

A river runs thru it

Guadalupe River Park celebrates

More than two decades in the making, city officials are ready to unveil the Guadalupe River Park and Gardens. A celebration is planned for Sept. 10 throughout the 250-acre park that traverses the downtown area and extends 2.6 miles from Interstate 280 to Interstate 880.

After working on the \$340 million project in various capacities over the past 20 years, **Shirley Lewis** is ready to breathe a very loud – and proud – sigh of relief.

“This is an example of the way governments should always work together for the common good,” said Lewis, a San Jose City Council member from 1981-92, chair of the Guadalupe River Park and Gardens Task Force for 10 years, current board member of the Friends of GRPG, downtown resident and employee at a business within walking distance of the park.

Lewis helped spearhead efforts to bring together city, county, state and federal agencies, from city councils to water districts to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to avoid a “Los Angeles River-like cement channel” and find a solution for flood control issues that also retains much of the river’s pristine charm.

When the park dedication occurs Sept. 10, visitors will notice flood protection tunnels mixed into a park full of recreational uses, open spaces and sensitive wildlife habitat that serves as sanctuary to fish, birds and other wildlife.

On a daily basis, downtown residents and employees will find refuge in the midst of their urban environment with space to picnic, relax, enjoy nature and exercise. “The sounds of the city disappear as you get closer to the water’s edge,” Lewis said.

Downtown businesses will also find the park a valuable asset. The River Street Gardens businesses near Julian Street are already integrated into its framework. The park’s riverwalk also connects the new San Jose Market Center, opening in March 2006, with the downtown core. In addition, every employee recruiting effort or concierge recommendation for joggers and runners should include a mention of the park, Lewis added.

Opening Day activities Sept. 10

Arena Green and Confluence points: Dedication ceremony (10 a.m.), healthy-living demonstrations including Joanie Greggains (12:30 p.m.), music, kids jump house, free backpacks and caricature portraits, tai chi lessons, misting tent and food booths

Riverwalk: Docents answer questions; solve clues and perhaps win a prize at the Habitat Hunt

Discovery Meadow: More than 30 children’s activities and music

Children’s Discovery Museum: free all day

Center for the Performing Arts Plaza: dance to the Joe Sharino band (4-6 p.m.)

McEnery Park: Music, free popcorn and lemonade, games, panning for gold and face painting

Visitor Center (438 Coleman Ave.): Music, free refreshments and free children’s activity books

Guadalupe Gardens: Tours and tea in the rose garden (1-4 p.m.)

Columbus Park: Celebrity softball game (1:30 p.m.), free plants, botany bingo, crafts and food

downtown

Dimension

Pinning Lewis down on her favorite part of the park proves difficult. Depending on her mood, she prefers the river as it flows past Paolo’s, an ever-increasing collection of under-recognized sculptures and art pieces scattered throughout the park, and the Arena Green. She also calls McEnery Park and Heritage Rose Gardens treasures.



Shirley Lewis next to the play structures at Arena Green.

Though the Sept. 10 celebration marks the opening of a completed park, Guadalupe River Park and Gardens is far from finished. Even after the opening, a section of trail that involves right-of-way agreements with Union Pacific Railroad still needs to be finished, and construction overhead of car pool lanes on Highway 87 will cause occasional closures of the lower trail for safety reasons.

Looking to the future, trails will be extended in the next few years north to Alviso and the bay, and south to Almaden Valley. Trails also will eventually connect to the Los Gatos Creek Trail near HP Pavilion. Many of the 120 acres of gardens next to the new Visitor Center on Coleman Avenue and by Columbus Park have yet to be developed. And the nonprofit Friends will transition to more of an education-based group that offers expanded programs in the park for children and the community, said **Kathy Muller**, GRPG executive director.

The celebration day itself has been in the planning for more than a year. As a finishing touch, the San Jose Rotary Club cleared the banks of trash on Aug. 28.

For more about the park and opening day, see grpg.org or call 277-5998.

Downtown gems of the park

Children’s Bridge – pedestrian suspension bridge between San Carlos Street and Woz Way

Children’s Discovery Museum – An interactive playground. 180 Woz Way, cdm.org

Five skaters artpiece – tribute to Bay Area skaters who made it big, Arena Green

Monopoly in the Park – The largest Monopoly game board in the world, Discovery Meadow

Parade of Animals artpiece – Discovery Meadow

Veteran’s Memorial and tribute to Ohlone/Muwekma people – Park Avenue

Remembering Agriculture tribute – south side of Santa Clara Street at the river

Weavers’ Gifts artpiece – tribute to indigenous people who inhabited the area, Confluence Point

Sister Cities seating areas – various locations

McEnery Park – water feature and play structure, West San Fernando Street

Children’s Carousel and playground – Arena Green

Hiking and biking trails – Interstate 280 to the airport

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DOWNTOWN

ASSOCIATION

Development Roundup: New plans for several projects

Park ordinance changes delayed: The City Council will wait for a report that explains where developer fees for new parks have been spent during the past decade before increasing fees. Because the amount of space for parks in the downtown area is limited, the new policy is expected to be more flexible by allowing for some credits to help offset fees on downtown housing.

The Downtown Association also is advocating for keeping the park fee hike to a minimum until the downtown high-rise housing market can be firmly established. Many association Business Improvement District members believe residential growth to be a key to enhancing downtown’s vitality.

The report detailing park fee spending isn’t expected until the end of the year. The City Council, which asked for the report on Aug. 16, should grapple with the issue again sometime in early 2006.

The City Council approved the Parkland Dedication and Park Impact ordinances in 1988 and 1992. The city in 1998 changed the way park fees are assessed, going from a flat fee to fees tied to land values. The last increase in rates occurred in 2002. Developers usually pass the city fees on to homebuyers, which currently is \$6,250 per high-density unit in the downtown with a potential increase per staff recommendation to \$14,400 per unit.

Modified plans for Block 3: CIM Group and new residential partner Wilson Meany Sullivan have modified their plans for the “Block 3” development project bordered by San Fernando, Second and Third streets. All but 150 parking spaces on the current 339-space lot will close Oct. 2

when phase one construction begins. Entrance to the smaller parking area will be off Third Street near the Repertory Theater.

The developers intend to reduce the height of the two towers from 305 feet to 270 feet – about the height of the nearby Knight Ridder building – and increase the number of residential for-sale units from 335 to 406. To account for the higher number of units, the average size of the condos will decrease to 1,150 square feet.

For the first phase of construction, 92 one-bedroom units, 95 two-bedroom units and 10 three-bedroom units are planned on 23 floors. Phase one also includes all 348 public parking spaces for the entire project on three levels below grade, plus 284 residential parking spaces on three floors above the ground. The street level will also have 33,000 square feet of retail space. Central Place, a new street that divides the two towers, will also be constructed during the first phase. CIM Group now plans to have all parking accessed through Central Place. The first phase could be completed by March 2008.

Phase two, which includes an additional 31,000 square feet of retail and 226 more residential parking spaces for 209 more housing units in the second high-rise tower, will take another 24 months to build, according to the developers. No more than 35 percent of the total retail space on the street level will be dedicated to restaurants.

Almaden buildings to be spruced up: The new owners of the Almaden Financial Plaza plan a \$6 million upgrade set

to begin in October. DiNapoli Capital Partners, headed by **Matt and Rick DiNapoli**, and Rockpoint Group plan to upgrade the three buildings at One, 55 and 99 Almaden Blvd., which total 403,700 square feet of office space.

The work includes new bathrooms, elevator lobbies, landscaping and entryways and is expected to be finished in June 2006. Tenants include Bridge Bank, AG Edwards, Bank of the West and Aon.

The DiNapoli and Rockpoint acquired the buildings, plus a five story, 1,100-space parking garage behind the buildings with entrances off Santa Clara and San Fernando streets and undeveloped parcel of land on West Santa Clara from the previous ownership group headed by **Lew Wolff** in March.

Housing back on Brandenburg site: The city’s Redevelopment Agency is once again negotiating exclusively with The Olson Company and Barry Swenson Builder to develop housing on publicly owned land off North San Pedro, Bassett, Julian, Terrain and Devine streets. In the past year, the agency had halted negotiations with the developers while sorting out whether the 9.2-acre site might be better suited for uses other than housing.

More recently, Olson/Swenson amended its original proposal and offered almost \$27 million for the site, intending to build 394 units out of two condominium towers, condominium flats and town homes. The original Olson/Swenson bid was for less, though that proposal included more than 700 units. While negotiations ensue, the agency also will explore the possibility of building a supermarket on 1.25 acres adjacent to the housing site. If a grocery store is not prudent, that land may also be included in the housing development.



From the President

A most welcome sight

We have watched with expectancy the building of the new City Hall downtown during the last three years. Now completed, the civic center has a remarkable presence in our downtown skyline, and should serve as the catalyst for significant improvements to the eastern portion of our core area.

City Hall returns downtown after a 47-year absence. It has taken more than eight years – from concept and voter approval to funding, design and actual build-out – to finally make the physical statement that our local government headquarters is back downtown where it belongs.

We now share sidewalks and common open spaces with more city employees and officials than ever before. While downtown businesses enjoy the convenience of conducting business at the new City Hall, we also have the concurrent opportunity to provide services to City Hall employees, commission members and members of the public visiting our new seat of municipal government.

We welcome all of these new faces to enjoy the delightful sights and tastes of downtown – such as the Downtown Association-sponsored events: free movies at Cinema San Pedro and Gypsy Cinema, free Music in the Park concerts on Thursdays; the Farmers' Market on Fridays, Downtown Ice during the holidays, and all of the other attractions that are offered downtown (see sjdowntown.com for details).

Many of us hope that during their walks to and from City Hall, city staffers and officials notice the vast array of amenities and services available downtown, recognize the need for further improvements to the core area, and contribute to our association's continued efforts to improve and enhance our central business district.

Thank you former Mayor **Susan Hammer**, current Mayor **Ron Gonzales** and the entire City Council for making this happen. We're looking forward to the public celebration and building dedication Oct. 15.



Henry Cord

General News

Fourth Street Garage rate reprieve: The Fourth Street Garage remains in the city's Free Parking Program on weeknights – at least for now. The Downtown Parking Board recommended that the City Council leave the garage operations alone while the board produces an updated parking plan for downtown that would include the future of free parking throughout the core area.

The City Council asked the board to come up with alternatives for the garage after the mayor's budget message in June. That message included a recommendation that the garage be removed from the Free Parking Program because San Jose State University students were filling it up Monday through Thursday nights while school was in session.

However, the Parking Board heard feedback from students, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library patrons, residents, businesses and the San Jose Downtown Association. Nobody favored kicking the garage out of the program. Businesses, in particular, expressed concern that elimination of free parking will deter potential customers who might simply choose to go to competing locations where parking is free.

"Merchants are concerned that the change to the Fourth Street Garage will actually make things worse," said **Troy Tibbils**, who operates Zanotto's Downtown Market and is a Parking Board representative. "I feel a look at the long-term plan regarding free parking, validated parking, a plan to market that product, and future site development needs to be mapped out."

Meanwhile, the city and university are working on a plan that will make the university's own garages more user-friendly to students in the evening, including reducing fees at SJSU parking facilities. And before determining the future of the Fourth Street Garage rates, parking officials also want to examine the effects of the partial closure of the "Block 3" lot at San Fernando Street between Second and Third streets and the effect the new City Hall has on downtown parking.

Quilts move into South First Area: Celebrate the grand opening of the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles' new location on Sept. 17.

The celebration is aptly themed, "Bedcovers and Beyond: Where Art Meets Life." The dedication ceremony begins at 11 a.m. at the museum, 520 S. First St. Admission will be free to three new galleries showcasing the museum's collection of historical and contemporary textile art from around the world.

Formerly located along Paseo de San Antonio between Third and Fourth streets, the new museum doubles exhibition space. The 1923 building, former home of San Jose Supply Co. and more recently a thrift store, includes lobby, store, atrium, space for special exhibits, storage area, classroom, offices and upstairs meeting room. See sjquiltmuseum.com for more information.

Grand Prix fallout: Almost immediately after more than 150,000 people showed up for the three-day Taylor Woodrow Grand Prix of San Jose July 29-31, race organizers and city officials began looking for ways to

make the event more attractive to businesses and race fans. Feedback by members to the Downtown Association and city officials after the race reveals some common themes to work toward next year:

- ◆ Streamlining track construction and move-out
- ◆ Noise concerns
- ◆ Unexpected, undercommunicated and possibly unnecessary street closures
- ◆ High parking rates restricted regular customers from coming downtown
- ◆ Traffic, congestion and signage issues
- ◆ Damage to Plaza de Cesar Chavez, notably the fountain

Retail businesses closest to the track generally did the best business. Some businesses scratched out a "typical" weekend and others reported much less than normal sales. Many businesses hope that better marketing and planning can result in better results for a wider variety of businesses, including those not immediately adjacent to the track.

Nonetheless, another race is planned for July 28-30, 2006. Grand Prix officials vow to build more pedestrian bridges and perhaps change the race track. City officials will provide an economic impact report in October.

More light rail to downtown: Vasona Corridor Light Rail trains are now running between Woz Way at San Carlos Street and Diridon Train Station. The 5.3-mile line, four years and \$316 million in the works, is expected to be fully opened by the end of September.

In all, eight stations, including two with park-and-ride lots (Bascom and Winchester), connect downtown San Jose with downtown Campbell. The 1996 Measure A/B bond initiatives paid for the rail line; 9,000 riders are expected on the line daily.

Future plans show the line will extend in its southwest direction to Vasona Junction, near Highway 85. See vta.org/vasona/ for more information.

Wheels less squeaky: VTA continues to make attempts to reduce the wheel squeal by its light-rail trains making turns off San Carlos and Devine streets at First and Second streets.

Christof Eichin, VTA's maintenance engineering manager, confirms that a project in August to replace rails at turns along San Carlos Street – the first since the rails were installed almost 20 years ago – is one of several measures taken. Other projects to help reduce vehicle noise, according to **Ethan Winston**, a VTA community outreach officer:

- ◆ VTA recently installed wayside friction modifier units at Devine and First and Second streets, where a friction product is applied to the top of the tracks.
- ◆ Manual lubrication of the curves occurs almost weekly.
- ◆ The rail grinding program that has been successful on other parts of the line will move downtown starting next year. Rail grinding will primarily remove the wavy surface of the rail head and reduce the rumble noise heard throughout the downtown area.

The trains have made increasingly louder noises at the turns since VTA switched to low-floor light-rail trains four years ago.

SJDA News

September event calendar: The Downtown Association's summer season winds down in September, but not before some great events take place.

The Miller Music in the Park free concert series at Plaza de Cesar Chavez finishes its 17th season with a Sept. 1 show featuring **Brenton Wood**, and a back-to-school alternative music show featuring **Trapt** and **Acceptance** a week later. That Sept. 8 show coincides with the Dew Action Sports Festival at HP Pavilion and is co-sponsored by the Associated Students of San Jose State University.

The run of 14 consecutive Thursdays of free music at St. James Park and Plaza de Cesar Chavez will end with the Sept. 8 show. The free performances take place from 5:30-9 p.m. Food and drink are available at the shows.

Parking is free after 6 p.m. in designated city lots and garages.

Cinema San Pedro: Free parking after 6 p.m. also comes in handy for Cinema San Pedro. That series ends with "Philadelphia Story" on Sept. 7. The free outdoor screening takes place at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday along San Pedro Street just north of Santa Clara Street.

Gypsy Cinema: Also free, Gypsy Cinema returns for more outdoor screenings. With the San Jose Museum of Art as a partner, Gypsy on Sept. 15 will present "Young Frankenstein" in the Circle of Palms.

And coming up as autumn sets in at St. James Park: Sept. 30: "North by Northwest"

Oct. 7: "Whale Rider"

Oct. 14: "Like Water for Chocolate"

Oct. 21: "Car Wash"

Oct. 28: "Sixth Sense"

Friday Farmers' Market: Dine, shop and pick up fresh fruits, vegetables and gourmet treats at the Downtown Farmers' Market at San Pedro Square. The market, which also offers downtown's best people-watching, opens for business each Friday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

More information is available at www.sjdowntown.com.

Business News

New businesses: Add Cajun food to the diverse list of dining opportunities downtown. Poor House Bistro is open for business at 91 S. Autumn St. Owned by **Jay Meduri**, the New Orleans-style joint offers the best of the Big Easy, including po' boys and mauffaletta sandwiches, popcorn shrimp, gumbo, jambalaya and red beans and rice. Call 292-5837. poorhousebistro.com

Georgie's Fresh Grill, located above Splash Bar and Grill at 65 Post St., grills fresh Mexican food, including quesadillas, burritos and flautas. Call 275-0618.

Allan Borch and his father create ornamental iron fences and frameworks, and complete larger seismic retrofitting projects out of Borch's Iron Works, 20 S. Autumn St. Call 293-4313.

With locations already in Campbell and Los Gatos, **Nick Goddard** and partners have created a third Tandoori



**SAN JOSE DOWNTOWN
ASSOCIATION**

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408.279.1775

return service requested

Oven location at 150 S. First Street, No. 107-109. The north Indian bistro features high-quality and great-value food, plus a variety of music, from bhanga to reggae. Call 292-7222.

Professional Legal Services, 28 N. First St., No. 700, provides processing, legal photocopying and court records services. Contact **Melanie Bartner**, manager, at 247-1574.

Go Mobile Group, located upstairs at 126 E. Santa Clara St., provides Sprint PCS mobile services to small and medium size businesses. Tactical Solutions is also at the same location providing business owners a cost effective tool to manage voice communications. Call **Susana Craig** at (877) 294-9695.

San Jose Ballers, a professional men's basketball team playing at San Jose City College for their first season, is part of an international basketball league. Their offices are downtown. Contact **Maria Martinez** at 999-0701.

Annual meeting

All members of the Business Improvement District are invited to attend the Downtown Association's annual meeting Oct. 15 at 8 a.m. at Bella Mia restaurant, 58 S. First St. The meeting includes election of board members. Please call **Gretchen Knight**, 279-1775, to RSVP for the meeting.

Downtown Fact

Office vacancy: The downtown office vacancy rate stands at 23.9 percent. Of 68 buildings surveyed, 17 lost tenants, nine gained tenants, and the rest stayed the same. The new City Hall is included in calculations. As a result of city employees moving into the newest downtown high-rise, buildings at 2 and 4 N. Second Street experienced large increases in vacancies. One Almaden, which is about to undergo extensive remodeling (see related story), lost a major tenant and is less than 50 percent occupied.

Source: Ritchie Commercial

At the Convention Center

Sept. 18-19 – Maly's Salon Forum (3,000)

Sept. 24-25 – NBC Health & Fitness Expo (40,000)

(estimated attendance)

downtown **dimension**

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