



PRESS RELEASE

June 8, 2014

Contact: Jennifer Davies, (619) 405-2741

New Urban Park Opens in East Village

Partnership transforms a parking lot into a playful pocket park

DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO – The Downtown community today celebrated the opening of its newest open space – a pocket park that was once a private parking lot.

The new urban park, which is located at 13th Avenue and J Street right next to the Mission Café, was a collaborative effort between the Downtown San Diego Partnership; HP Investors, which owns the property; the East Village Association; and RAD Lab, a design and development architecture firm.

The Downtown San Diego Partnership coordinated the effort to build the new pocket park as part of its larger urban placemaking initiative, which looks to transform spaces throughout Downtown into lively, engaging areas.

“In dense urban neighborhoods like Downtown San Diego, space is at a premium,” said Kris Michell, president and CEO of the Downtown Partnership. “Because of that, we need to look at public and private spaces in new ways to enhance the Downtown experience. I like to say: Where others see asphalt, we see opportunity.”

Sumeet Parekh, principal of HP Investors and owner of the property, approached the Downtown Partnership about working together to engage the community while exploring new ways to use the space.

“Our firm strives not just to create value for our investors, but also for the communities we invest in,” said Parekh. “This pocket park is an example of how we seek to improve the experience for our tenant’s businesses and for the neighborhood.”

RAD Lab designed and built the park based on feedback from the East Village Association and the Downtown community. The new park offers unique and playful seating shaded by trees as well as public art, including a mural by noted local artist Chris Konecki.

“This pocket park shows what the community can do with a heavy dose of creativity and a little bit of money,” said David Loewenstein, chief operating officer of RAD Lab. “Cities around the world are looking for ways to transform urban spaces quickly and cost-effectively to eliminate blight and improve the quality of place for a community.”

David Hazan, president of the East Village Association, said the new pocket park, which is across the street from the new Central Library, is a much-needed neighborhood amenity that will only add to the growing roster of unique places and spaces in East Village.

“The East Village is clamoring for parks and open space, and we thank HP Investors, the Downtown San Diego Partnership and the RAD Lab for working with us to make this pocket park a reality,” Hazan said.

The pocket park is privately funded with HP Investors donating the land and paying for the improvements. The Downtown San Diego Partnership will work with the Mission Café to oversee the pocket park to ensure that it is well-maintained and safe. The park will be locked at night.

Council President Todd Gloria praised the collaborative nature of the pocket park.

“This project perfectly represents the creativity, innovation, and community focus of the neighborhoods of East Village and Downtown,” Gloria said. “I appreciate the effort and ingenuity that has resulted in this new community asset and look forward to implementing more publicly-driven projects and continue the momentum of the Downtown San Diego Partnership, RAD Lab, East Village Association, and their partners.”

Michell of the Downtown Partnership said the pocket park is an example of civic experimentation at its best. As with all placemaking efforts, she explained, the park is temporary and flexible in nature so that it can be readjusted based on how the community uses the space. Michell said her organization is always looking for new spaces and different ways to revitalize Downtown as part of its larger placemaking initiative.

“The goal of this project is to experiment with the process and take what we learn to other areas of Downtown and to other communities,” Michell said.

The Downtown San Diego Partnership is a non-profit, member-based organization that serves as the leading advocate for the revitalization and economic health of Downtown. To learn more about the Downtown Partnership, visit www.downtownsandiego.org.

HP Investors, LLC is a San Diego-based owner and investor of commercial real estate assets. Established in 2010, the firm primarily invests in urban retail and hospitality real estate. HP Investors' principals have more than 50 combined years of experience in real estate capital markets, investment, and asset management. For more information, visit www.hpinvestors.com.

To learn more about the East Village Association, visit EastVillageSanDiego.com.