



D I S C O V E R
DOWNTOWN
SAN JOSE





ABOVE Young people on the grounds of the San Jose Repertory Theatre.

Downtown San Jose offers a 'unique recipe' of life, 'a great place to live, work, play & gather'

BY JENNIFER SHAW
CORRESPONDENT

Consistent with the city's reputation for being at the pinnacle of innovation, the pulsating vitality of downtown San Jose has been carefully and creatively planned.

It is a place where the infrastructure is kept clean and graffiti free, the pedestrian-friendly streets are safe, and sidewalks are appointed with colorful planters and lighting. That commitment is underscored by how the downtown business owners are voluntarily assessing a tax on themselves in order to make that happen.

"Around every corner you find something that is visual and aesthetically pleasing," says Rick Jensen, communications director for the San Jose Downtown Association. "There's a real visceral element."

He also describes the downtown as a "foodie's paradise."

Key to the concerted approach is identifying and injecting a greater presence into a defined space within the downtown — through collaboration between the private and public sectors — that serves as a template for other places in the downtown. Such is the case with the newly renovated south of First Street development (SOFA), which Josh Russell, director of communications for 1stACT, calls "an up and coming artsy area," with its galleries and public art, monthly art walks, expanded walkways, outdoor dining, picturesque landscaping and Gore Park, resembling "an outdoor living room." The non-profit's charge is to enhance the synergy in the downtown.

Occupants of the new residential high rises bring an even greater vested interest in keeping the urban core brimming with activity and maintaining its ever emerging sense of place.

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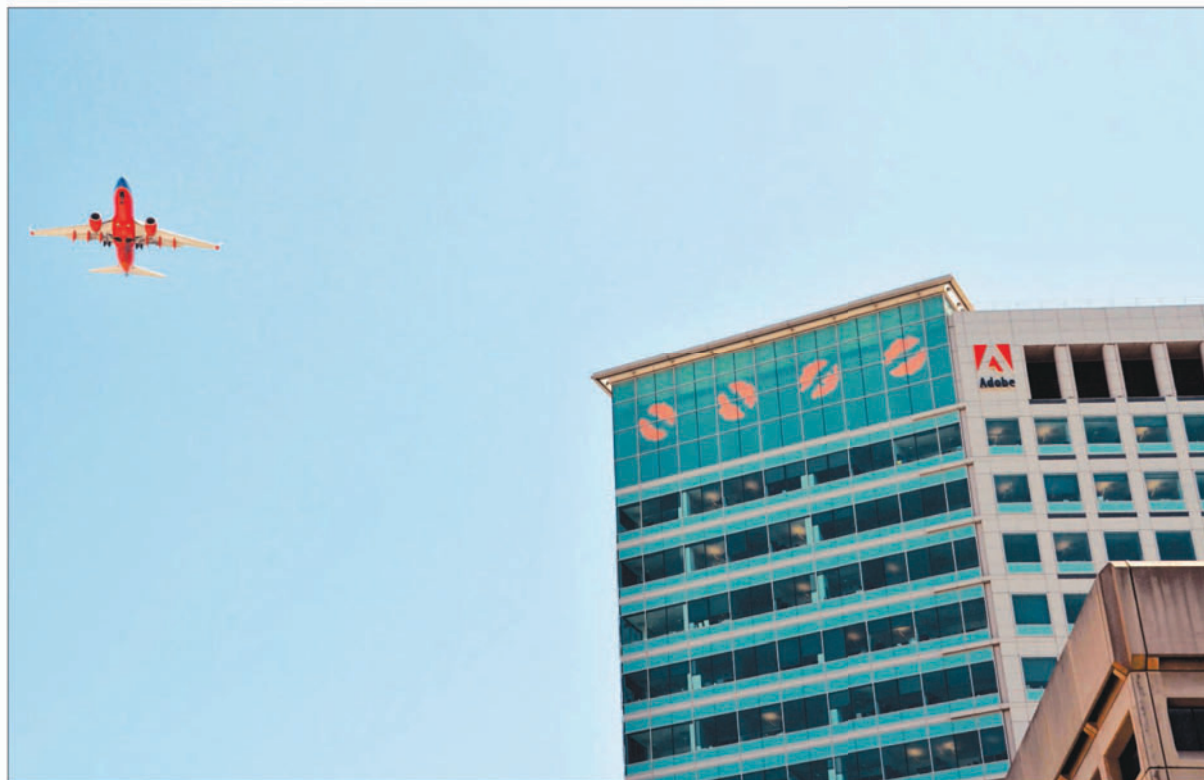
ALL PHOTOS BY
FRANK ANZALONE

ABOVE An incredible view of San Jose from atop the Knight Ridder building.



LEFT The HP Pavilion looms in the background of the Guadalupe River Park sign.

BELOW The eye-catching Adobe building.



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ABOVE Eager kids explore the 2,200-square-foot exhibition *Mammoth Discovery!* at the Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose.

Downtown San Jose

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"It's become more of a community of residents who are starting to have a passion and a feeling of a neighborhood. They are engaged, and they care for the well being of the city, especially the downtown," says Jensen. "It's an urban atmosphere with a small town component."

"There's definitely more options for urban living than there have been before," adds Erika Justis, 1stACT's director of creative space, citing the downtown's "incubator spaces," where sole entrepreneurs and start-up companies can rent small offices. "The urban lifestyle is about being close to everything, where you can walk everywhere."

The downtown is now defined by the distinctive SOFA district and a soon-to-be opened urban market in San Pedro Square Market to the north — with the historic Peralta Adobe as a cornerstone.

"It employs the traditional European notion of bringing unique food, crafts and merchandise out into the street while providing a gathering place in the downtown," says city councilman Sam Liccardo, noting how the market will be reflective of the diverse populace who attract multi-cultural festivals to the city's core, be it Mariachi, Festa Italiana, Children's Moon or Oban for thousands to enjoy.

"We're leveraging the great weather," adds Russell. "Festivals are part of our green lifestyle. San Jose is becoming more and more recognized for being a great container for outdoor festivals."

And, says Kerry Adams Hapner, "art is at the heart of the downtown," — be it performing or visual — citing such venues as the San Jose Museum of Art, the San Jose Repertory Theater, the Tech Museum of Innovation, the Quilt and Textiles Museum and the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art.

"One of our key goals is to strengthen the idea that the downtown is the creative and cultural center of Silicon Valley," adds Hapner, the city's director of cultural affairs, noting the \$2.1 million in grants issued by the governance to support the arts as a testament to the value it holds in the community.

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RIGHT Hop on the Light Rail train or check out a show at The Improv, 62 S. Second Street.





LEFT The San Jose Repertory Theatre is a fully professional regional theatre.

BELOW Guests enjoy the great weather at San Pedro Square.

BOTTOM Wine tasting on Wednesdays at Hotel De Anza.




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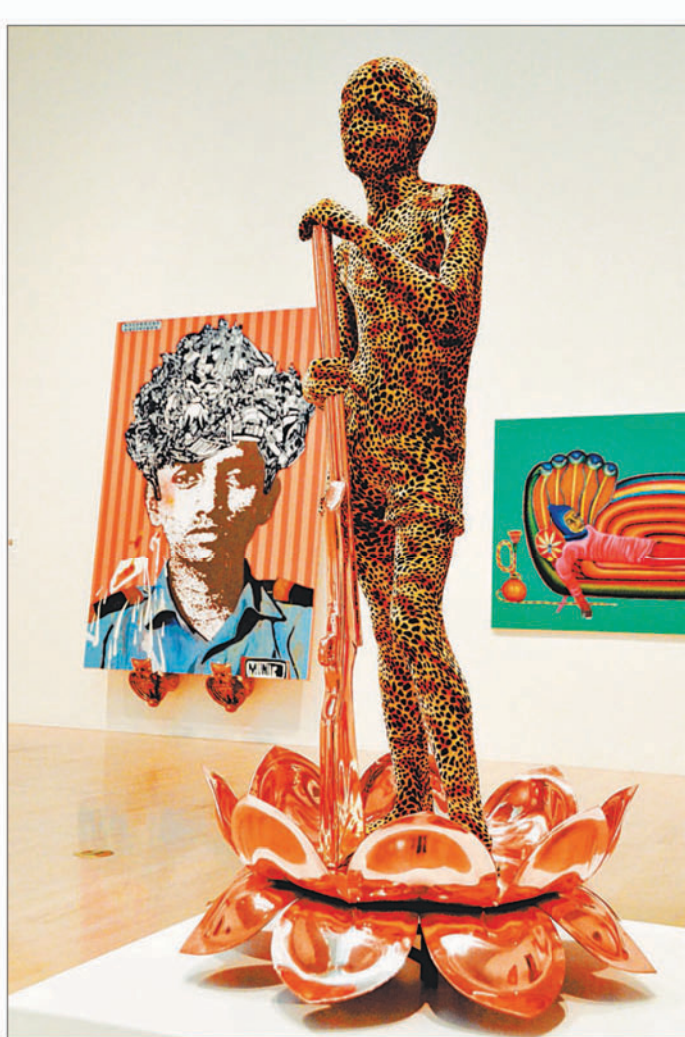
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For info on next year's festival, please call 408-299-5030 or email steven.blomquist@bos.sccgov.org.



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LEFT A recent art exhibit at the San Jose Museum of Art.



ABOVE The Martin Luther King Jr. Library on the San Jose State University campus.

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LEFT Children engage their minds at The Tech Museum.

BOTTOM LEFT Dancers participate in a Vietnamese festival downtown.

BELOW Behind the scenes at Henry's Hi-Life, 301 West St. John Street.



Downtown San Jose

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Hapner also notes the city's commitment to hire artists to enliven public facilities utilizing various media, citing the revolving illuminated discs at Adobe Towers, or eye-catching light displays changed via one's cell phone at the corner of Second Street and San Fernando.

"There's the 'there, there.' The public art reflects the idea that this is the capital of Silicon Valley," she says. "This is a place that is alive 24/7. It's a really important business center. People are here to learn (at San Jose State). There are cultural facilities, a wonderful nightlife and a wide variety of people."

"To have all those options at your fingertips ensures there's never a dull moment," Liccardo adds.

"And, there's a very unique synergy," says Lee Wilcox, downtown manager for the city's office of economic development, citing the mix of copious dining and entertainment options, distinctive architecture and the Guadalupe Park, with a river meandering through the urban area. "I can think of only a few areas in the world where technology and the arts converge. It makes San Jose very cutting edge, very futuristic."

It is a place where an even greater pulse is on the horizon for a downtown that draws an estimated 22,000 people to work during the week, with ongoing plans for a baseball stadium and a goal of having roughly 7,500 residential units.

Downtown San Jose boasts an intentionally well-configured appearance and a menu of activities that residents and visitors alike can anticipate.

Liccardo cites some of his favorite pastimes, including enjoying a pastry at Caffe Trieste; dancing to live music in Cesar Chavez Plaza; watching a classic movie at the restored California Theater; and picnicking on the Tower Lawn at a Symphony Silicon Valley performance.

However, key to its vibrancy is also the element of surprise. Explaining the seeming paradox, Jensen notes that the city is ever "redefining routine."

"It's expecting the unexpected and not knowing what it is," he adds.

The 1stACT folks refer to the eight-second rule as they map out future improvements to an already robust downtown when it comes to finding something visually stimulating. These make up the "small wonders," Russell notes.

As civic leaders and citizenry continue their quest to make the downtown an even greater place, their palette is already replete with a vibrant mix.

"The downtown is where residents and visitors will find the intersection of great diversity, unique cultural offerings, technology startups and 300 days of sun each year," says Liccardo. "This unique recipe makes for a great place to live, work, play and gather."