

# Knights Foundation invests \$1 million in downtown San Jose's economic recovery

Santa Clara Street is downtown San Jose's busiest east-west artery, stretching from City Hall to SAP Center. Located between these landmarks are gems such as foodie destination San Pedro Square and brand new dual-high-rise Miro luxury apartments.

It is also a street of future promise where some teeth are currently missing — an incomplete Guadalupe River Park, a half-renovated intersection at First Street and a collection of historic buildings in need of refresh.

The BART extension to downtown San Jose will tunnel directly beneath Santa Clara Street. Adjacent to SAP Center will be an expanded Diridon Station, which will connect BART, light rail, buses and commuter trains at a large transportation depot in the middle of Downtown West. Big plans for a mixed-use development of retail, offices and housing are planned for Santa Clara Street between Market and First streets where the main Downtown San Jose BART subway station will be located.

While some of these big projects are in planning, they are years away from starting construction and more years from completion. As we look to our future with these big plans and complex projects, one of the immediate questions involves what to do with the street today, tomorrow and in the next five years? Now, after nearly two years of hardship brought by the pandemic, is the time to push Santa Clara Street and the entire downtown on the fast track to economic recovery.

Knights Foundation is investing in the San Jose Downtown Association (SJDA) once again to help reimagine post-COVID-19 downtown San Jose that's more vibrant to create a better experience for people to live, work, study and visit.

Knights is currently investing nearly \$1 million in SJDA's Beautiful Tableau, a five-year initiative that intends to create a better future for downtown San Jose by using data to provide insights for executives, business and property owners, artists, investors and developers to build a downtown that's innovative, vibrant, equitable and inclusive.

Beautiful Tableau initiative goals come into play along Santa Clara Street:

- Integrating the street into daily public life with surprising aesthetic delights, service businesses such as salons and cleaners, and outdoor amenities for discussion, coffee and lingering.

- Building the physical connection between downtown districts in big ways such as transportation and mixed-use development and small ways such as public art and both temporary and permanent street life enhancements
- Utilizing and strengthening data use to create more cohesive systems, such as filling empty storefronts and improving ground-floor business merchandising.

Ultimately, Knight Foundation’s partnership with SJDA works. Future investment strengthens not only Santa Clara Street, but the entire community, including all the residents, businesses, workers, students and visitors who demand that the cityscape keep up with their ever-changing demands. Downtown becomes a place of diversity, innovation, growth, change and history. Coming out of the pandemic, it is to be welcoming, safe and desirable for everyone.

Besides Santa Clara Street, SJDA wants to strengthen the public experience on the paths connecting the commercial district with San Jose State University and bridge the paths between the SoFA, Historic and San Pedro Square districts. And, make way for more than 50 proposals currently in planning -- one of them being Google’s Downtown West massive project.

Included in the Beautiful Tableau’s core activities of partnering and mentoring, community engagement, placemaking and public conservancy are research and development, and enhanced storytelling, both of which are imperatives to tying the downtown together.

The initial data collected for the program aims to focus on new uses for outdoor spaces and improving development zones undergoing transformation with useful, strategic and attractive barriers and public furniture. The implementation of the Beautiful Tableau’s physical additions will likely occur in the later – and hopefully post-pandemic – years of the grant.

The strategy:

Year one: Focus on business survival, and building on a safe and outdoor-oriented downtown

Year two: As socialization normalizes, increase investment and engagement in downtown’s neighborhoods

Year three: Innovate by responding to trends and use R&D to set a course for sustenance

Year four: Strengthen the social and physical landscape between districts

Year five: Begin connecting the bigger new projects and shift from street life to public life

Thanks to the Knight Foundation for its support of SJDA and downtown over the past decade, and for the next five years as we set the table for our “Beautiful Tableau.”

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