

Media Highlights

APRIL 2017

San Diego Has a Chance for Another Downtown Renaissance

The San Diego Union-Tribune | April 12, 2017 | Kris Michell

Today, San Diego has a chance for a third renaissance. Adjacent to the blossoming neighborhoods of Gaslamp and East Village is an area that, despite its apparent potential, has remained underutilized and uninviting for decades. The C street corridor has been plagued by crime, blight and a lack of economic investment.

The ‘Live, Work, Play’ Vision for East Village is Missing the ‘Work’

Voice of San Diego | April 12, 2017

“We started out incredibly concerned about residential not wanting to be downtown,” Michell said. “It has always been a heavy office market and getting residential was so hard. Twenty years ago, we’d say, ‘Gee, how are we going to get anyone to live downtown?’”

She said she’s not worried about the heavy residential boom in East Village – the neighborhood is just following a normal development cycle.

Is Change in The Air?

San Diego Downtown News | April 3, 2017

The Downtown San Diego Partnership is among the local civic groups hoping to have a seat at the table as discussions of Horton Plaza’s future ensue.

From her vantage point, Katherine Johnston, Senior Vice President of Communications for the Partnership, said she believes Horton Plaza remains an important part of the Downtown fabric. “We’re excited and optimistic,” Johnston said of Westfield’s commitment to the property. “We think there’s a lot of opportunity for revitalization.”



The 'Live, Work, Play' Vision for East Village is Missing the 'Work' April 12, 2017 | Kinsee Morlan

<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/business/the-live-work-play-vision-for-east-village-is-missing-the-work/>

There's a problem with East Village's rapid transformation into the urban center imagined by developers and planners as a place where residents can live, work and play.

They forgot about the work.

An unprecedented building boom is under way, but of the approximately 25 projects in the pipeline in East Village, only four are office buildings. The rest will be mostly apartments and retail.

Sumeet Parekh, managing partner of HP Investors, a development firm behind several new and planned East Village developments, said the lack of office space is a problem.

"I don't think that anybody really wants East Village to be another bedroom community in San Diego," he said. "Everybody wants it to be a live, work and play development, and the work is what ties the system all together. You have to have people in and activating the streets at all times during the day, not just driving out in the morning and coming back in the evening."

Plus, the dearth of office space in East Village could make it hard for retail businesses and restaurants to survive, Parekh said.

His firm is about to break ground on a new building at 15th and F streets that will add about 45,000 square feet of office space to East Village. The firm has another planned project on the east side of Sixth Avenue that would add an additional 50,000 square feet for offices.

The average office space per employee is about 200 square feet, meaning those two projects would likely accommodate fewer than 500 workers in East Village.

Civic San Diego, the agency that oversees downtown development, also required office space in two East Village projects on Market Street – Cisterra Development's building at Seventh Street and Holland Partner's project at Park Boulevard, which will house UC San Diego's new downtown outpost.

All that office space combined, though, is just a pittance compared with the approximately 6,500 residential units being built in East Village in coming months, and the thousands more that have come online over the past few years. Planned office space in East Village represents just 2.3 percent of the 13.5 million square feet of office space in all of downtown.

Sempra opened its new East Village headquarters in 2015. Outside of that project, downtown hasn't seen a new office building in a decade.

The last office building to go up was Diamond View Tower, a hip East Village workspace that is fully leased and commands some of the highest rents in all of downtown. That building has attracted several online marketing firms and tech companies.

Generally speaking, if you work downtown, you don't work in East Village, despite its "live, work, play" moniker.

Developers say part of the issue is that there's much more demand for new housing in San Diego, which makes it easier to finance a residential project. Plus, living units can be rented up quickly, while it takes longer to find business tenants. It all makes building new office space riskier, so even though the vacancy rate for downtown office space is the lowest it's been in years, most developers and investors are still sticking with the safer bet.

The developers behind East Village's IDEA1 mixed-use project had plans to build office space, but converted most of it into residential because they couldn't find businesses to pre-lease the space.

"We have the ability to convert residential floors back to office if the market supports that use at some future date," David Malmuth, one of IDEA1's developers, said in an email. "We like that the building can adapt as the market changes."

Some people think it's hard to find businesses that want offices in East Village because of the neighborhood's growing homeless problem. Others, like Frank Wolden, an urban designer with an office in East Village, said the lack of business interest in East Village is more of a perception and marketing problem.

"The city needs to be more aggressive on promoting the vision as East Village as a dynamic workplace," he said.

Stacy Meronoff, who heads leasing at the Diamond View office tower in East Village, said he thinks the demand for more office is there, but developers need to build the cool and creative spaces that tech companies want.

"I do think we're getting to a point where new construction for office buildings is warranted," he said.

East Village's dearth of office space lies in stark contrast with the other neighborhoods in downtown San Diego, which are saturated with office space but have few workers who live nearby. According to a report commissioned last year by the [Downtown San Diego Partnership](#), about 81,000 people work downtown, but only 3.8 percent live there as well.

[Kris Michell](#), CEO of the [Downtown San Diego Partnership](#), said she remembers when getting people to live downtown was a hard sell. When the first two residential high-rises opened in the neighborhood, just a handful of people lived there for the first few years.

"We started out incredibly concerned about residential not wanting to be downtown," [Michell](#) said. "It has always been a heavy office market and getting residential was so hard. Twenty years ago, we'd say, 'Gee, how are we going to get anyone to live downtown?'"

She said she's not worried about the heavy residential boom in East Village – the neighborhood is just following a normal development cycle.

There's also a significant number of people who will live and work in their East Village apartments, she said, and a good chance that creative co-working office spaces could pop up in some of the retail space being built. The low office square footage in East Village doesn't worry her, in other words, because she thinks some of the retail and residential space could become offices in the end.

[Michell](#) also pointed to her group's study, which found young people entering the workforce want to live and work in downtown neighborhoods like East Village, so it's only a matter of time before employers start moving there to attract young talent.

The city also requires developers to include office space in its employment zone, which stretches into portions of East Village.

"We've done such a good job of attracting the residential that now it's just about finding that balance," [Michell](#) said. "There's not a big concern, however, we do recognize that we want to see as much office as we can because we know we don't want to become a bedroom community."

San Diego Has a Chance for Another Downtown Renaissance

April 12, 2017 | **Kris Michell**



<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/commentary/sd-utbg-downtown-redevelopment-michell-20170412-story.html>

Downtown San Diego has had not just one renaissance, but two. The first was under Mayor Pete Wilson with the visionary plan to build Horton Plaza. A project that led to the transformation of the surrounding Gaslamp District from blight to a magnet for visitors and tourists alike. The second came under Mayor Susan Golding with the approval of Petco Park and the innovative plan to redevelop 26 blocks of East Village. That project, combined with the last expansion of the convention center, created thousands of jobs and new economic activity. Were there battles over competing visions? Of course. Yet now we see that both visions were transformative.

Today, San Diego has a chance for a third renaissance. Adjacent to the blossoming neighborhoods of Gaslamp and East Village is an area that, despite its apparent potential, has remained underutilized and uninviting for decades. The C street corridor has been plagued by crime, blight and a lack of economic investment.

For more than 10 years, there has been plan after plan with several false starts. The revitalization of this corridor must be a top priority, starting with the reinvigoration of the old California Theatre site.

Once a hub of activity, the celebrated theater sat vacant for more than 25 years. When the property was acquired in 2008, the theater had been shuttered for more than 18 years, and the structural integrity of the building had become compromised beyond repair. In its most recent past, it has been an attractive nuisance and an eyesore for the community.

Thankfully, last week the City Council unanimously approved the Overture project, which will redevelop the site and construct a new mixed-use residential building. In replicating original design elements from the California Theatre, the project will pay tribute to its own past while inspiring future development. The Overture will breathe life into a corridor that currently feels abandoned and at times unsafe.

This is just the beginning.

The mayor should launch a public dialogue on the revitalization of Civic Center, a complex that includes not only city government, but the San Diego Civic Theatre, convention and meeting space, and a 1,200-space parking structure.

The mayor should launch a public dialogue on the revitalization of Civic Center, a complex that includes not only city government, but the San Diego Civic Theatre, convention and meeting space, and a 1,200-space parking structure.

Recent facility assessments released show that the City Administration Building and City Operations Building, the two buildings that house the majority of city employees, are crumbling and have hundreds of millions of dollars of deferred maintenance. It would require a minimum investment of \$133 million to repair these buildings to a barely acceptable condition.

Investing millions of dollars into crumbling infrastructure is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Now that the city will also own Civic Center Plaza located at 1200 Third Avenue and the old Sempra building at 101 Ash Street, it is time to have a robust discussion on what comes next. This property is also home to the San Diego Civic Theatre which currently hosts the San Diego Opera and Broadway San Diego. The aging facility is ripe for a major renovation that would create a world-class

arts venue befitting of a global city. There is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a long-term vision that will be as much a catalyst for redevelopment as Horton Plaza and Petco Park.

In 2010, there was an extensive process undertaken to identify a financially feasible deal to revitalize this site. It is time to restart this effort. A final development should include a mix of retail and residential uses to reinvigorate C Street. Private investment follows public investment, and without the city taking a leadership role, this part of Downtown's future will remain uncertain.

The city should begin a process to formally solicit ideas from developers, and its plans shouldn't stop at Civic Center. There needs to be a renewed focus on creating a long-term vision for the entire C Street corridor.

The economic impact of past decisions to close C Street to vehicular traffic, without making the necessary improvements to build a successful pedestrian corridor, still linger. Any effort should include an analysis of undergrounding the trolley — potentially financed through sale of air rights to interested developers — to lay the foundation for creating a more vibrant, pedestrian mall similar to Santa Monica's 3rd Street Promenade and Denver's 16th Street Mall. Both projects started as a kernel of an idea and are now central to each city's economic and cultural identities.

Big things don't happen overnight. They happen like everything else. One step at a time. So let's start the discussion.



Sun Salutations on the Deck of the USS Midway April 18, 2017 | Leslie Hackett



<http://www.pacificsandiego.com/local-entertainment/sportsfitness/yoga-on-the-midway-2017/>

Yoga on the Midway is going ahead full throttle. The annual event, which will take place from 7-9 a.m. on Saturday, May 6 is in its fourth year and joins the **Downtown San Diego Partnership** with Scripps Health and Yoga One for a unique, free experience as part of the "Healthy Living in the City" series.

As has been the tradition since its inception, co-founder and head teach of Yoga One Amy Caldwell will lead the class of approximately 1,000 people atop the flight deck of the USS Midway Museum.

"An important part of our teaching at Yoga One includes reminding students to listen to and honor their bodies as they enjoy breathing and moving through the poses," said Caldwell. "We look forward to seeing you and making it a fantastic experience for participants of all levels — brand new beginners and experienced yogis alike, all are welcome."

When asked what her favorite part about this event is, Caldwell responded, "It is so empowering to connect with approximately 1,000 people on the flight deck of the USS Midway and share together the joys and benefits of yoga."

Even though this is a free class, registration is required. Participants are asked to bring their own yoga mats or towels, and to arrive early as space is limited to a first come, first serve basis for the first 1,000 attendees. Some walk-ins on the day of the event may be accepted, but it is dependent on available space. Registration is available at eventbrite.com



San Diego's Homeless Populations Surpasses 9,000 April 20, 2017 | Richard Allyn



<http://www.cbs8.com/story/35204531/san-diegos-homeless-population-surpasses-9000>

SAN DIEGO (CNS) - The number of homeless people living in San Diego County is up about 5 percent over last year, and more of them are living without any type of shelter, according to numbers released Thursday from an annual countywide tally.

Organizers said the January count tallied 9,116 homeless people in the county, up from 8,692 last year. The number of homeless who had no type of shelter was 5,621, up 14 percent.

Among the county's homeless, 62 percent were in the city of San Diego. The city's total of 5,619 represented a 10.3 percent increase from last year.

Of those, 3,231 were living on the streets.

The count also found large increases in the number of people living in tents, hand-built structures and vehicles.

At a news conference where the results were announced, Dolores Diaz, executive director of the Regional Task Force on the Homeless, said that has made homelessness more visible to the public.

The numbers quantify the scope of the problem for local officials and are used to determine the amount of state and federal funding provided to the region.

"The results are also used locally to identify the programs that are needed by our local providers," county Supervisor Ron Roberts said.

Diaz said the numbers, which represent a one-day "snapshot," will be reported to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on May 1.

Of the total homeless population, 69 percent were men, 29 percent women and 2 percent transgender, she said. According to the data, 39 percent reported having a mental health issue, 30 percent had a substance abuse problem and 31 percent were chronically homeless.

The 1,274 volunteers in January also counted 883 unsheltered youth up to age 24, a 54 percent jump. More than 40 were minors.

Only 8 percent were veterans, representing the good news portion of the report. The 1,054 homeless veterans was 9 percent fewer than last year and 29 percent below the level of four years ago.

The number of veterans counted on the streets, 454, was down 21 percent from 2016.

Mayor Kevin Faulconer credited the city's "Housing Our Heroes" program, which provides incentives to landlords to rent to former military members without a place to live.

"We said we were going to make veterans homelessness our number one priority -- we had the opportunity to make a difference," Falconer said.

"I was very heartened at that part of the report that did show we're making a difference," he said. "That was a key focus of last year's efforts, and Housing Our Heroes did make a measurable difference in peoples' lives."

Almost 1,000 residential units have been opened to veterans, according to the mayor.

On a regional basis, counters found:

- 1,287 homeless in the North County inland areas like Escondido, San Marcos and Vista, up 11 percent;
- 814 in North County coastal communities like Encinitas, Carlsbad and Oceanside, down 7 percent;
- 711 in the southern cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach and National City, down 21 percent; and
- 685 in East County locations like El Cajon, La Mesa and Santee, up 3 percent.

San Diego's wet and sometimes chilly weather over the weekend had made it question whether the tally would show an increase in homelessness or not.

Just before the latest count took place, the San Diego Housing Commission held its annual resource fair for the homeless and had far fewer attendees than expected.

At about the same time, a monthly tally by the **Downtown San Diego Partnership** was down 38 percent from December.



San Diego People: Downtown San Diego Partnership
April 23, 2017 | Kris Michell, Dr. Mary Walshok, & Yehudi "Gaf" Gaffen



<http://www.kusi.com/story/35221063/san-diego-people-downtown-san-diego-partnership>

The **Downtown San Diego Partnership** is the leading advocate for the economic vitality and growth of Downtown San Diego. They offer training programs and partner with businesses to further development. The **Downtown Partnership** is currently teaming up with UC San Diego to provide entrepreneur training.



Downtown SD Partnership to Ask City to Stop Funding Temporary Homeless Shelters

April 25, 2017

<http://www.kusi.com/story/35242283/downtown-sd-partnership-to-ask-city-to-stop-funding-temporary-homeless-shelters>

SAN DIEGO (KUSI) — Representatives of the **Downtown San Diego Partnership** and other organizations will call on the city this morning to stop funding temporary shelters for the homeless. The group says such facilities do little to solve the homelessness problem.

The call comes as the San Diego City Council is set to consider a proposal to allocate \$2.8 billion for temporary shelters.

The **Downtown SD Partnership** will also voice their concerns about recent proposals to build more temporary shelters including one on the site of the old Easy Village library. They say the city should instead focus on permanent housing possibly through rental assistance and help with finding affordable housing.



FAQ: The Answers to 7 Burning Questions about Downtown

April 24, 2017

<http://www.sandiegomagazine.com/San-Diego-Magazine/May-2017/The-New-Downtown-San-Diego/FAQ-The-Answers-to-7-Burning-Questions-about-Downtown/>

What's happening with the homeless?

Homelessness has always been an issue for downtown San Diego, but never quite to the extent it is now. A February count by the **Downtown San Diego Partnership's Clean & Safe** outreach program found roughly a thousand people living on the streets, more than twice the number from five years ago.

The increase comes despite a number of initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness. In mid-2015, the city moved its emergency winter shelter program to St. Vincent de Paul's Paul Mirabile Center in the East Village and expanded it year-round, with the goal of moving people from the shelter into more permanent housing.

There's also Path San Diego's Connections Housing, which opened in 2013 and provides 134 beds where people can stay for up to three months while looking for a more stable place to live. The newly rehabilitated Hotel Churchill, a century-old building along the C Street trolley tracks, includes 72 rooms for people coming off the street, and in 2015, homeless services provider Alpha Project opened East Village's Alpha Square, which includes 203 units.

So, why are there still so many folks living on the street? No one has a definitive answer, but other large US cities with high housing costs have seen similar increases. As for the solution, everyone agrees that San Diego needs more affordable housing.

In the short-term, Mayor Kevin Faulconer, who hired Stacie Spector to be his point person on homelessness in October 2016, supports a multi-services center proposed for the corner of 20th and B streets—the current site of the city's vehicle maintenance yard—which would include as many as 300 shelter beds. But some homelessness advocates believe the \$12.5 million cost would be better spent on creating permanent housing.



San Diego Businesses, Residents Oppose Adding Temporary Homeless Shelter Downtown April 25, 2017 | Andrew Bowen, Marissa Cabrera, Maureen Cavanaugh



<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2017/apr/25/san-diego-businesses-residents-oppose-adding-tempo/>

A coalition of downtown businesses and residents are speaking out against plans to convert the old downtown library into a temporary homeless shelter.

Members of the **Downtown San Diego Partnership** along with some East Village residents said at a news conference Tuesday that the city should instead focus on long-term solutions to address homelessness such as permanent housing.

"We've seen temporary shelters go up all over downtown, and they're not really the answer," said **Kris Michell**, president and CEO of the **Downtown Partnership**. "They may be part of a solution temporarily, but it's not the answer."

The group called the news conference out of fears that the City Council would use grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to repurpose the library into a homeless shelter. City staffers said at the council meeting Tuesday afternoon that they had no intent to do so.

The old library has sat vacant since the city opened the new downtown library in 2013. Civic San Diego, the non-profit corporation that oversees development downtown, issued a request for proposals last year to redevelop the property. The mayor halted the RFP process earlier this year.

City Councilman Chris Ward, whose district includes downtown, suggested at Tuesday's council meeting that he could be open to a re-purposing of the library for temporary use, but that he did not want to see it turned into a homeless shelter in the long term.

"It is my immediate priority to see an RFP is issued for that site, and that we get a really smart development proposal in the works," he said.

Countywide data released last week showed a rise in street homelessness, particularly in downtown San Diego. Advocates, homeless service providers and public officials are debating whether temporary shelters are a necessary short-term solution to get people off the streets, or whether they are a wasteful use of the region's limited funding and that all resources should be going toward permanent housing tied in with social services.

Downtown Leaders Don't Want Homeless Shelter in Old Library

April 25, 2017 | David Garrick



<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/politics/sd-me-homeless-downtown-20170425-story.html>

Downtown San Diego leaders said on Tuesday that they oppose a potential plan to convert the old Central Library on E Street into a temporary shelter for the homeless.

A spokesman for Mayor Kevin Faulconer said the old library is among options the city is considering for additional shelter space, but that no decisions have been made.

The old library, located between Eighth and Ninth avenues, closed in 2013 when a new Central Library opened next to Petco Park.

Meanwhile, the City Council approved Faulconer's proposal on Tuesday to spend \$4.1 million in federal grants to support services to reduce homelessness.

Those projects include \$2.8 million to support a criminal diversion program led by City Attorney Mara Elliott and to add showers and restrooms to the Neil Good Day Center, where homeless people can get mail and do laundry.

The additional \$1.3 million will fund existing programs, including Connections Housing, the Cortez Hill Family Center and interim housing for homeless adults.

"This will support effective programs and vital services that can help someone without shelter get back on their feet," the mayor said in a Tuesday afternoon news release.

At a news conference on Tuesday morning, leaders of several downtown groups said one reason they oppose the potential library conversion is recent data from the Regional Task Force on the Homeless showing temporary shelter beds are underutilized and less effective than other interventions.

"It doesn't make sense to invest millions of taxpayer dollars to rehabilitate this site when the revenue generated from its development could be used in ways that would better serve San Diego's most vulnerable," said **Kris Michell**, chief executive of the **Downtown San Diego Partnership**. "This is a prime piece of real estate in the heart of downtown."

Claudette Cooper, a long-time resident and member of the East Village Residents Group, said the old library could help boost the area around it.

"If fully developed, this site will serve as a catalyst for revitalization and generate additional tax revenue for the city," she said.

Faulconer spokesman Matt Awbrey stressed that no decisions have been made about locating a shelter at the site.

"We continue to review viable options to assist homeless individuals with emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing and services," he said. "No decision about the potential use of the former central library has been made. Our priority is to provide shelter and help homeless individuals move into housing. We look forward to continuing to work with the community to reduce homelessness in San Diego."