



# The Sparkler \* \*

Promoting a cleaner and friendlier downtown San Jose  
Newsletter of the San Jose Downtown Property-Based Improvement District

Call 287-1520 for service

Spring 2009  
Vol. 1, No. 4

## Members give high approval ratings

Results of a recent survey of Property-Based Improvement District (PBID) members indicate streets are cleaner and friendlier since the implementation of Groundwerx in January 2008. According to the survey:

- \* 87.9 percent of the 160 respondents said that downtown cleanliness has significantly improved after one year. In 2007, before Groundwerx crews took over the task of cleaning downtown, 46.3 percent believed downtown cleanliness was improving;
- \* 93.7 percent indicated the overall conditions improved, compared to 78.6 percent in 2007.

In addition, nine out of 10 downtown property owners monitoring their investment in the PBID generally favor Groundwerx enhanced services – friendly ambassadors, clean teams and street beautification projects. The streetscape beautification improvements included planters, hanging flower baskets, bamboo wall and mural – on First Street between Santa Clara and San Fernando streets.

“It’s great to get recognized from our property owners,” said Chuck Hammers, president of the downtown Property Owners’ Association. “Considering the report that citywide graffiti is up 800 percent over the past two years, we started this program none to soon. Without Groundwerx, our downtown would be a disaster right now.”

The clean crews use environmentally friendly equipment to remove stains and pressure-wash sidewalks and pedestrian areas; pick up litter; maintain receptacles; report and remove graffiti; paint and maintain public spaces; and beautify streetscapes. In Groundwerx first year of operation, clean teams removed 52 tons of debris, collected 73 tons of trash and cleaned more than 12,000 graffiti tags.

Also of note, two out of three respondents preferred that leaf-blowers continue to not be used in cleanup efforts. The PBID board of directors consciously made the decision not to use leaf-blowers when Groundwerx was formed. Even though cleanup efforts cost a bit more, members

thought the extra expense was more valuable than the dust and noise created by leaf blowers.

“The survey feedback will help us fine tune our efforts to increase responsiveness to our members,” said PBID Operations Manager Eric Hon. “We can achieve a higher level of cleanliness, hospitality and beauty.”

Downtown residents completed half of the surveys, with downtown commercial property and business owners comprising the other half of the responses. To view the complete results of the 2009 PBID member survey, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/PBID09Results>.

## Groundwerx Employee of the Year



**Raul Gomez**

Clean team member Raul Gomez is Groundwerx’s first Employee of the Year. Gomez, a native of Jalisco, Mexico, who has worked downtown for six years, received his award March 18 after rising to the top of Groundwerx’ employee ranks through incredible work ethic, efficiency and positive attitude.

Gomez is one of Groundwerx’ “go-to” people, doing whatever is necessary, from popping gum off sidewalks to caring for plants. One of his primary responsibilities is keeping the various downtown light-rail platforms clean.

Gomez brings his personal values to his job. “I like to be a father figure; a responsible role model to my family and others,” he said.

In recognition of his achievements, he was given a standing ovation at the San Jose Downtown Association semi-monthly meeting of Business Improvement District members on April 10. The Employee of the Year receives a cash bonus and other gifts. Gomez and his wife, Adrianna,

*continued on page 2*

# The Sparkler\*

*"If everyone swept in front of his house, the whole town would be clean."*

*Polish Proverb*

Spring 2009

## Groundwerx Awards (continued)

are parents to Jessica 15, Genesis, 14, and Jonathan, 11.

Three other employees, were also honored:

Ambassador of the Quarter – Patricia Byrum. Byrum, of South San Jose, was recognized for her constant smile, friendliness, approachability and for her ability to build rapport with people in need of assistance, some of whom request her specifically.

Service Awards – Bob Martins. Martins, also from South San Jose, started as an M20 operator, was promoted to equipment manager, and now serves as interim operations manager. Mike Thibodeau. Thibodeau, a Seattle native and now downtown resident, started as a pan and broom cleaner before becoming a machine operator. Currently, he is connected to pressure-washing in every way, from scheduling and planning to execution.

## Homeless Census and Outreach

Groundwerx will emphasize its work with the downtown homeless population during its second year of service. During its first year of service, ambassadors got to know and develop relationships with about 50 "regulars," most



**Outreach at St. James Park.**

of who utilize available community resources. Ambassadors this year are looking to connect this group with housing services that will get and keep them off the street.

Bear in mind – not all homeless want homes. During a survey of downtown homeless individuals in March, 41 of 49 knew about

nearby services and shelters available. Some reasons they don't use shelters: distrust of the services; complaints of too many rules; and because shelters cannot accommodate the individual and his or her belongings. As part of its expanding role to address downtown homeless issues, Groundwerx participated in several events, including:

- \* On Jan. 27, Groundwerx took part in the 2009 Homeless Census, collecting data for a Housing

and Urban Development (HUD) grant to bring extra money into the community to assist the homeless. Full reports will be available in June from the city and Santa Clara County.

- \* On Feb. 5, Groundwerx attended a collaborative meeting with Santa Clara County service providers at EHC Boccardo Reception Center. This was the first of many proposed meetings where agencies work together to address homeless issues.

## Spring beautification efforts

Foxglove and Cosmos were planted to add vibrant spring color just in time for Easter weekend. These plants add a dramatic new look to the planters along South First Street.



**Corner of First and San Fernando Street.**

Beautification efforts even found their way to Highway 87. The PBID coordinated litter pickup and vegetation control on Highway 87 between Interstate 280 and Highway 101 took place the end of March, making the freeway entrances to downtown more inviting.



**Removing weeds at Hwy 87 on ramp.**

**Call 287-1520 for service. Contact Eric Hon at 590-0241 or [ehon@sjdowntown.com](mailto:ehon@sjdowntown.com) with suggestions.**

Edited by Rick Jensen