street to South First Street represents the first beautification effort of the San Jose Downtown Property Owners Association.

“We want the people that downtown attracts to be even more attracted to downtown,” said Chuck Hammers, president of the association.

With the design assistance of urban landscapers Ken Kay Associates, the streets are now enhanced with:

- 48 new planters, each with its own irrigation system that only needs to be watered every 2 – 3 weeks. The irrigation is designed to prevent the drainage stains that are associated with most street planters. Four different seasonal plantings will occur during the year.
- 22 hanging baskets with similar irrigation systems. These baskets are bracketed to street light poles overhead of pedestrians.
- A bamboo “green screen” placed behind the fence of the former Porter Stock building, rises 14 feet. The fence is painted to simulate a bamboo forest scene, complete with bamboo trees and other indigenous creatures. Paul Gonzalez, an artist recommended by MACLA, created the image.
- Greenery gets the spotlight at night. State-of-the-art lights (with LED’s) are installed in 30 trees and bamboo trees are up-lighted.

The property owners expect to dress up an additional four streets in upcoming years.

“The beautification plan is another way we have taken something good downtown and made it even better,” said Mayor Chuck Reed.

In August 2007, downtown property owners agreed to form a Property-based Improvement District (PBID), funding cleaning services, downtown ambassadors and beautification projects through annual

assessments. The PBID organized Groundwerx crews to serve the downtown starting in January 2008. In nine months, cleaning crews have spent over 2,300 hours sweeping by hand and machine, 2,387 hours scrubbing sidewalks and another 1,639 hours pressure washing. The crews have also painted light poles and trash receptacles, and tackled or reported more than 8,000 small and large graffiti tags.

Ambassadors have assisted people on the street on 2,000 occasions, offered directions 14,138 times, and offered social services information handouts or food and shelter referrals 774 times.

More photos available on request

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The San Jose Downtown Property Owners Association is a non-profit group that funds Groundwerx efforts to make downtown San Jose a cleaner and friendlier place.

Photos available on request

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