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Business Improvement District (BID) Q&A



Every business within the BID Boundaries becomes a member of the San Jose Downtown Association, which works on behalf of business and property owners to promote downtown as a destination for business and pleasure, produce events that showcase the center city, and to advocate on behalf of business concerns.

Q: What is a BID?

A: BID stands for Business Improvement District. A BID is authorized by state law and created by the City Council. Its purpose is to promote and improve a specific area for the benefit of businesses within the area. The BID fee is a benefit assessment. In San Jose, the city assesses all business license holders a BID fee annually, based on anticipated benefits. Julian Street, Fourth Street and Highways 280 and 87 bound the San Jose Downtown BID roughly, where it jogs west to include the arena and the train station, and Coleman Loop area.

Q: Who manages the BID?

A: Every year since 1989, the San Jose Downtown Association (SJDA), a nonprofit organization, has been selected by the City Council to manage the Downtown BID. Every business that pays the BID is automatically a member of the Downtown Association. The members elect a board of directors to determine budgets and programs.

Q: Do you raise the BID every year?

A: No. Since 1989, the BID has been raised three times: in 1994 when the BID boundaries extended to include the Arena; in 2003 to include San Jose Market Center, and a modest rate adjustment in 2011.

Q: How is the BID money used?

A: In 2019-20, BID fees generated about \$528,000 representing 24 percent of SJDA’s budget. The rest of SJDA revenue comes from earned income through events and sponsorships, plus contracts and fees for services. For every dollar the business community puts into the BID, six more dollars are leveraged by SJDA to improve Downtown. By state law, the BID money can only be used to support general

business activities, promote public events, decorate public places and provide music and entertainment in the BID area.

Q: How much do I pay?

A: The annual fees are calculated on expected benefit. For example, retail pays more than non-retail, and large businesses pay more than small businesses. The rate schedule is: retail \$29.04 per employee/\$264 minimum; non-retail \$19.35 per employee/\$185 minimum; apartments and hotels \$7.92 per room/\$264 minimum; non-profits flat fee of \$100; Independent contractors flat fee of \$55; property owners range from \$440 to \$2,200. The maximum charge per year is \$6,000.

Q: How does the rate work for commercial landlords?

A: About half of the commercial landlords in the BID pay \$440 a year. The fee scale is graduated upward, with landlords with more leasable space paying higher fees.

Q: What do I get for my BID fees?

A: BID funds are spent on a variety of downtown marketing, promotional and communication projects including ads, websites, weekly e-letters, decorations, and events such as the Farmers’ Market, Starlight Cinemas, Music in the Park and Downtown Ice holiday skating rink. SJDA advocates on behalf of BID members for a vital and vibrant Downtown for businesses and their clients, customers and employees. Association staff members are available to assist BID businesses and property owners and address their individual concerns. SJDA provides a strong voice for Downtown to the media, government officials and policy makers and manages the Groundwerx clean, safe and beautiful services.