

# DIRIDON TO DOWNTOWN

## A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT



**SJSU** SAN JOSÉ STATE  
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING  
GRADUATE CAPSTONE STUDIO  
FALL 2018 & SPRING 2019



# DIRIDON TO DOWNTOWN

A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

CREATED BY SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE CAPSTONE STUDIO CLASS  
DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING  
FALL 2018 & SPRING 2019

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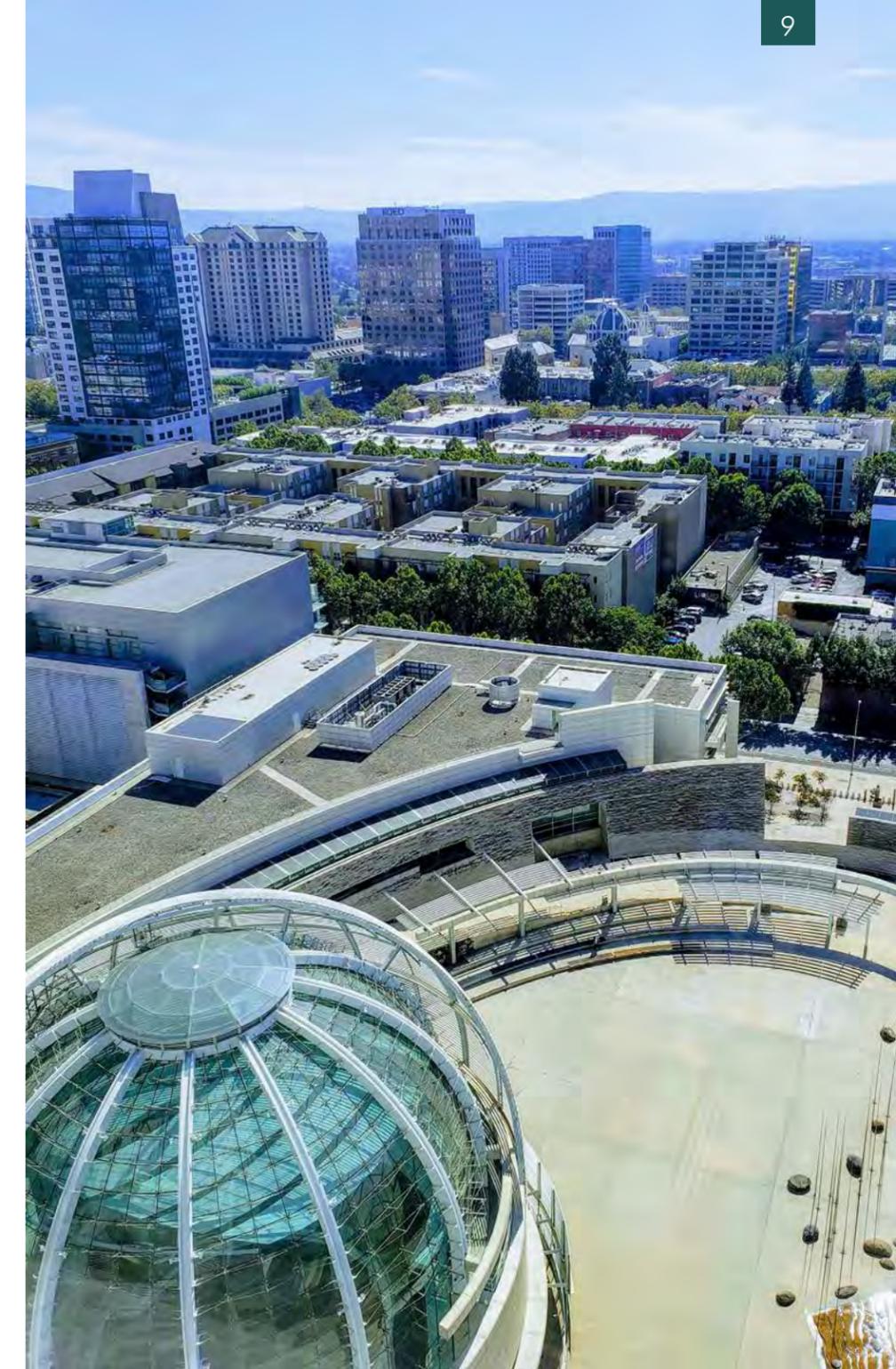


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- » SPUR
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- » SV@Home
- » Tamien Neighborhood Association
- » The Alameda Business Association
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Photo from Wikimedia Commons

# INTRODUCTION

Downtown San Jose and its connections to Diridon Station are in dire need of improvement. Currently, many users of Diridon Station, including locals, have trouble comfortably and clearly navigating to major Downtown landmarks such as the San Jose McEnery Convention Center and San Pedro Square. Creating an intuitive and comfortable pedestrian experience is necessary to build a better Downtown San Jose for local residents, employees, and visitors alike, especially as the central core of the city anticipates transformative changes in the coming decade.

In an effort to understand the status and needs of Downtown and its connection to Diridon Station, students in the San Jose State University fall 2018 and spring 2019 capstone studio in community planning courses, in coordination with CommUniverCity, conducted community assessments of the urban form and transportation connections in Diridon and Downtown. The culminating experience of each class was a community open-house event that encouraged attendees to share their thoughts and recommendations for connections within the study area; and an assessment report based on observations of existing conditions, policy analysis, and stakeholder interviews. The Spring 2019 Community Event demonstrated that the main topics of concern are clear wayfinding, a need for pedestrian safety enhancements, a wider range of mobility options, and uncertain



Fig E.1. Locals voice concerns at Spring 2019 Community Event

local and regional impacts of the proposed downtown Google campus.

The graduate students analyzed the community input and compiled a list of short-term and long-term recommendations to present to the staff of the city's Department of Transportation and Office of Economic Development. The short-

term recommendations presented here are intended to be quick, functional, or temporary interventions, while the long-term recommendations would require policy changes and infrastructure projects. The following list summarizes these recommendations and the rationale behind them. These recommendations are explained in further detail in Chapter 6 of this report.

# SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1

**Introduce pedestrian wayfinding elements between the Diridon Station, the Convention Center, and San Pedro Square, highlighting suggested routes and estimated travel times.**



A lack of wayfinding signage was one of the most often-mentioned deficiencies of Downtown San Jose. Most people agreed that wayfinding signs are desperately needed at Diridon Station and throughout Downtown. Doing so will, at a minimum, create an important "first impression" of a city that cares about the navigation needs of its employees and visitors.

2

**Designate preferred walking routes that physically separate pedestrians from traffic to the extent practicable by utilizing smaller streets, pedestrian plazas, and paseos to reduce travel time and improve the visual experience.**



Many community members at the open house noted that too many areas in Downtown feel unsafe or difficult to walk through. They noted impediments such as streets that clearly favor cars over pedestrians and numerous physical objects on sometimes too-narrow sidewalks. Creating clearly-marked walking routes for pedestrians would greatly enhance the walking experience and make walking or biking a more attractive option that might entice people in the area not to drive to their destinations.

# SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

3

Create appealing spaces to park bikes and scooters in multiple areas around Downtown, including existing parking lots.



Photo by: Streetsblog LA

Encouraging active transport such as biking and scooting, as opposed to driving, is an important goal for any city that wishes to attract a younger workforce and provide options to those who cannot, or choose not, to drive. Replacing targeted vehicle parking spaces with appealing bike and scooter spaces is an important step in this direction.

4

Partner with landowners and parking lot operators to allow for street vendors, food trucks, and other commercial activity near the Convention Center and around Diridon Station, and activate existing alleys with music and art.



Photo by: Washington Post

Community members repeatedly expressed their desire for more vibrant and “activated” public spaces to further the city’s placemaking goals and foster more social connectivity. A relatively simple way to activate spaces would be to allow street vendors and food trucks to cluster near major destinations like the Convention Center and Diridon Station. San Francisco’s StrEatfood Park is an example of such a space: a former moribund parking lot that now comes alive daily with social and economic activity.

# LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Establish a legacy business program.



Photo by: Mercury News

This program would provide funding to businesses at risk of displacement due to property value increases triggered by nearby development activity. The grant program could be modeled after the City of San Francisco Legacy Business Registry and Preservation Fund, established to preserve businesses over 30 years-old in the city.<sup>1</sup> Potential sources of funding and eligibility criteria for this program are discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>1</sup> SF Heritage, <https://www.sfheritage.org/legacy/legacy-business-registry-preservation-fund/>, accessed May 11, 2019.

2

Construct a multimodal path from Diridon Station to the Convention Center and San Pedro Square.



Photo by: Philly Complete Streets

Connecting areas of Downtown with multimodal paths will encourage walking, bicycling, and scooting and deter vehicle use. One path would run from the Diridon Station to the Convention Center parallel to the light rail. The second would extend South San Pedro St. as a pedestrian paseo through the Cityview Plaza. These suggested routes are described in Chapter 6.

3

Introduce employment programs for the homeless in redevelopment areas.



Photo by: Business Insider

Concerns about the presence of homeless people throughout Downtown areas was a major recurring theme among the graduate students and community members. The homelessness crisis may be alleviated by creating a targeted employment program as part of the redevelopment plans.

Programs developed by organizations like Code Tenderloin in San Francisco have proven successful in helping people out of homelessness.

# CHAPTER ONE

# CONNECTING PLACES, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

## CONTENTS

- 1.1 The Study Area
- 1.2 Preparing the Assessment
- 1.3 Objectives
- 1.4 Methodology
- 1.5 Assessment Layout



# INTRODUCTION

Extensive infrastructure projects in the Diridon Station area, fueled by both public and private investments, are expected to drastically transform Downtown San Jose in the coming years. Transportation infrastructure projects such as Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and California High-Speed Rail are anticipated to substantially increase the amount of foot traffic in the Diridon Station area, and position the Station as a destination itself. Adding housing, commercial, recreational, and office developments to this future scenario may accelerate the transformation of Diridon into a lively, high density, mixed-use, transit accessible neighborhood, with abundant public spaces.

## 1.1 THE STUDY AREA

The McEnery Convention Center and San Pedro Square are two of the most popular attractions in Downtown San Jose for business travelers and locals alike. In this community assessment, it will focus on the routes between them and Diridon Station, highlighting the challenges and opportunities to better link the three nodes.

Two planning documents guided the analysis for this area: The Envision San Jose General Plan, which identifies the City's needs and challenges with future population growth and urban development; and the Diridon Station Area Plan, which lays out the policies, design principles, and goals for increasing rail and transit services, and for incentivizing high density and mixed-use development in proximity to new transit lines.

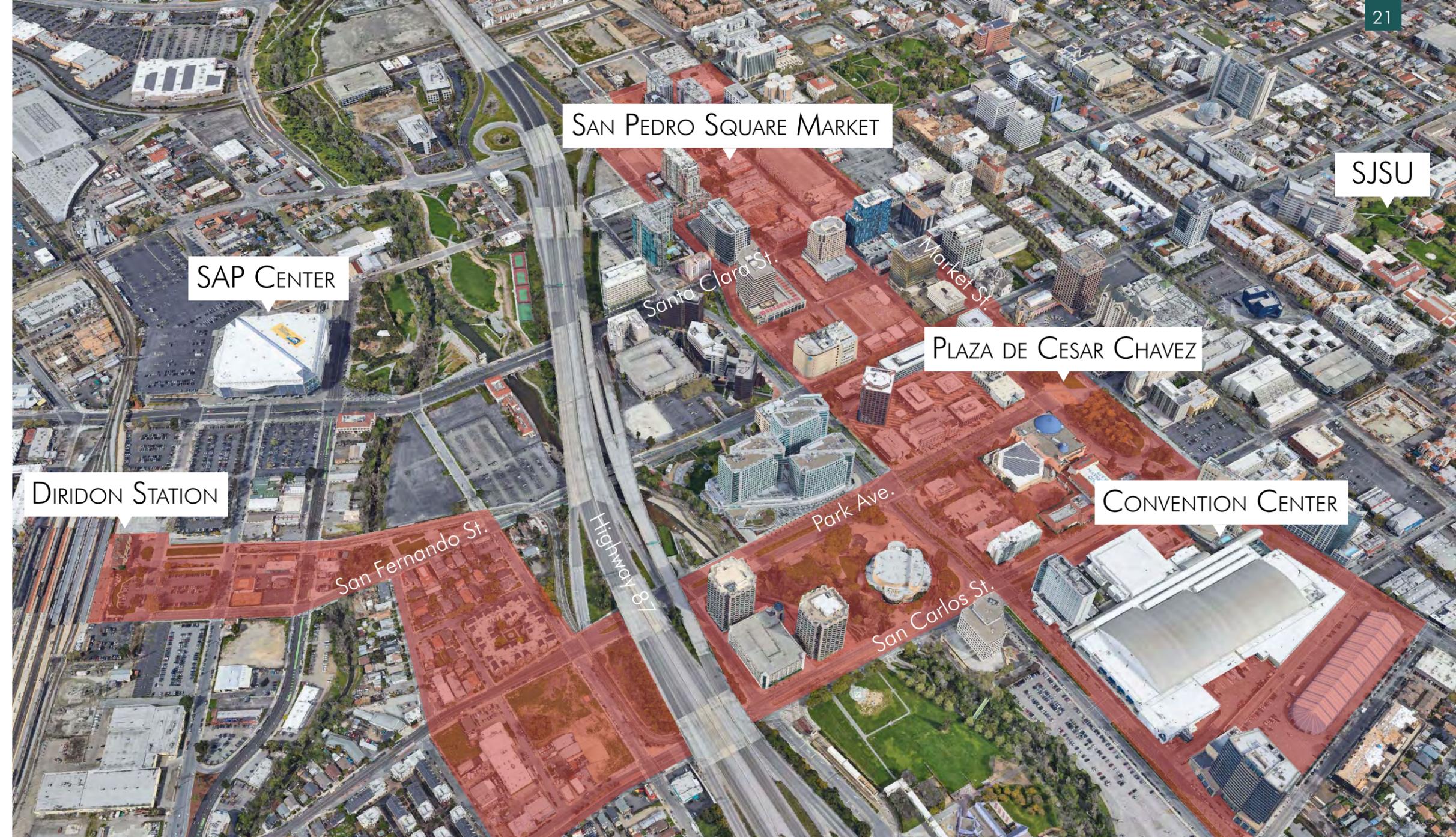
Increasing connectivity between Diridon and other districts of Downtown San Jose to bridge places and communities will require more than infrastructure investments; it will require significant concerted efforts between City, organizations, and community members. This assessment focuses on the challenges related to connectivity between Diridon Station and other important destinations like the McEnery Convention Center and San Pedro Square.

Anticipating this change, the City of San Jose partnered with the San Jose State University's graduate program in urban planning to conduct a community assessment of the Diridon Station area and its relationship to Downtown San Jose in order to gather and provide valuable community input.

Additionally, the graduate research team considered relevant planning documents, including the materials for the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) Plan process, Downtown Design Guidelines, and SPUR's report Re-envisioning the Guadalupe River Park. DISC is developing the concepts for how the future station will function. It focuses on the design and configuration of "the tracks and platform; station location and layout; access to the station by various transportation options; integration with the surrounding area; and passenger flows to, from, and through the station."<sup>1</sup> DISC seeks "to develop a world-class center of transit and public life that provides smooth connections between modes and integration with the surrounding neighborhoods."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan." Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan, [www.diridonsj.org/disc](http://www.diridonsj.org/disc), accessed May 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



## 1.2 PREPARING THE ASSESSMENT

In Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, San Jose State University graduate planning students partnered with the City of San Jose through CommUniverCity to prepare a community assessment of the Diridon Station area and Downtown.

Established in 2005, CommUniverCity engages students, city staff, and the general public in solving neighborhood problems and creating lively, vibrant, and healthy communities around central San Jose. Through this partnership, San Jose State students participate in service learning projects to document the unique and dynamic neighborhoods in central

San Jose. Information gathered through projects like this community assessment is then used to improve the City's planning process and educate residents and local officials on the state of their neighborhoods.

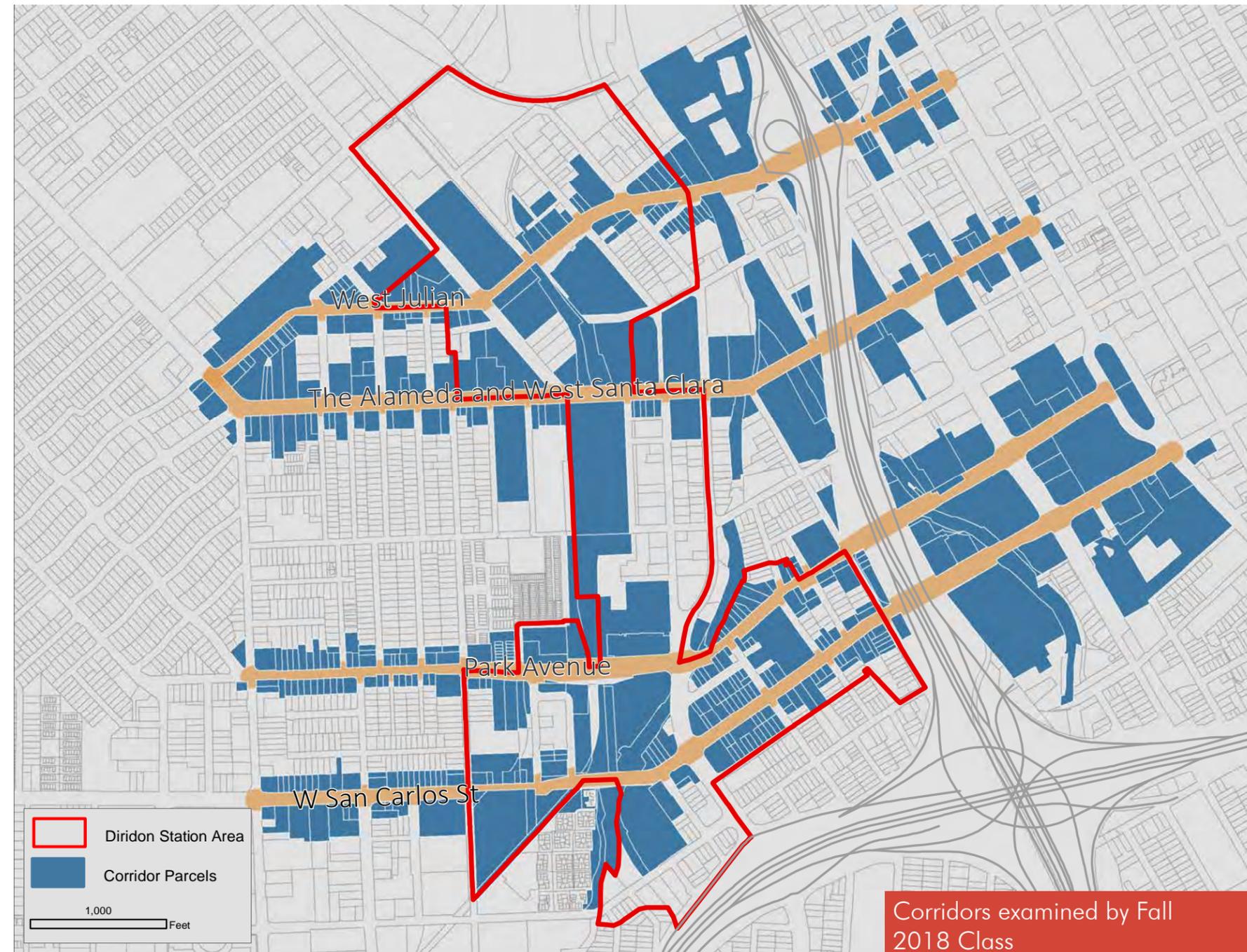
This assessment was prepared by a team of 34 graduate students in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at San Jose State University under the tutelage of faculty members Richard Kos, AICP and Jason Su. It represents a summary of the work carried out by the faculty and students and a synthesis of their findings.

## 1.3 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this assessment is to document the current conditions surrounding Diridon Station and the links, or lack thereof, between the transit center and key Downtown destinations. The graduate research team focused on routes different types of users would take between Diridon Station and the Convention Center, and between Diridon Station and San Pedro Square. It also documents detailed findings about current conditions in these downtown nodes, and recommends potential corridor improvements and policy changes that can enhance connectivity between them. This assessment also examines recommendations with existing programs and plans,

and strives to align students' recommendations to inform the development of both the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) Plan and the Downtown Transportation Plan (DTP).

The preparation of this report involves three main phases: research, assessment, and engagement. These research phases were not developed independently from each other; rather, those are part of a collaborative process that enabled the development of short-term and long-term recommendations consigned here.



Corridors examined by Fall 2018 Class

## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The assessment was carried out by two consecutive urban planning graduate classes: Fall 2018 and Spring 2019. The Fall 2018 class focused on identifying the characteristics of specific corridors and community priorities for the Diridon Station design, while the Spring 2019 class concentrated on first-hand user experiences in the area between the train station and Downtown San Jose. Both classes utilized the same methodological framework of assessment and community engagement to inform students of the current conditions and develop recommendations based on their oral and written findings.

### 1.4.1. PHASE ONE: RESEARCH & SURVEYING

The first phase analyzes research results from site-specific explorations, interviews, walking tours, and stakeholder meetings. The Fall 2018 class examined four specific east-west corridors: Julian Street, Park Avenue, West San Carlos Street, and West Santa Clara Street. On the other hand, the Spring 2019 class studied the Downtown area from the following perspectives: 1) a person attending a convention at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center; 2) a San Jose State

University student, 3) a North San Pedro neighborhood visitor, and 4) a first-time visitor exploring all three points of interest.

Students walked through their study areas and documented urban design features and transportation facilities in need of improvement. These findings were initially organized visually and geographically into collages, which were presented to, and reviewed by, project partners. The collages were then formalized into a series of professional InDesign display boards, with guest speakers from City Hall, community leaders, technical experts, and design professionals providing valuable feedback and input.

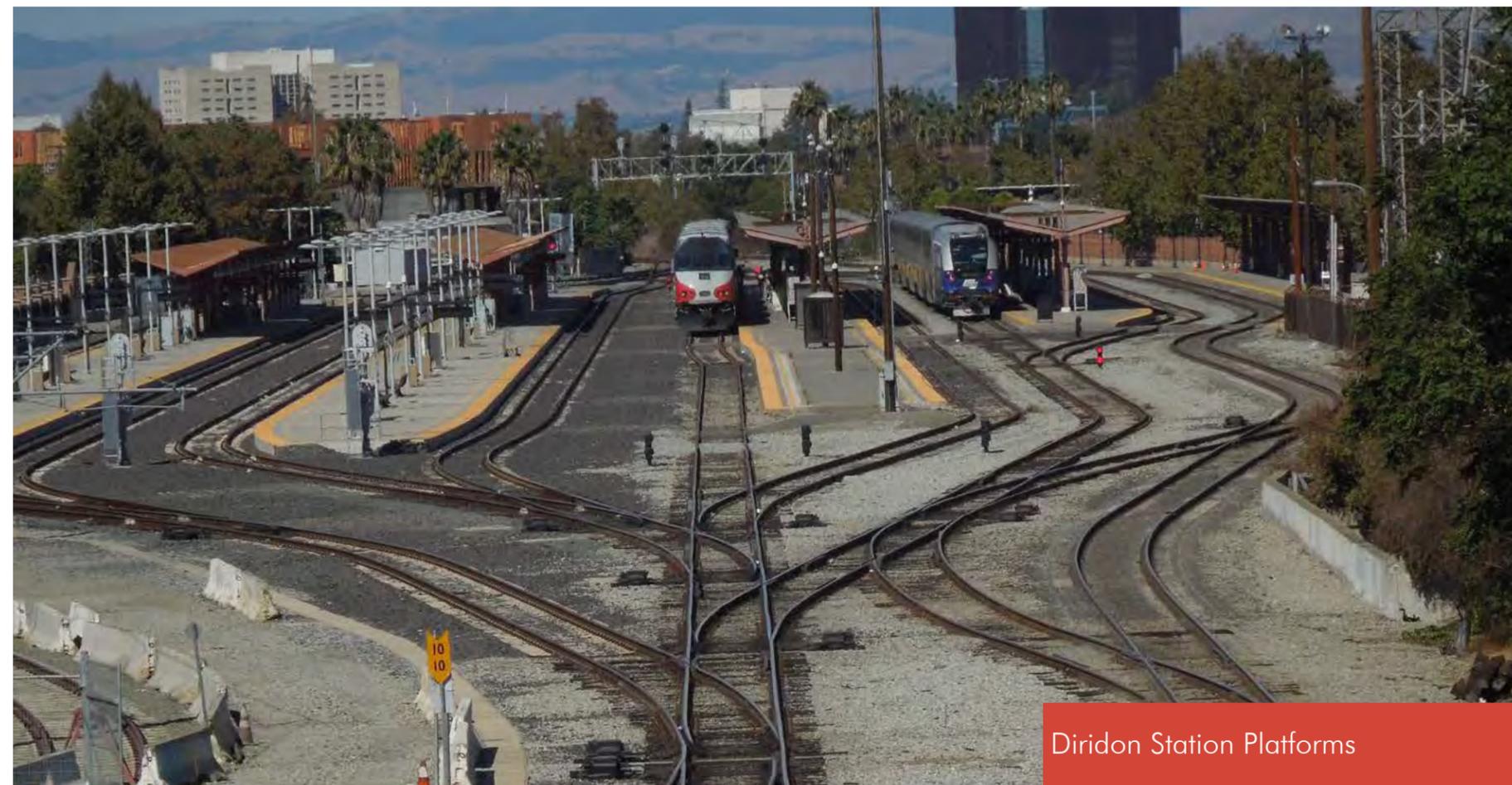
To better understand the policy and development framework of the area, the students compiled a list of relevant plans and policy documents from the private and public sectors, reviewing them extensively to ensure their recommendations were closely aligned with existing plans.

### 1.4.2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Phase two of the course involves actively engaging with the Downtown San Jose community and the production of this document. To accomplish this, the graduate students convened focus groups, held a community engagement event, and presented assessment findings to stakeholders at the end of the semester. They also pilot-tested an online engagement platform which provides an avenue for community members to learn what students envision for improving connectivity between Diridon Station, the Convention Center, and San Pedro Square, as well as soliciting the general public for their input on the design proposals. The online platform will then collect information about the community's feelings about the changes that might take place in their neighborhood, which will then be reviewed by planning officials and deliberated by the City Council.

## 1.5 ASSESSMENT LAYOUT

The report is divided into six chapters that showcase the conditions and challenges of linking Diridon Station with Downtown from various perspectives. Chapters 2 through 4 focus on the specific urban design elements, current state of infrastructure, and mobility options in the three study areas, with Chapter 2 focusing on Diridon Station, Chapter 3 on the Convention Center, and Chapter 4 on San Pedro Square. Chapter 5 synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters, including connectivity challenges and addressing the dynamic planning landscape of San Jose. Finally, Chapter 6 prescribes short- and long-term recommendations, highlighting limitations and needs for future research.



Diridon Station Platforms

# CHAPTER TWO

# DIRIDON STATION

## CONTENTS

Introduction

2.1 History & Development Patterns

2.2 Community Characteristics

2.3 Mobility Options & Quality of Place

2.4 Built Environment & Open Space

2.5 Short-Term Recommendations



## INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this Assessment, the Diridon Station area refers to the neighborhood immediately surrounding the Diridon Transit Station bounded by Julian Street to the north, Interstate 280 (I-280) to the south, the Southern Pacific railroad tracks to the west and State Route 87 (SR-87) to the east.

San Jose Diridon Station is the primary multimodal transportation hub for the City and Santa Clara County and is poised to undergo rapid and substantial changes for several years, with the potential of radically transforming the urban form and character of the area. This chapter will explore community assets and challenges in the Diridon Station area in terms of connectivity, urban design and form, mobility options, and infrastructure.

## 2.1 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The Diridon Station area has a long history of agricultural production and shipping. For the first two centuries of Euro-American settlement, much of the Santa Clara Valley and the Diridon Station area was surrounded by active agricultural operations.<sup>1</sup> The climate, soil, and regular flooding of the Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creeks created an ideal environment for the cultivation of stone fruits and facilitated a booming agricultural industry which supported growing populations northward to San Francisco.<sup>2</sup> Development in the Diridon Station area at the time was limited to canneries and warehouses. The completion of the Lewis Canal and channelization of the Guadalupe River in the 1860s then allowed the wetlands in what is now the Delmas Park neighborhood to be drained, spurring further development of the area.<sup>3</sup>

From the 1870s to the 1940s, San Jose prospered as a financial and mercantile center, thanks to the completion of the San Jose-San Francisco Railroad in 1864, allowing more goods and people to move between the burgeoning communities of

San Jose and San Francisco. By the 1880s, railway ownership was transferred to Southern Pacific, and an extension was built to connect the main line to Downtown San Jose at the Market Street station. By the 1930s, train traffic through Downtown San Jose increased considerably, causing significant congestion. In response, Cahill Depot (later renamed Diridon Station) was built in 1935 to redirect train traffic away from downtown.

For the next half-century, decentralized development became the method of

mitigating traffic congestion.<sup>4</sup> Dramatic growth in the post-war years facilitated the annexation of unincorporated lands on all sides of San Jose's city limits to accommodate the growing population. The city's decentralization was further accelerated by the development of the freeway system and widespread automobile ownership.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the Diridon Station area experienced sparse development during the second half of the 20th century as many of its businesses and residents left

<sup>4</sup> San Jose State University, Department of Urban Planning, Diridon Station area Community Assessment Report, December 5, 2018.  
<sup>5</sup> City of San Jose, Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan, <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/474>, November 1, 2011.



Photo by: Wikimedia

Historic map of the route from San Jose to San Francisco



the neighborhood in favor of new suburban neighborhoods.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1980s, residents of the Delmas Park neighborhood actively advocated for new development to reactivate and revitalize the Diridon Station area.<sup>7</sup> The formation of Fund Arena Now, a citizen advocacy group promoting the development of a city sports arena, successfully lobbied for a partnership with the National Hockey League and then-Mayor Tom McEnery. The arena, now called SAP Center, was completed in 1993.<sup>8</sup> Despite the massive public investment, the stadium did little to catalyze further development in the Diridon Station area.<sup>9</sup> In response, City Council and their staffers drafted and revised several plans establishing a clear vision for the future of the Diridon Station area. These planning documents include the Delmas Park Improvement Plan (2002, amended 2007), Diridon Station Area Plan (2014, currently being revised to incorporate Google development), and the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan (being prepared as of May 2019).

The Delmas Park Improvement Plan focuses on hyperlocal issues to improve neighborhood conditions around the Diridon Station. The plan prioritizes improving residential parking

<sup>6</sup> Delmas Park Neighborhood Association, Delmas Park Neighborhood Improvement Plan, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4856>, April 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

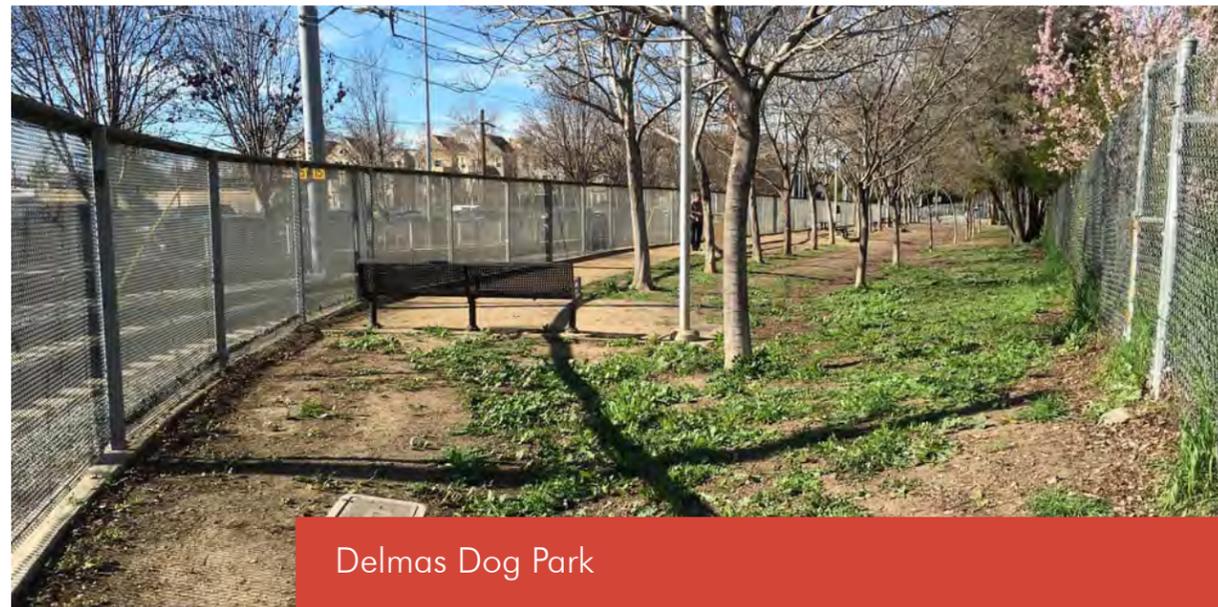
<sup>8</sup> Mark Purdy, "Arena Vote years ago made San Jose a real city," San Jose Mercury News, July 7, 2008;

<sup>9</sup> Kathy Sutherland, "Delmas Park Walking Tour." (Presentation, San Jose, CA March 6, 2019).

conditions, streetscapes, and sidewalks, creating a neighborhood traffic plan, modifying existing land use policies, and developing neighborhood parks. At a broader scale, the first version of the Diridon Station Area Plan (2014) envisioned the area as a lively regional destination for sports events, including the construction of a baseball stadium south of the Diridon Station which would have been home to the Oakland Athletics.<sup>10</sup> Despite concerted efforts to secure a deal with the team, the arena was not built and the area remains vacant and underutilized today.

In 2016, renewed interest in the Diridon Station area as a transportation hub of

<sup>10</sup> City of San Jose, Diridon Station area Plan, <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=4404>, June 17, 2014.



Delmas Dog Park

statewide importance prompted the City to revisit and redesign its existing plans for the area with an amended version of the Diridon Station Area Plan and a new Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan. Although a draft of this plan has not been published for public review, early feedback from City staff suggested focusing on transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhoods with linked open spaces, abundant public and active transportation options, and lively streetscapes.<sup>11</sup> The expected results would be an area with a much stronger sense of place and improved connections to Downtown.

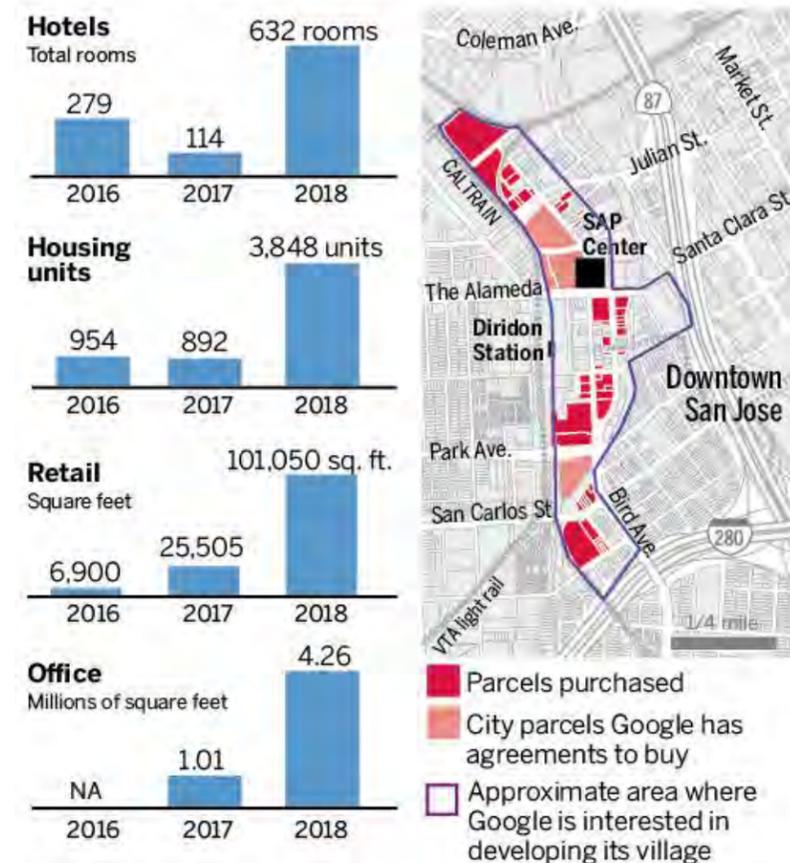
<sup>11</sup> Lori Severino, Doug Moody, and Charla Gomez, "Introduction to CommUniverCity Partnership," (presentation, San Jose City Hall, San Jose, CA February 6, 2019).

## 2.2

# COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

### GOOGLE'S EFFECT ON DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE

Proposed hotels, housing, retail and office space have skyrocketed since Google's transit village was announced.



Source: City of San Jose

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

The Diridon Station area exemplifies an urban mixed-use neighborhood with an almost equal balance of residents (2,149) and employees (2,131).<sup>1</sup> A majority of residents (76%) reported holding professional or white collar jobs, while 62% of businesses in the study area are blue collar industries such as construction, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, transportation, wholesale, automotive and other services.<sup>2</sup> The median household income of residents is nearly half of the citywide average at \$55,444, compared to \$93,891 for San Jose. Residents in the Diridon Station area, therefore, are particularly vulnerable to changes in property values due to market shifts and development activity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> San Jose State University, Department of Urban Planning, Diridon Station area Community Assessment Report, December 5, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, (April 17, 2019).

### 2.2.1. PREPARING FOR CHANGE

During a City Council hearing on December 4, 2018 regarding the proposed sale of 21 acres of City-owned land in the Diridon Station area to Google, many residents came out in vocal and hostile opposition to the deal.<sup>1</sup> Community members expressed fear of displacement as a result of the so-called "Google-effect"—the increase in property value based on market speculation around the future Google development. Since the approval of the sale, property values in the area soared by 20% or more according to reports by the Mercury News.<sup>2</sup> Despite the opposition, some people in the Delmas Park Neighborhood Association are optimistic about working with a major developer like Google instead of multiple smaller developers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Emily Drury, San Jose City Council Approves Sale of Land to Google in Meeting Marked by Arrests and Protests," Mercury News, December 4, 2018. <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/12/04/san-jose-city-council-votes-on-google-land-sale-today/>.

<sup>2</sup> George Avalos, "Google Effect: search giant spurs downtown San Jose boom," Mercury News, January 13, 2019. <https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/01/13/google-effect/>

<sup>3</sup> Kathy Sutherland and Bert Weaver, "Delmas Park Walking Tour." (Presentation, San Jose, CA March 6, 2019).

## 2.3 MOBILITY OPTIONS AND QUALITY OF PLACE

The current urban form of the Diridon Station area exhibits a patchwork of extremes in building scale and land use intensity, resulting in a disconnected and dissatisfying experience for pedestrians and active transit users. The scale of buildings in the Diridon Station area ranges from compact, historic residential developments in the Lakehouse District, to the mammoth and modern SAP Center flanked alongside low rise industrial buildings and extensive surface parking lots. This stark contrast in scale between newer developments and historic buildings creates a disconnect throughout the neighborhood, severely impeding pedestrian activity.

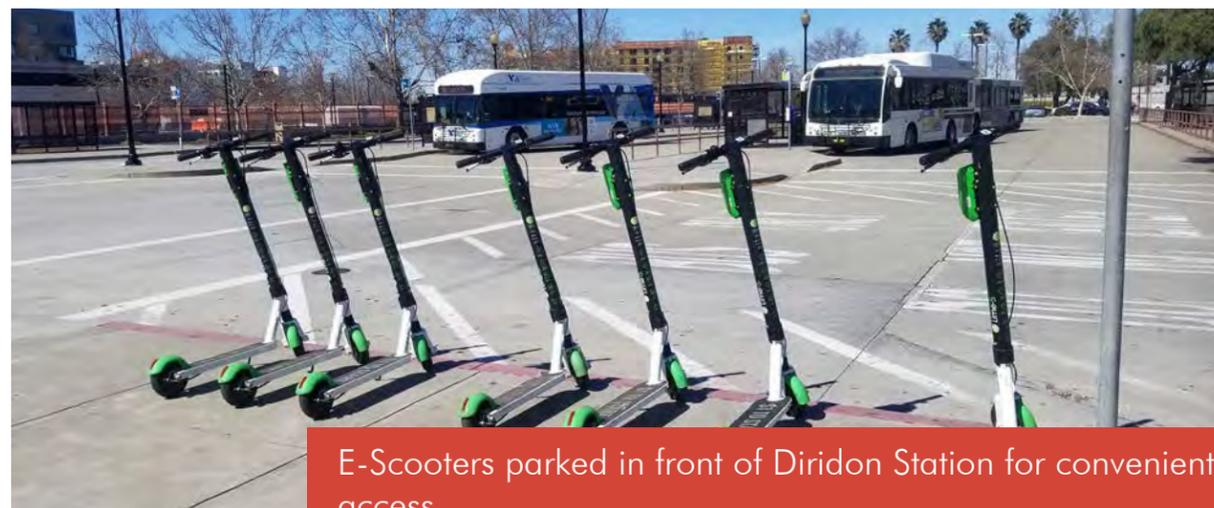
### 2.3.1. ISSUES OF CONNECTIVITY, NAVIGABILITY, AND WAYFINDING

Transportation facilities in the Diridon Station area are more abundant compared to other neighborhoods in San Jose, but the mobility options are often inconvenient, inconsistent, and inefficient.

The street typology around the station area ranges from narrow one-way residential streets to wide arterial streets to elevated freeways. Currently, California State Route 87 (SR-87) attributes the greatest transportation impact to the area. SR-87 is an elevated freeway that runs north-south between the suburban residential neighborhoods of south San Jose and large employment centers, San Jose International Airport, and downtown to the north. The current design of SR-87 and plans for future improvements are outlined in the Transportation Concept Report for State Route

87.<sup>1</sup> The report identifies development and land use trends in the area surrounding SR-87 which influence long-term transportation demand for the highway and various active

<sup>1</sup> California Department of Transportation, Transportation Concept Report for State Route 87, October 24, 2014, [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/3\\_SR%2087%20TCR.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/3_SR%2087%20TCR.pdf)



E-Scooters parked in front of Diridon Station for convenient access

transportation infrastructure within the right-of-way.<sup>2</sup> SR 87 currently provides multimodal transportation through a range of facilities in the Caltrans right-of-way, including traditional highway auto lanes, the Guadalupe River

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Trail, urban sidewalks, and light rail service throughout the highway's right-of-way. According to the Transportation Concept Report, areas of the SR-87 right-of-way that require greatest improvements in the coming decades are at street level, including bike facility improvements to the San Carlos Street and Julian Street underpasses, and the installation of bike lanes along San Fernando Street, Park Avenue, and San Antonio Street.<sup>3</sup> These measures, if implemented, will benefit pedestrians, bicyclists, and scooter users with wider, safer buffers that will segregate walking, cycling, and vehicular traffic.

Public transportation around the Diridon Station is currently served by nine local, regional, and national providers. These include Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) bus and light rail, Amtrak and Amtrak Thruway Motorcoach, Caltrain, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE), Greyhound, Megabus, Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transportation District, and Monterey-Salinas Transit. At Diridon Station, nine platforms carry heavy rail services with Caltrain, Amtrak, and ACE, and two side platforms serve VTA light rail southwest of the main station. Connections to bus services are available at the station's transit center located northeast of the main station building.

In addition, heavy rail projects including Caltrain electrification and BART Silicon Valley Extension will enhance public transportation options at Diridon Station. The Caltrain Strategic Plan denotes planned upgrades

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



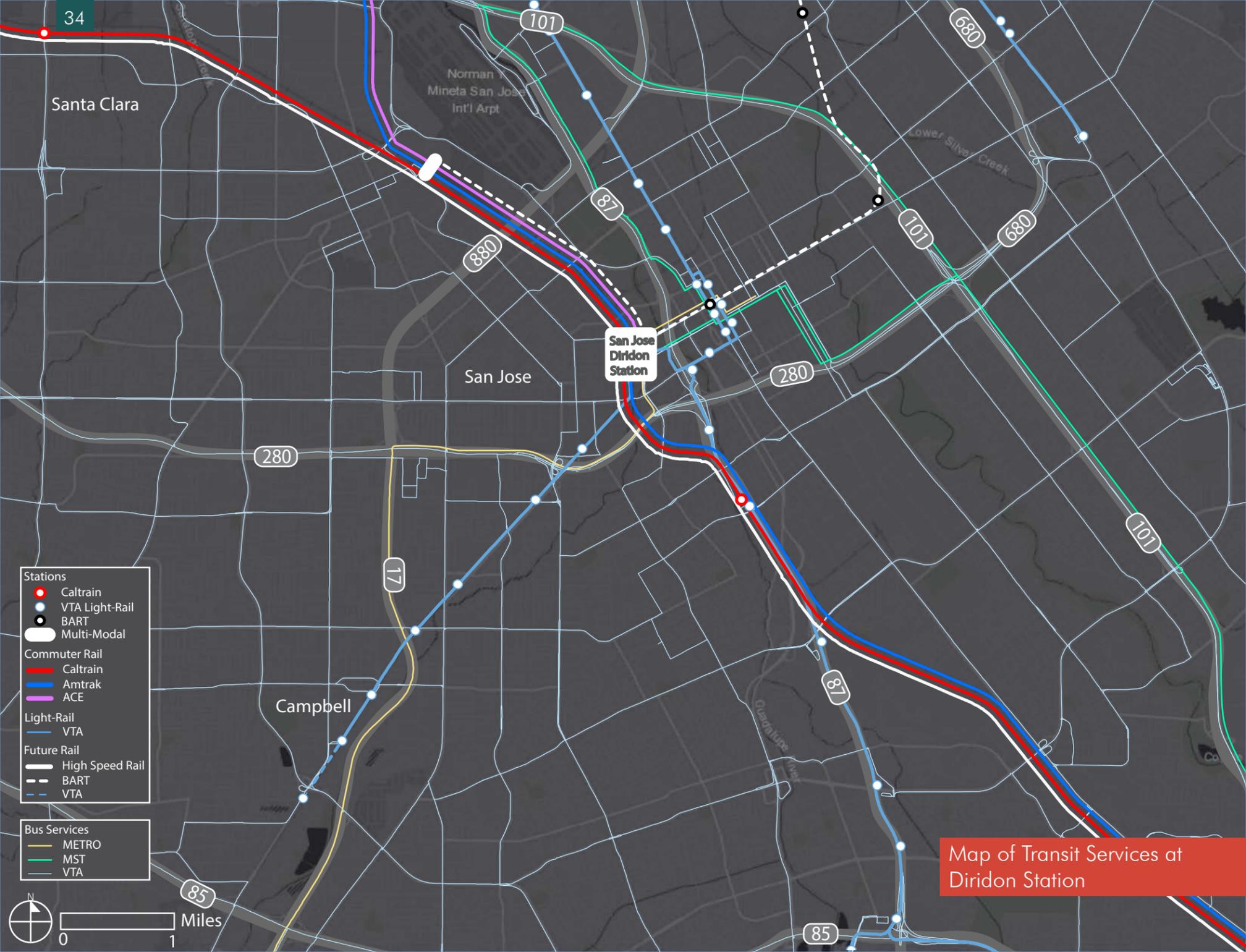
Caltrain at Diridon Station

along the 51-mile section of track between 4th & King Depot in San Francisco and Tamien Station in San Jose, including track electrification, purchasing higher capacity train sets, linking service levels to ridership, improving intermodal connections and enhancing first and last-mile connections to stations. The Silicon Valley BART extension, on the other hand, will connect the existing BART line at Warm Springs/South Fremont through Milpitas, Downtown San Jose, and eventually terminate in Santa Clara. Phase 1 of the extension involves the construction of Milpitas Station near Great Mall and East San Jose/Berryessa Station next to the San Jose Flea Market. Phase 2 will have three stops: one in Downtown San Jose (either at City Hall or

Santa Clara & 1st Streets), another at Diridon Station, and finally at Santa Clara Caltrain. Together, these transportation projects are expected to increase the number of transit users at Diridon Station to 140,000 users in 2040.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the abundance of transit services from Diridon Station, transferring between services can be daunting for visitors. Multiple payment methods, a lack of wayfinding signs, and the unintuitive station design can be especially confusing for first-time visitors. While Clipper provides a unified payment option for Caltrain, BART, and the VTA, it is not accepted as a payment option for the

<sup>4</sup> Unknown, "Station Area Advisory Group Meeting # 10," (Presentation, San Jose City Hall, San Jose, CA October 18, 2018).



Map of Transit Services at Diridon Station

other transit services operating at the station. The lack of payment method cohesion inhibits the Bay Area from achieving full-seamless transportation.

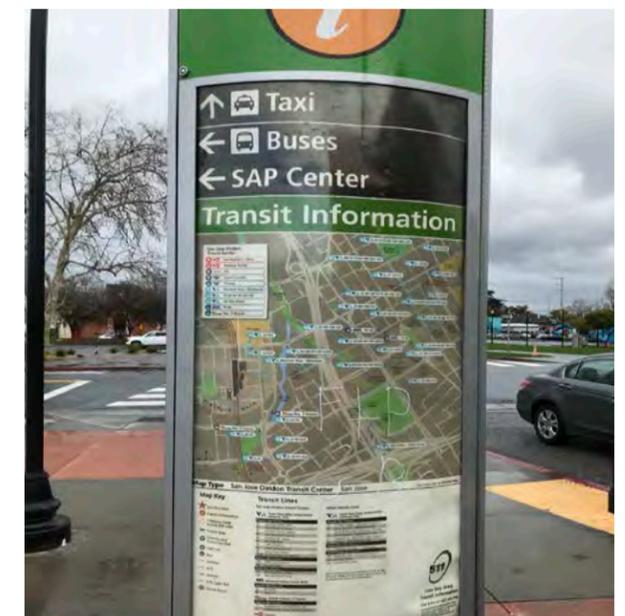
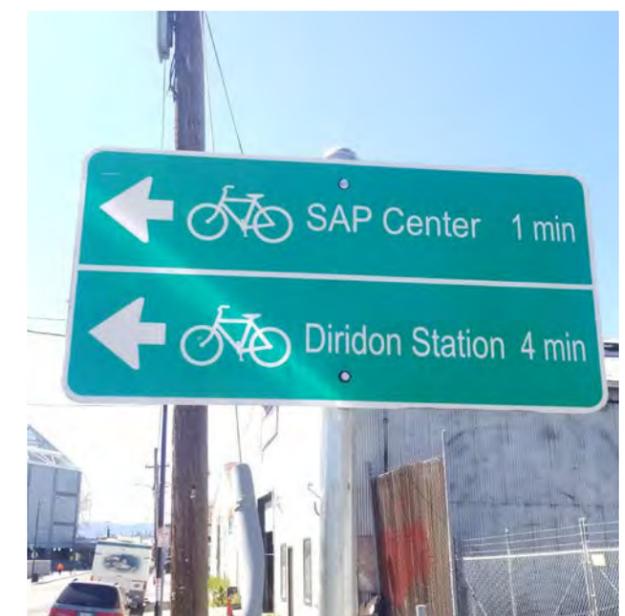
Wayfinding signs are few and far between. Two large wayfinding signs are located at either end of the underground passageway for passengers continuing to buses and light rail. There are "To Station" signs towards the bottom of each station platform ramp, as well as a large overhead sign pointing passengers to the trains in one direction, the buses on the other, and the station concourse on either side. Although there are passenger screens for upcoming trains with Caltrain, directional signs to transit options along the passageway and on the station platforms are inconsistent, if not conspicuously absent. The real time departure screens located throughout the station can also be unreliable as they often run into computer problems and can be especially difficult to read from a distance. Finding the ideal transit connection beyond Diridon can be equally daunting, especially with staff members who only know their transit agency's information and not the others that serve the station. Based on interviews with transit users, the most confusing transfer is between heavy rail platforms or buses and light rail. To make this transfer, pedestrians must navigate through the station underpass without signs indicating the direction of light rail service, with only a large sign saying "Light Rail" visible towards the western end of the walkway. Bigger, well-lit signage directing passengers to the station building, buses,

light rail station, and bike share stations are necessary to improve connections and transfers at Diridon Station.

Driving to and from the station can also be challenging. West Santa Clara Street can be especially impacted during special events at SAP Center, including San Jose Sharks games, concerts, and other special gatherings. Cahill, San Fernando, Autumn, and Montgomery Streets are typically congested during rush hour, especially with commuters driving to and from I-280 and West San Carlos Street. Ridesharing services further congest roadways surrounding the station. And the car ramp leading to the station is used by taxis, private shuttles, ridesharing vehicles, and pedestrians

alike, leading to delays.

Accessing the station by bike and scooter is, by far, the easiest way to access the station than by car or bus. Currently, a docked bikeshare station across from the station entrance and parked electric scooters near the station entrance are available for first- and last-mile journeys between Diridon and Downtown.



Examples of wayfinding near Diridon Station





Guadalupe River Park

## 2.4.2. UNDERUTILIZED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Open space in the Diridon Station area is limited compared to other areas of central San Jose. Three parks, Arena Green, Guadalupe River Trail, and Discovery Dog Park, as well as two smaller public spaces, provide recreation spaces for locals and visitors. The limited number of open spaces provides ample opportunities for future developments to incorporate more parks and plazas to increase the station area's attractiveness for everyone.

The largest park in the Diridon Station area is Arena Green. Located across from SAP Center at Santa Clara & Autumn Streets. Arena Green is a large landscaped park with child-friendly amenities, including a carousel and several play structures. Despite the availability of child-oriented amenities, its location several blocks from the nearest residential neighborhoods in all directions and adjacent to SR-87 makes visiting the park undesirable for many families with young children. As a result, this park is often underutilized, most frequently occupied by homeless residents.

Adjacent to Arena Green to the west and located directly under SR-87, the Guadalupe River Trail is a linear park that occupies the banks of the Guadalupe River running in a north-south direction through Downtown San Jose and connecting to a number of other separate public parks including Arena

Green. The Guadalupe River trail features a multimodal riverside path with several stepped concrete gathering spaces. Access to the Guadalupe River Trail from the Diridon Station area is provided at a number of formal and informal points, at both street- and riverbed-level, many of which are poorly marked and difficult to find.

Since its initial construction in 1995, multiple plans have been published to direct future development along the Guadalupe River trail. The first of these plans was the Guadalupe River Park Master Plan (1995 and revised in 2002) followed by the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens Urban Design Guidelines for Development Adjacent to the Guadalupe River (2003), and the Confluence Area Activation Strategy (2003). Despite these concerted efforts, the trail remains underutilized, and many portions are occupied by homeless encampments. In April 2019, SPUR published a white paper outlining the challenges and opportunities associated with Guadalupe River Trail, in which a call for action on the part of the City and community organizations is needed to improve the quality of this unique open space.<sup>1</sup>

The smallest, yet most well-used park in the Diridon Station Area is the Discovery Dog Park, located on a narrow lot along Park Avenue between Delmas Avenue and SR-87. Completed in the early 2000's as a result of lobbying by the Delmas Park Neighborhood Association, the dog park is conveniently

1 SPUR, Re-envisioning the Guadalupe River Park, April 2019, [https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications\\_pdfs/SPUR\\_Re-envisioning\\_the\\_Guadalupe\\_River\\_Park.pdf](https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications_pdfs/SPUR_Re-envisioning_the_Guadalupe_River_Park.pdf)

located adjacent to several new housing developments along Delmas Avenue and nearby Lakehouse District. As a result, this compact open space is well utilized by area residents and provides much needed open space in the neighborhood.<sup>2</sup>

Other, existing public open spaces around the station area include the San Fernando Light Rail station plaza and the lawn at the Diridon Station. While these open spaces are considerably smaller than Arena Green or the Guadalupe River Trail, due to their proximity to transit facilities, these are frequently occupied by residents and visitors.

2 Delmas Park Neighborhood Association, Delmas Park Neighborhood Improvement Plan, October 2007, <http://www.sjredevelopment.org/StrongNeighborhoods/DelmasPark/DelmasParkNeighborhoodImprovementPlanAmendment.pdf>

## 2.5

## SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into consideration community assessment findings, existing plans, and feedback gathered through community engagement, the following represent a brief list of high level action items which designed to improve the urban form and connectivity in the Diridon Station area.



Photo By: SF Eater

Activate parking lots and freeway under crossings by allowing food trucks and mobile vendors to sell there free of charge (Santa Clara Street, San Fernando).



Photo By: Magic Carpet Murals

Paint sidewalks to assist pedestrians navigate to popular nearby destinations.  
-  
Install decorative painted crosswalks on SR-87 on and off ramps increase pedestrian visibility and safety (West Julian, Park Avenue, West San Carlos).



Photo By: PlanPhilly

Use planters with trees and colorful flowers to along path from Diridon to San Fernando Light Rail Station to assist in intuitive wayfinding and beautification.



Photo By: SPUR

# CHAPTER THREE



# CONVENTION CENTER

## CONTENTS

Introduction

3.1 History & Development Patterns

3.2 Community Characteristics

3.3 Mobility Options & Quality of Place

3.4 Built Environment & Open Space

3.5 Short-Term Recommendations



CONVENTION CENTER

● Project Area



700 Feet

## INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this assessment, the Convention Center area refers to the area immediately adjacent to the McEnery Convention Center, bounded by South Almaden Boulevard and First Street in the South-North direction, and by Park Avenue and Balbach Street in the West-East direction.

This chapter provides an overview of community assets and challenges for the Convention Center area in terms of connectivity, urban design, transportation facilities, and services. To frame the exploration of how people experience this part of San Jose, the graduate student team adopted a series of personas that represented different human perspectives involving aspects of gender, age, abilities, and socio-cultural background. The chapter concludes with a series of short-term recommendations for supporting better connectivity to a broader spectrum of destinations between Diridon and the Convention Center.

## 3.1 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The Convention Center area of San Jose has been the epicenter of local events and regional attractions since the late 18th century, when the first Spanish colonial square was laid out on the grounds of the Plaza de Cesar Chavez at the steps of today's McEnery Convention Center.<sup>1</sup>

The cultivation of cash crops in the late 1800s and the development of industrial canneries for processing and shipping produce in the late 1900s<sup>2</sup> paved the way for the development of the Horticultural Hall in 1886, and later the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds on Tully Road in the early 1940s.<sup>3</sup> These places served as the main public gathering spaces for locals to showcase their agricultural products, with the Fairgrounds continuing to play as a primary event venue in San Jose.<sup>4</sup>

As the City prospered and financial industries blossomed alongside the long-standing agricultural industry, demand for concerts and other entertainment events drove the construction of the Municipal Auditorium which was completed in 1934 at the corner

<sup>1</sup> Archives & Architecture, Historical Evaluation Museum Place Mixed Use Project, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/66138>, accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> SPUR, Re-envisioning the Guadalupe River Park, file:///Users/andrearjona/Downloads/SPUR\_Reenvisioning\_the\_Guadalupe\_River\_Park.pdf, accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> County of Santa Clara, Chronology and Annotated Bibliography of Fairgrounds Revitalization Initiatives, <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/fat/capital-projects/fg/Documents/Chronology%20of%20Fairgrounds%201800%20-%202013%20Rvsd%20v10.pdf>, Accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> SPUR, Re-envisioning the Guadalupe River Park, file:///Users/andrearjona/Downloads/SPUR\_Reenvisioning\_the\_Guadalupe\_River\_Park.pdf, accessed April 23, 2019.

of West San Carlos Street and South Market Avenue.<sup>5</sup> Today, the Municipal Auditorium, known as the City National Civic, attracts performances, conferences and concerts of local, national, and international acclaim.

The growth of the communications and technology industry in the post-World War II years fueled demand for a more modern convention space in Downtown San Jose. In 1964, the Jay McCabe Convention Hall was completed to accommodate the growing

<sup>5</sup> The Living New Deal, "San Jose Civic Auditorium," <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/san-jose-civic-auditorium-san-jose-ca/>, accessed April 23, 2019.

demand for both cultural and professional events. And a decade later, the National Civic was expanded with the addition of the Parkside Hall in 1975.<sup>6</sup>

By 1989, increased demand for a large event space coupled with a need to redevelop the declining central city led to the construction of the San Jose Convention Center (renamed McEnery Convention Center in 1991) in the modernist community plaza-style predominant

<sup>6</sup> Archives & Architecture, Historical Evaluation: Museum Place Mixed Use Project, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/66138>, accessed April 23, 2019.



Photo by: Living New Deal

Photo of San Jose Civic Auditorium

in other buildings of the time. Since its initial construction, two major expansions have been completed: the South Hall, opened in 2005; and a significant expansion and renovation of the entire complex in 2013.<sup>7</sup> The Convention Center area also enjoyed a spike of new hotels, restaurants, business centers, and parking structures. According to Team San Jose, the managing organization for the Convention Center, today's convention and cultural facilities bring to the City's revenue about \$10 million in local taxes from approximately 1.34 million attendees, a number that has been steadily increasing in the past five years.<sup>8</sup> In 2017 alone, the Convention Center and supporting event venues generated about 1,600 part-time employment positions, and hotels and local businesses in San Jose generated about \$111 million in revenue.<sup>9</sup>



Convention Center Area

### 3.1.1. ISSUES OF GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT

This area of downtown has seen consistent development interest, such that urban development around the Convention Center has accelerated much further compared to other areas. The Convention Center area has seen a major development project approximately every decade since the 1930s, including new event venues, offices, housing projects, and hotels.

The amount of new development, however, has been met with controversies. The McEnery Convention Center was one of the city's Redevelopment Agency downtown projects<sup>1</sup> that worsened the displacement of low-income and Hispanic households around the Guadalupe-Auzerais Redevelopment Area,<sup>2</sup>

including Guadalupe River Park, SAP Center, and Children's Discovery Museum, among others.<sup>3</sup> In 1986, Los Angeles Times staff writer Mark Stein reported that residents displaced by the construction of the Convention Center filed a lawsuit against the City of San Jose for relocation assistance.<sup>4</sup> The Redevelopment Agency was dissolved in 2012, but recent conversations derived from new infrastructure and development proposals, such as BART and the Google Village Project, revived sentiments of displacement and gentrification.

<sup>1</sup> San Jose Redevelopment Agency, "Redevelopment Works," <http://www.sjredevelopment.org/projects.htm>, accessed April 28, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Karen Chapple and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-oriented displacement or community dividends? Understanding the Effects of Smarter Growth on Communities," MIT 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Harris et.al, "Urban redevelopment around Diridon Station. Case study on gentrification and displacement pressures around Diridon Station of San Jose, CA," Center for Community Innovation, University of California Berkeley, June 2005, [http://iurd.berkeley.edu/uploads/San\\_Jose\\_Final.pdf](http://iurd.berkeley.edu/uploads/San_Jose_Final.pdf), accessed April 28, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Mark Stein, "Big ambitions: San Jose- seeking to come of age," LA Times, October 5 1986, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-10-05-mn-4678-story.html>, accessed April 29 2019.

### 3.1.2. FUTURE CHALLENGES: MITIGATING IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Gen Fujioka, the lawyer for displaced Guadalupe-Auzerais residents in the 1980s, argued at the time, "communities that have maintained the vitality of the downtown area through many lean years of marginal public and private services... [can] be pushed out of their historic neighborhoods exactly at a time when the area becomes, because of massive public investment, a 'desirable' place in which to live and do business."<sup>1</sup> While it is highly desirable to improve connectivity and enhance economic opportunities between Diridon Station and the Convention Center, recognizing past efforts by residents and city officials is crucial to ensure all voices will be heard and address past mistakes in urban development.

<sup>1</sup> Gen Fujioka, "Overhauling the residential face of downtown city must assure that gentrification won't displace longtime communities," San Jose Mercury News, February 26 1986, San Jose Mercury News Archives, <https://www.mercurynews.com/archive-search/>, accessed April 29 2019.



San Carlos Street looking east

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Team San Jose, "Annual Report 2017," <https://www.sanjose.org/pdf/2017-annual-report>, accessed April 28, 2019

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## 3.2 COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Most households in the Census blocks adjacent to the Convention Center are Hispanic between the ages of 15 and 44, and over 36% of the population in these blocks live in non-family households.<sup>1</sup> Over 86% of these households are renters that devote the majority of their income to housing costs.<sup>2</sup> According to the most recent Census data, the median household income in the residential blocks adjacent to the Convention Center between West San Carlos Street and Highway 280 is \$37,750 and most residents are employed in the services industry.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the median household income of the majority White and Asian households in the Census blocks between West San Carlos Street and the North San Pedro area is \$132,471.<sup>4</sup> These residents are mostly employed in professional sectors, and about 19% live in non-family households.<sup>5</sup>

Stark differences can be found between residents living around the Convention Center and convention attendees. While visitors can enjoy events, coffee shops, restaurants, and parking facilities at and around the Convention Center, some residents find difficulties in getting around the area,

especially when large events block West San Carlos Street. The amount of disconnect between local residents and out-of-town visitors highlights disparities in wealth, access, and interaction, fueling the displacement issue even further.

### 3.2.1: DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT NEEDS

The San Jose McEnery Convention Center hosts hundreds of diverse events every year, including the Silicon Valley Auto Show, Silicon Valley Comic Con, tech conferences, school sports tournaments and more. Visitors to the Convention Center are as varied as the events hosted there, from educational tours to technology conferences. In spite of this diversity, most supporting services immediately adjacent to the Convention Center, from hotels to restaurants to parking garages, are tailored to a very specific convention demographic: the business convention attendee. Other user personas adopted for this research encountered important issues of accessibility and affordability around the Convention Center area, including family-oriented services, the near absence of quick-service restaurants, storage facilities, and

alternative modes of transportation. Intercept interviews and casual conversations with non-business convention attendees indicated that even finding coffee at the very popular Peet's Coffee next to the Convention Center requires significant time and effort.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, business convention attendees and higher-income residents enjoy the lively surroundings, coffee shops, and restaurants located a couple of blocks away from the Convention Center and hotels, towards First Street and Paseo de San Antonio. Intercept interviews and casual conversations with lower-income residents like students indicate that many enjoy accessible events, some local restaurants, and a sense of community in the neighborhood. They struggle, however, with transport accessibility due to infrequency and inadequacy of services, housing costs, and limited and expensive parking.<sup>2</sup> As the Convention Center area continues to thrive into a vibrant community, it is important to secure enough space in this area for the development of services that can support different lifestyles.

<sup>1</sup> Convention Center attendees, interviewed by Andrea Arjona, San Jose, February 18, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Coffee shop attendant, interviewed by Andrea Arjona, San Jose, February 18, 2019.

## 3.3 MOBILITY OPTIONS AND QUALITY OF PLACE



Light rail train outside the Convention Center

This section focuses on two interrelated factors of quality of place that determine how people reach other downtown destinations from the Convention Center: 1) the physical attributes that affect transport mode choice, and 2) the distinctive intangible qualities that affect how people experience the area on foot (e.g. vibrancy and distinctiveness).<sup>1</sup>

Taking transit is inconvenient for most convention attendees due to longer travel times, circuitous routing, and inadequacy of transit options. Even though a light rail station right across from the Convention Center exists, the system is vastly underutilized. During

<sup>1</sup> Mel Burton, "Quality of Place," In: Michalos A.C. (eds) Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Wellbeing Research, Springer, Dordrecht.

interviews, none of the convention attendees considered taking light rail or the DASH free shuttle, and very few arrived to the Convention Center through Diridon Station.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, 1,730 parking spaces are available across four city-operated parking lots adjacent to the Convention Center.<sup>3</sup> These parking lots are supplemented by five privately operated garages, including hotel parking lots.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, hotels near the Convention Center offer in-and-out valet parking privileges, which makes driving substantially

<sup>2</sup> Convention Center attendees, interviewed by Andrea Arjona, San Jose, February 18, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> San Jose Department of Parks and Recreation, <https://parksj.org/parking-maps/convention-center/>, accessed April 30, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

easier from the Convention Center to other San Jose destinations, including San Jose International Airport.<sup>5</sup>

Wide sidewalks, well marked crossroads, and bathroom facilities, promote heavy pedestrian traffic during high-profile events at the Convention Center. However, walking around the area can be overwhelming due to long blocks with expansive properties facing the street, a lack of wayfinding elements, and limited amenities that could enhance the walking experience. This is partly mitigated by intersecting paseos, like the "History Walk" across the Convention Center, and proximity to compact areas downtown like First Street and Paseo de San Antonio.

Casual intercept interviews of convention attendees indicate that the Paseos in downtown San Jose are a great asset to the Convention Center,<sup>6</sup> but those are often underutilized by convention goers due to lack of signages leading to them. Wayfinding was identified as a needed improvement for corridors between the Convention Center and Diridon Station, and between the Convention Center and San Pedro Square.

<sup>5</sup> Convention Center attendees, interviewed by Andrea Arjona, San Jose, February 18, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

### 3.3.1. WAYFINDING TO SAN PEDRO SQUARE VIA PASEOS AND PLAZAS

Navigating on foot around the Convention Center to specific destinations is difficult without a smartphone's map application. The built environment is car-oriented with wide streets, large buildings, wide -and few- commercial spaces, and long blocks. Wayfinding is significantly easier from a motor vehicle, as most signage in the area is placed very high above ground and not at the pedestrian eye level.

A potential connectivity corridor for the Convention Center is the non-contiguous but important network of pedestrian paseos, urban parks, plazas, and small streets in Downtown San Jose. These include Plaza de Cesar Chavez, Paseo de San Antonio, office park plazas, pedestrian alleys, and Post Street. The most pedestrian-friendly and scenic route to access San Pedro Square from the

Convention Center is a 0.7 mile/15 minute walk through the "History Walk" alley by the City National Civic theatre (see image below), cutting through the above-ground business park plaza that connects Park Avenue to West San Fernando Street, leading to South San Pedro Street and San Pedro Square.<sup>1</sup>

The San Pedro Square area offers a multitude of amenities to convention attendees but it is not so easy to access by foot because of lack of signage, and it may result inconvenient to convention goers pressed with time.<sup>2</sup> As a result, most convention attendees rely on the amenities available in closer proximity throughout the day.<sup>3</sup> While there are bus stops and light rail in the area, it is difficult to assess how to reach popular destinations through transit lines, or to determine how long it would take to get to a certain destination.

In addition to driving, shared scooters and bicycles are perhaps the easiest and fastest transport mode to reach San Pedro Square

<sup>1</sup> Note: This route was taken naturalistically while navigating the area to avoid traffic, but it is also the main route suggested by Google Maps.

<sup>2</sup> Convention Center attendees, interviewed by Andrea Arjona, San Jose, February 18, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

and other nearby destinations over ¼ of a mile away from the Convention Center. There are important protected crosswalks on S Almaden Blvd at the intersections with West San Carlos Street and Park Avenue, which are critical for people riding scooters and bikes. However, these modes are not accessible to all ages and abilities. All convention attendees interviewed expressed either interest or experiences riding scooters, but mostly for entertainment purposes.<sup>4</sup> Introducing additional amenities that support scooter and bike riders around the Convention Center may help change the perception by visitors that these modes are only for fun. Some of the recommendations explored in this assessment consider this aspect. As the following chapter will discuss, in the San Pedro Square area, scooters are highly used by San Jose residents, and different supporting elements are needed.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



History Walk

## 3.4 BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE



City National Civic Theater, immediately across from the Convention Center

The Convention Center area is characterized by predominantly modernist buildings and some contemporary structures. Few remnants of historic buildings are still standing in the area, among them the City National Civic and San Jose Center for the Performing Arts. Vast, extensive parking lots are a common feature in this area, many of them occupying valuable real estate.

Walking northeast from the Convention Center, First Street and Paseo de San Antonio are characterized by compact structures,

with commercial spaces laid out at a human scale, boasting a mix of commercial and retail activity. This area arguably represents the closest and more affordable core of amenities to convention goers. Market Street, on the other hand, is flanked by Plaza de Cesar Chavez between W San Carlos and W San Fernando Streets, with the Tech Museum and Saint Joseph's Basilica within a manageable walking distance (up to 10 minutes). This corridor is auto-centric, with multiple lanes, long pedestrian crossings, narrow sidewalks, and no bike lanes on certain segments.

Perhaps one of the most salient features of the built environment around the Convention Center is the light rail, which links the large-scale West San Carlos Street section to the compact areas along First and Second Streets. Despite the issues the light rail faces to attract more passengers, quick fixes and long-term improvements can be made to improve its reliability and facilitate wayfinding and navigability between Diridon and Downtown San Jose.

South of the Convention Center, craftsman-styled single family homes, several multi-family dwellings, and light industrial and commercial buildings can be seen along Market Street, First Street, Second Street and environs. A small park, Parque de los Pobladores, provides recreational space at the junction of Market, S First, and William Streets. The neighborhood has been evolving since the development of the Convention Center, with high density, mixed-use structures surfacing in recent years. One such building is The Pierce on S Market Street and Pierce Avenue, a luxury residential development which resembles the style of new developments in the North San Pedro area.

The most prominent landmark in the Convention Center area is Plaza de Cesar Chavez, which was the location of the California State Capitol from 1850 to 1851, and the first San Jose City Hall. Lesser-known attractions like the History Walk can benefit from adding more features like an art exhibition along the sidewalk or placing a relic of a historic structure (similar to the Spanish pueblo within San Pedro Square Market), which can boost its appeal to residents and visitors. Enhancing alleyways by hosting impromptu events and providing kiosks selling food and small items can further spur pedestrian and commercial activity.

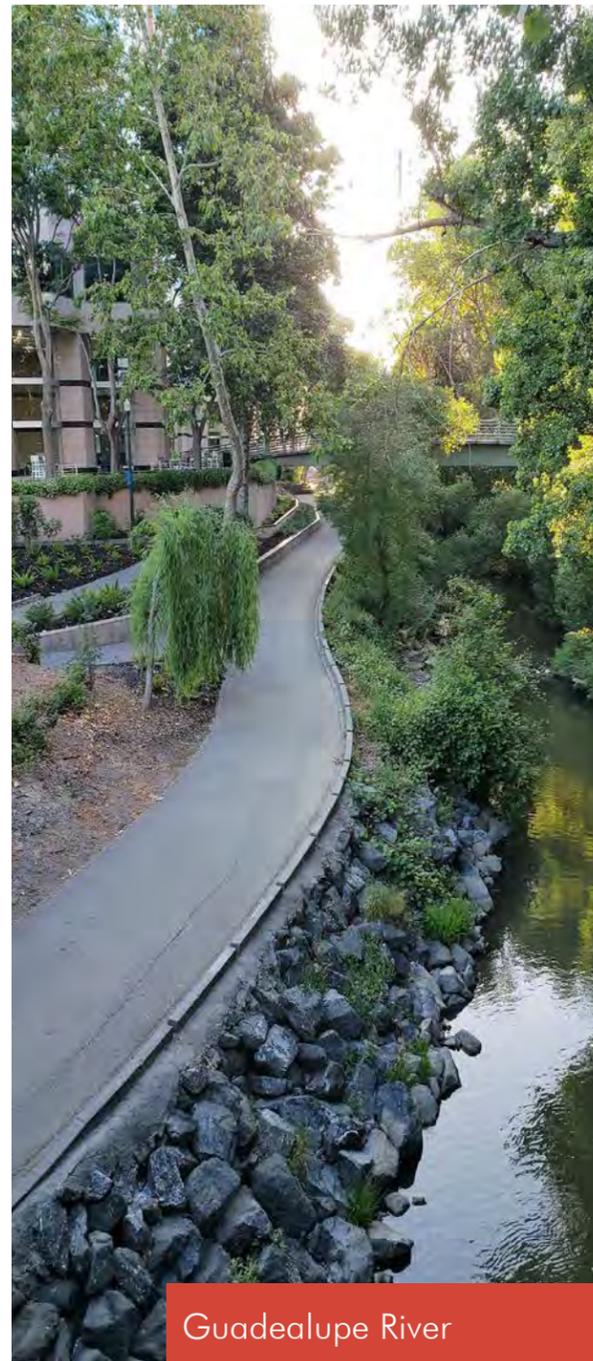
### 3.3.2. UNDERUTILIZED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The most important open space assets in this area include the Guadalupe River Trail and the adjacent Discovery Green which houses the Children's Discovery Museum. The Guadalupe River was critical for the survival and development of colonial settlements of present-day San José,<sup>1</sup> fundamental to the development of its agricultural industry, and now one of the few remaining spaces of ecological importance in the City. The linear park that runs along the Guadalupe River has been perceived by planning professionals as a potential "community hub" for residents and visitors alike.<sup>2</sup> However, as previously described, the trail is currently underutilized due to safety concerns and the prevalence of homeless camps. Organizations like the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy and SPUR are actively working to improve community facilities and services that will revitalize the Guadalupe River Trail and improve its reputation as a community hub.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Archives & Architecture, "Historical Evaluation Museum Place Mixed Use Project," <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/66138>, accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> SPUR, Re-envisioning the Guadalupe River Park, file:///Users/andrearjona/Downloads/SPUR\_Reenvisioning\_the\_Guadalupe\_River\_Park.pdf, accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Guadalupe River

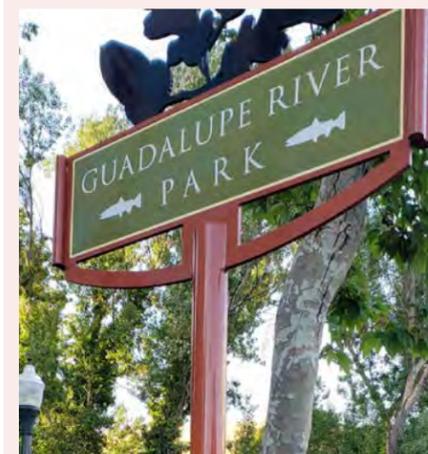
## 3.5

# SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

This short-term recommendations are intended to test and trial potential permanent changes that could address the challenges highlighted above in terms of wayfinding, connectivity, neighborhood character, and pedestrian services, creating better downtown readability between Diridon and the Convention Center:



Develop highly visual spaces to park scooters and bikes in various areas next to the Convention Center, and add wayfinding features or signs to these spaces (e.g. "Ten-minute ride to San Pedro Square").



Introduce pedestrian eye level wayfinding features between the Convention Center and Diridon Station highlighting different routes and travel times, including a scenic route that involves the Guadalupe River Park and Paseos. Link desired destinations to wayfinding signs (e.g. "coffee around the corner").



Implement tactical urbanism changes to temporarily activate underutilized paseos, alleys and plazas, and promote usage of Guadalupe River Park trails. These changes should include accessible music and art exhibitions, transitory commercial activities, and the introduction of additional amenities like coffee and food push carts, especially along the Historic Route right across the Convention Center.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# NORTH SAN PEDRO

## CONTENTS

Introduction

4.1 History & Development Patterns

4.2 An Old (New) Community

4.3 Mobility Options & Quality of Places

4.4 Short-Term Recommendations



# INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this Assessment, the North San Pedro (NSP) area refers to the neighborhood immediately north and west of the downtown core of San Jose. In this study, the NSP area is defined as south of Coleman Avenue and the Union Pacific railroad tracks, east of SR-87, west of Market Street, and north of Santa Clara Street. The study area also includes Little Italy, just to the west of SR-87.

However, an overall redevelopment of the area, including four projects under construction and five other projects either approved or under review, is transforming the area dramatically. As more residents move into the neighborhood, integrating these new developments into the existing urban form of the city is crucial, with NSP anchoring the community's overall landscape.

This chapter examines the evolving North San Pedro area by reviewing its historical development patterns, population and community dynamics, mobility options, and urban form. In addition, findings from a stakeholder engagement session and a community event are analyzed, along with short-term recommendations for improvement.



# 4.1 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

North San Pedro is the oldest neighborhood in San Jose, boasting some of the oldest existing structures in the city. The San Luis Peralta Adobe, located at the southwest corner of present-day Almaden Avenue and West Saint John Street, was built in 1797 by Manuel Gonzales and remains a focal point of the community today as it has been integrated into the San Pedro Square Market.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Luis María Peralta Adobe Timeline." History San Jose, n.d. <http://historysanjose.org/wp/plan-your-visit/peralta-fallon-historic-site/luis-maria-peralta-adobe/>.

Decades after the completion of the Peralta Adobe, development consisted of pockets of residences surrounded by vast agricultural lands. To the west of present-day Market Street, an area referred to as the "old pueblo" was populated by native Californians, while Spanish and Euro-American settlers occupied the eastern portion of the North San Pedro area.<sup>2</sup> However, by 1847, as California's ownership was being transitioned from Mexico to the United States, the highly productive

<sup>2</sup> "The Thomas Fallon House." History San Jose, n.d. <http://historysanjose.org/wp/plan-your-visit/peralta-fallon-historic-site/the-thomas-fallon-house/>.

agricultural land was quickly surveyed, subdivided, and readied for sale to the new settlers.

A structure that was built after the subdivision of land plots was the Fallon House. Constructed in the 1850s as the home of Thomas Fallon, the Fallon House still stands at its original location just north of the Peralta Adobe on West Saint James Street. Although entirely surrounded by modern urban development, the Fallon House



An example of the reuse of an old structure for a new use.



currently serves as a house museum and historical landmark.

Early development in the San Pedro area was primarily residential. During the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the area became more industrial, with factories and warehouses being built to meet the growing demand for manufactured goods, mechanical equipment, and automobiles. Remnants of the area's historic industrial past are still visible today with low-rise warehouses scattered along San Pedro and Terrain Streets. A fine example of a surviving industrial structure is a one-story building on the northwest corner of

Terrain and Saint John Streets, that operated as a factory for the garment giant, Levi Strauss and Company. In addition, old signs such as a sign advertising a printing company next to a warehouse act as a reminder of the area's past. Many of these once-industrial structures have been left vacant, waiting to be leased or sold to developers.

Similar to other areas of Downtown, the North San Pedro area experienced mass depopulation during the second half of the 20th century. Large portions of residents and many businesses left the area in favor of the booming new suburban neighborhoods on

the periphery of the City. During this period, there was little regard for preserving many of Downtown San Jose's historic structures and large swaths of the area were demolished.<sup>3</sup>

By the early 2000s, renewed interest in redeveloping Downtown led to the construction of San Pedro Square Market, a unique collection of shops, restaurants and bars built around a central courtyard featuring the historic Peralta Adobe. Today, this unique space is the heart of social activity in the City and a source of pride for many residents.

<sup>3</sup> Terplan, Egon. "Shaping Downtown San Jose." The Urbanist. SPUR, April 2013. <https://www.spur.org/publications/urbanist-article/2013-04-04/shaping-downtown-san-jose>.

## 4.2 AN OLD (NEW) COMMUNITY

Today, the neighborhood continues to be transformed from an underutilized industrial area into a social and residential hub. San Pedro Square Market is a lively and vibrant area brimming with activity. In 2015, Mayor Sam Liccardo credited the San Pedro Square Market as the source of a "second renaissance" in Downtown, "a catalyst attracting thousands of visitors and new residents" to the city.

While the North San Pedro area experiences high visitor traffic at its businesses, there is a relatively small residential population settling in the new housing stock still under development. The area is becoming a highly desirable place to live, but housing costs are increasing as well, constraining diversity for the growing residential community.

Employees outweigh residents in NSP with a ratio of 6,400 employees to 1,776 residents according to recent census data. The result of this resident/jobs imbalance is exacerbated by the overall visitor serving orientation of the San Pedro Square Market. When residents were asked for their thoughts on the area, they often voiced disappointment in the lack of sense of community. Employees, business owners, and visitors on the other hand, found no fault in this lively social area.

Residents in the North San Pedro area tend to be young, well-educated, and hold professional or white-collar jobs. In fact, 72% of residents hold at least a bachelor's degree, and the median age is 38.4. Household sizes tend to be much smaller compared to the rest of the city with an average household size of 1.7 compared to the 3.1 average for the rest of the City. Moreover, the 2018 household income data show large differences the median incomes between NSP, \$116,960 and the City of San Jose as a whole, \$73,752. As seen in the previous chapter, this difference is even more starking when contrasting to the income level of adjacent neighborhoods to the Convention Center area.<sup>1</sup>

Despite current complaints of residents about a lack of community within the North San Pedro area, the numerous developments under construction or planned and approved have the potential to at least ameliorate the imbalance between employees and residents, increasing the pool of residents that could participate in community life. The remaining issue of community diversity and sense of community may be more complex to tackle due to high cost of living and increasing housing costs in this area.

<sup>1</sup> Esri.

# 4.3 MOBILITY OPTIONS AND QUALITY OF PLACE

Due to the location of North San Pedro to Downtown, the area is a transit-rich neighborhood with two light rail lines running along First and Second Street, and multiple local and regional bus services running along Santa Clara, First, and Second Streets. The closest bus stops to San Pedro Square include:

- Santa Clara Street & San Pedro Street (VTA Routes 22 and 68; Highway 17 Express)
- Santa Clara Street & First/Second Streets (VTA Routes 22, 522, 23, 323, 66, 68, 72, 73, 82, 181, and 304; Highway 17 Express)
- First/Second Streets & St. John Street (VTA Routes 323, 72, 73, 82, and 181)

VTA Route 22 operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week between Palo Alto Transit Center and Eastridge Transit Center in East San Jose, stopping close to San Jose Diridon Station at First and Cahill Streets. VTA Route 181 is a regional bus service linking San Jose Diridon Station and Warm Springs/South Fremont BART station operating daily from 5:30am to 12:45am weekdays, and from 7am to 12:45am weekends and holidays. Highway 17 Express provides regional bus service between San Jose and Santa Cruz from 4:40am to 11:45pm weekdays, and from 7am to 11pm weekends and holidays.

Additional bus services that are within walking distance of San Pedro Square Market include:

- Monterey-Salinas Transit Route 55 to Monterey
- VTA DASH
- VTA Routes 63, 64, 65, and 81

In the next few years, the BART to Silicon Valley project will include a new underground station close to San Pedro Square Market, with a proposed subway portal located at W Santa Clara and Market Streets. This will provide impetus to the evolving neighborhood

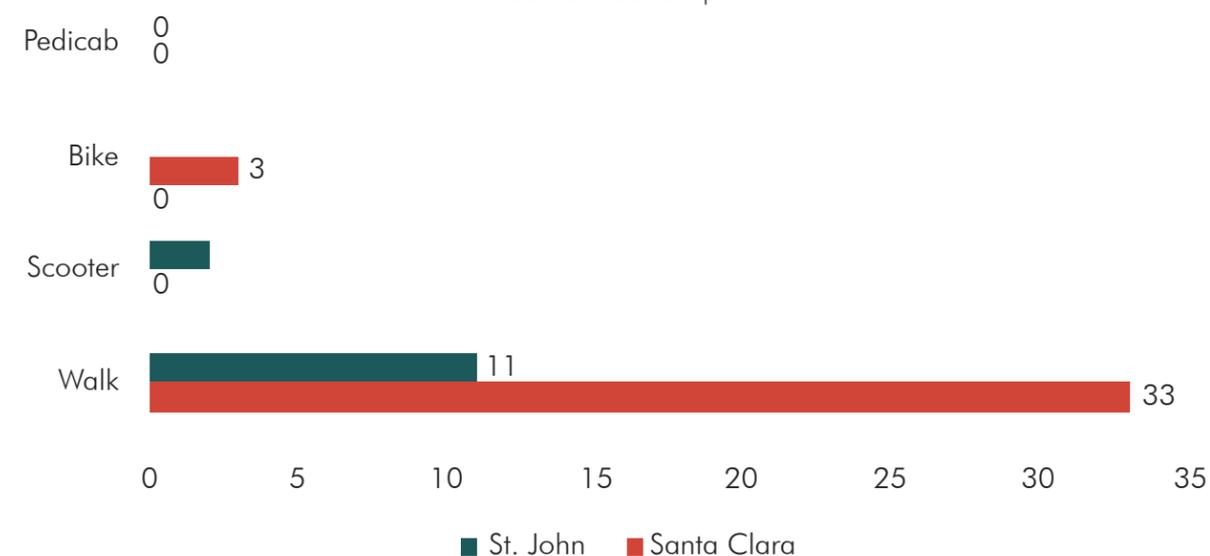
by expanding its reach to the rest of the San Francisco Bay Area.

In comparison to other areas of San Jose, the North San Pedro area has greater pedestrian and biking connectivity. According to Walkscore.com, the North San Pedro area is rated “very walkable”, scoring 84 out of 100 in walkability, and a “Biker’s Paradise”, scoring 91 out of 100 in bikeability.<sup>1</sup> A combination of flat topography, presence of bike share stations, and the proliferation of scooters make the neighborhood ideal for

<sup>1</sup> “Walk Score.” Walk Score, n.d. <https://www.walkscore.com/score/77-n-san-pedro-st-san-jose-ca-95110>.

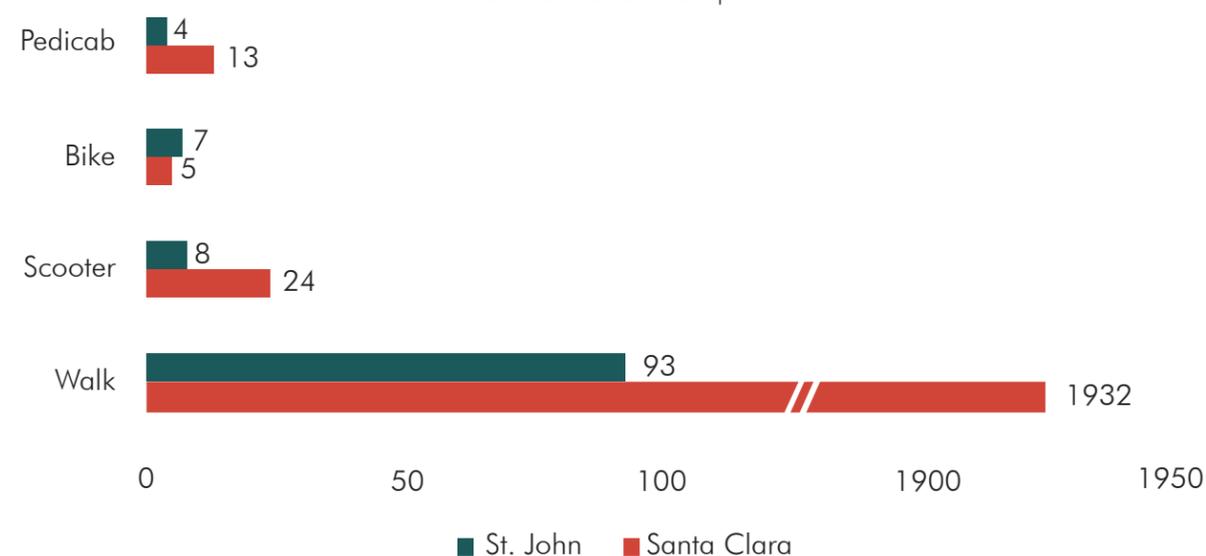
## Wednesday Evening

Data collected at 5pm



## Saturday Sharks Game

Data collected at 7:10pm

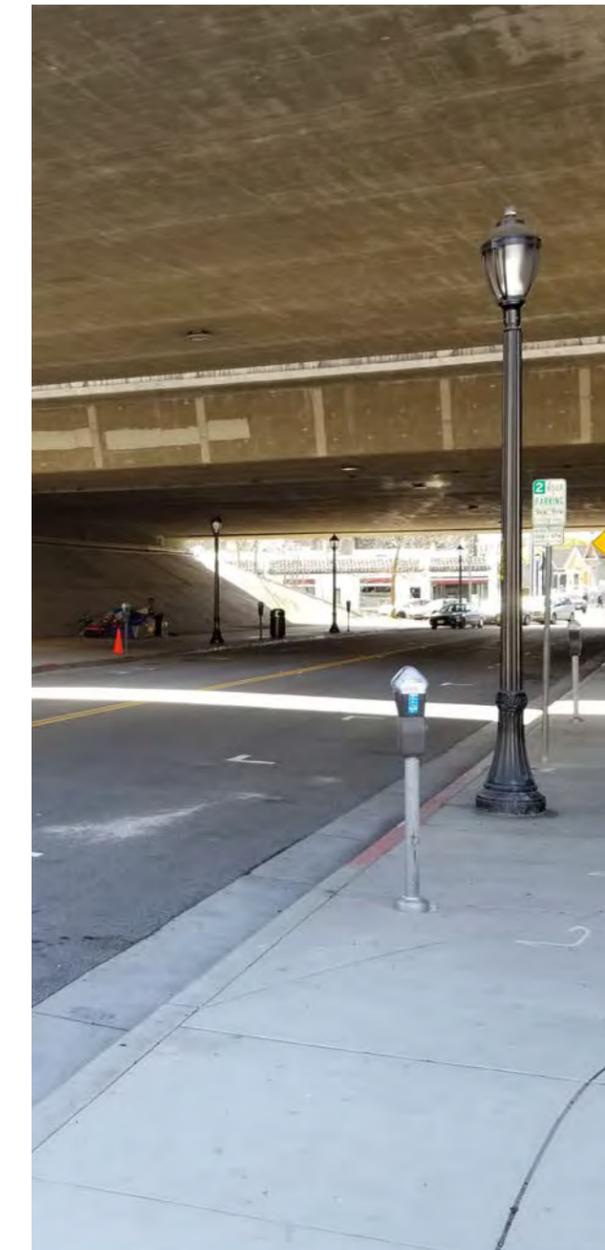


walkers and cyclists. Despite the abundance of mobility options, major roadways such as Santa Clara Street and Market Street lack dedicated bike lanes along certain sections and are heavily congested during peak periods (e.g. rush hours, SAP Center events, etc.). Combined with fast moving vehicular traffic, these streets create safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians. Wide intersections with long crosswalks, especially at the intersections of W. Santa Clara & Market Streets, W. Santa Clara & San Pedro Streets, and Market & St. John Streets, create a hostile experience accessing San Pedro Square Market.

### 4.3.1. ISSUES OF CONNECTIVITY

Graduate students measured the numbers of active transportation users on a Wednesday at 5pm and on a Saturday at 7:10pm under SR-87 along both Saint John Street and Santa Clara Street. Traffic going in both directions were measured for 20 minutes. The results are seen in Figure X. Each mode of active transportation observed were walking, scootering, biking, and pedicabbing.

Results show that on that particular Wednesday, St. John Street supports many active transportation users, with spikes during Sharks games at nearby SAP Center. In contrast, on



St. John Underpass

the Saturday count, 1,974 active transportation users were observed passing along Santa Clara Street 30 minutes before the Sharks game, compared to Wednesday's count of 36. Walking was the preferred mode for both days, but during the Sharks game, more scooter and pedicab riders were observed than bicyclists.

Santa Clara Street and St. John Street also have narrow sidewalks. Despite the existence of a shared bike route along St. John Street, bicyclists and scooter riders were observed riding on sidewalks, competing with pedestrians. Cyclists using either corridor must go through them defensively as Santa Clara Street has fast flowing traffic, while St. John Street lacks adequate lighting to guide cyclists through Little Italy between North San Pedro and SAP Center. With more residential and commercial developments coming to the North San Pedro area, more investments should be made to strengthen the biking and pedestrian infrastructure between the neighborhood, SAP Center, and Diridon Station.

### 4.3.2. EXPERIENCING THE NORTH SAN PEDRO AREA

Wayfinding around the North San Pedro area is severely limited. While the iconic San Pedro Square sign at the intersection of San Pedro and Santa Clara Streets creates a gateway to the neighborhood, no signs direct visitors to the area from other streets. In fact, the other wayfinding observed during site observations include the San Jose History Walk signposts along Santa Clara Street and Market Street, and bikeshare station maps. This lack of wayfinding leaves visitors unaware of nearby attractions such as the Convention Center, SAP Center, Diridon Station, and Little Italy.

Visiting the neighborhood, even for the first-timer, showcases the dynamic growth of Downtown. More than 80,000 square feet of retail space is either now under construction or being planned in the North San Pedro area, with almost all of it dedicated to ground floor retail. An additional 4,500 residential units are either being developed or under construction, on top of the over 600 completed and occupied residential units in



Santa Clara Street Sidewalk

the last four years. Despite its location next to the flight path for nearby San Jose International Airport, development proposal signs can be seen on almost every block, highlighting the City's confidence in making this neighborhood a thriving place to live, shop, play, and invest.

An innovative strategy used to invigorate the area is the Moment Project. A portion of a city-owned parking structure's ground floor was converted to temporary pop-up retail spaces. Prior to the conversion, San Pedro Street felt like a one-sided retail and entertainment strip as the parking structure created a huge void of nothingness, with concrete, steel, and asphalt facing an otherwise bustling restaurant corridor.

Open space improvements have been in the works to accommodate future mixed use developments in the neighborhood. The most prominent project is the expansion of Saint James Park, one of the oldest parks located within the City of San Jose, located two blocks east of San Pedro Square Market. Plans have been developed to revitalize this park; as of last year, however, the project was stalled due to funding issues. Saint James Park, with its historical significance, has immense potential to be a prominent Downtown landmark. In its current state, however, overfilled trash cans and homeless individuals proliferate, with signs warning parents to stay close to their children. Although a public restroom is available next to the park at Second & St. John Street, it does not look well taken care of by the City, with graffiti and lack of cleaning equipment being the main issues.



### North San Pedro Development Map

- Planned
- Under Construction
- Completed Since 2015



700 Feet

## 4.4

## SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS



Open alleys to pedestrians to reduce the scale of the street grid and communicate the historic background of the neighborhood.



Photo By: SJMdde

Make the street space more flexible during special events by using tactical urbanism strategies in order to temporarily expand San Pedro Street sidewalks or implement road closures.



Photo By: Municipal

Introduce wayfinding elements linking North San Pedro to other downtown destinations, including Plaza de Cesar Chavez, Little Italy, the Guadalupe River Trail, and Diridon Station.



Photo By: Asia One

Make space for scooter and bike infrastructure:

- On the streets, especially on San Pedro and St. John Streets. Replace some of the existing parking spaces on these streets to create separated bike lanes, parking, and wayfinding amenities for cyclists, scooter users, and pedestrians.
- Inside public parking lots to make space for alternative transport modes, introducing charging stations for scooters and e-bikes along electric vehicle charging stations.



# COMMUNITY FINDINGS AND CONNECTIVITY ASSESSMENT

## CONTENTS

Introduction

5.1 Community Findings

5.2 Connectivity Assessment

5.3 Results

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes findings from focus groups, interviews, and community engagement events from both fall 2018 and spring 2019 and contrasts them with a connectivity assessment which evaluates the connections between Diridon, the Convention Center, and San Pedro Square.

## 5.1 COMMUNITY FINDINGS

As noted in the methodology section, the fall 2018 class focused on identifying the characteristics of specific corridors and community priorities for the Diridon Station design, while the spring class 2019 concentrated on first hand user experiences in the area between the Station and Downtown. Themes from the fall were safety, street activity and equity. The spring semester found similar themes of transportation, wayfinding, safety along with activities and streetscape improvements. The following sections describe these findings from both semesters.

### 5.1.1. FALL 2018 COMMUNITY FINDINGS

In fall 2018, the graduate students gathered feedback from the community during focus groups and an engagement event to better understand the community's priorities for future development at the Diridon Station and surrounding area.

In general, the community supported redesigning the Diridon Station as a landmark destination—in and of itself, a place for the community to gather. During focus groups aimed at identifying the community's values and priorities to inform future redesign of the Diridon Station, community members expressed interest in grand architecture, better public spaces, and multimodal connections to the surrounding neighborhood. To help make this vision a reality, community members suggested tactics such as improved signage throughout the station, better security through installation of surveillance cameras, and upgrades to the existing ticketing machines such as a universal ticketing system that covers all transit service lines.

Community members' interests for the area around the Diridon Station were largely centered on the themes of safety, street activity, and equity. Attendees cited that they often felt unsafe walking through the Diridon Station area because of the lack of other people on

the street and that the presence of homeless camps along the Guadalupe River Trail deters them from using the path. Common suggestions proposed at the community event to address these safety concerns include introducing more retail stores, coffee shops, and hosting public activities in parks and open spaces.

Finally, many participants expressed concern for the possible displacement of low-income residents as a result of new developments (participants specifically mentioned the Google Village project). Suggestions to this problem included increased affordable housing for low and middle income residents in the Diridon Station area.





## 5.1.2 SPRING 2019 COMMUNITY FINDINGS

While the graduate students in fall 2018 focused on documenting the community's priorities for future development at the Diridon Station and surrounding area, students in the spring 2019 concentrated their efforts on gathering public feedback on factors influencing connectivity between Diridon and Downtown such as: transportation, wayfinding, safety, the Google development, activities, and streetscape improvements.

### TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

With connectivity between Diridon and Downtown as the major focus of this semester's efforts, it is no surprise that a large portion of the community event findings centered around transportation and mobility.

Pedestrian mobility throughout the study area is generally good, as many common destinations such as the Convention Center and San Pedro Square Market are easily accessed by foot. Feedback collected during the community event supports this with most respondents stating that they would prefer to walk to the Convention Center and San Pedro Square over using other modes of transportation. Table X summarizes these findings.

Another key finding from the community engagement event was the strong interest in improved and expanded public transit services in Downtown. Overall, there was a considerable amount of interest in creating dedicated bus lanes and expanding existing public transit services, especially those that connect San Jose to outlying areas such as Gilroy and Morgan Hill. Feedback recommended easily implementable changes such as developing a transit validation system similar to parking validations.

	Convention Center	%	San Pedro Square	%	Subtotals	%
Walk	15	37.5%	17	36.2%	32	36.8%
Bike	6	15.0%	4	8.5%	10	11.5%
Drive	10	25.0%	15	31.9%	25	28.7%
Public Transit	8	20.0%	10	21.3%	18	20.7%
Other	1	2.5%	1	2.1%	2	2.3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table X: Community Members' preferred method of traveling from Diridon to the Convention Center or San Pedro Square

## WAYFINDING

Wayfinding was a prominent topic with both focus groups and with community members during the community event. According to subject-matter experts interviewed during the focus groups, Downtown San Jose currently has maps which provide wayfinding to major event centers while simultaneously promoting upcoming Downtown events. They stated that wayfinding should be more pedestrian-oriented at the street level, and suggested adding kiosks and signage on corners to aid with navigation. The focus groups supported future improvements to existing wayfinding in Downtown, indicating that these features have noticeably improved the pedestrian experience and increased sales at local businesses.

Many attendees at the community engagement felt that existing wayfinding was not sufficient to meet their needs. Sixteen attendees of the community event showed support for increased wayfinding signage throughout Downtown. Moreover, many of the suggestions voiced during the community event were centered on wayfinding. These include: installing large maps outside of the Diridon Station to orient visitors to the surrounding city, increased signage identifying the location of transit service lines in the station itself, improving existing signage for vehicle and bike parking throughout downtown and developing a walking tour map showing the location of major destinations in Downtown.



Wayfinding in Downtown Huntsville, AL

## SAFETY

Similar to those who attended the fall 2018 community event, many attendees expressed concern for safety while walking between Diridon and Downtown. When asked to identify areas where they felt unsafe, most respondents cited areas along the Guadalupe River trail and near homeless camps.

Others felt that lighting was one of the biggest contributing factors to the perception of safety in Downtown. Many noted that there was not sufficient lighting at SR-87 overpasses as well as around vacant lots and near abandoned

buildings in the Diridon Station area. Similarly, Downtown parks were deemed unsafe because of the limited activity levels in these spaces during the evenings and at night.

Still other attendees felt safety was closely linked to the presence of vehicle traffic. For example, sidewalks and crosswalks with limited separation from vehicle traffic caused concern for some participants. Moreover, one attendee expressed a desire for buffers and grade-separated streets in order to increase perception of pedestrian safety on busy streets.

## ACTIVITIES & STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to transportation and wayfinding, community members also identified activities and streetscape improvements they felt would improve the experience of pedestrians as they travel between Diridon and various points in Downtown.

Some of the most well-loved areas of Downtown are spaces where community events and activities are held on a regular basis such as Plaza de Cesar Chavez, the Tech Museum of Innovation, and the San Jose Museum of Art. When asked what they felt would improve the pedestrian experience in Downtown, respondents noted that they would like to see other public activities like farmers markets, concerts in the park, fantasy or renaissance faires, and comedy shows in public open spaces. As shown in Table Z below, there was strong community support for activation of parking lots and paseos as well as hosting free art and music events in public open spaces.

Activation	Subtotal	Percentage
Activate parking lots, paseos, plazas, Guadalupe River Trail	13	43%
Free art/music exhibitions	17	57%
Total	30	100%

Table X: Attendees' preference for activation

Other comments received included installation of pop-up shops, more food trucks in underutilized spaces such as parking lots under freeway overpasses.

In terms of physical changes to the streetscape to enhance the pedestrian experience, community members noted that they would like to see beautification improvements in order to clean up and add color to the streets. Table V shows strong community support for installation of planters, painted sidewalks, and murals Downtown.

Beautification	Subtotal	Percentage
Planters, trees, flowers, etc.	17	59%
Painted sidewalks, murals, etc	12	41%
Total	29	100%

Table V

Other comments received were to install more public art, shade trees, and planters with native and seasonal flowers. To ensure these plants are well maintained over the long-term, community members suggested creating a program which allows community groups to adopt a planter, maintaining and replacing spent plants and flowers over the life of the planter. One community member noted that "the flowers make me feel like I live in a nice place!"

## GOOGLE DEVELOPMENT

Finally, in order to assess the community's reaction to the proposed Google development in Downtown San Jose, event participants were asked to provide feedback. Responses received were either positive or neutral.

Positive reactions from community members were generally driven by the belief that the development would activate underutilized spaces in the Diridon Station. Some other attendees seemed to like the Google project, but had some reservations. For instance, one attendee stated that though Google has a lot of potential to help Downtown, success will depend largely on details such as how Google will handle architecture, mixed uses, and how they will plan their developments. Another attendee felt that Google should use its power to help local organizations, such as the church property at 580 Lorraine that is offering support for the homeless.

Some people interviewed during the community event held a more neutral perspective on the Google development, stating that currently there are a lot of unknowns and it is hard to gauge whether the project will have positive or negative outcomes until solid plans are formalized. However, obvious downsides of such a large development would likely include traffic congestion during construction, followed by displacement and housing shortages during operation.



Google's offices in Mountain View

Photo By: Government Technology

## 5.2 CONNECTIVITY ASSESSMENT

Community input, research, and site observations gathered on the Diridon Station, Convention Center and San Pedro Square show several commonalities with regards to navigating between these destinations. Safety, wayfinding, and a variety of streetscape challenges were identified as major impediments to easy and enjoyable pedestrian connection between these destinations.

### 5.2.1. DIRIDON TO CONVENTION CENTER

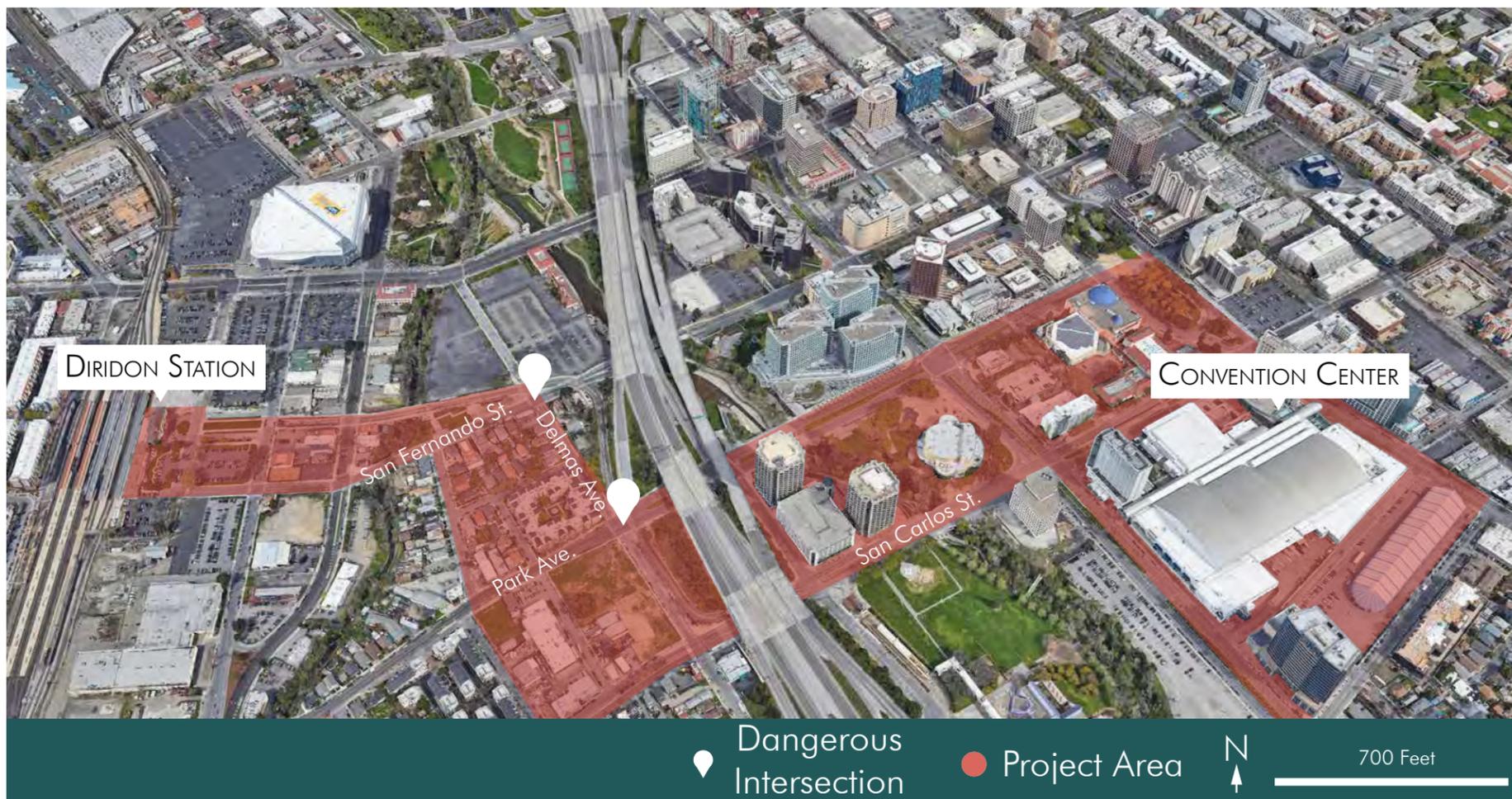
This section assesses the quality of connections between the Diridon Station and Downtown San Jose, specifically to the Convention Center. Traveling by foot from Diridon Station to the Convention Center can be difficult for first-time visitors, particularly because of the lack of wayfinding signage at Diridon Station and surrounding streets. Furthermore, when locals are asked for directions to the Convention Center, none were able to provide a clear set of directions and many suggested taking Uber or Lyft instead. There are transit options that will get visitors to the Convention Center quickly, but the services are unintuitive and run infrequently outside weekday rush hours for travelers to use. A summary of transit options are as follows:

Mode	Route	Schedule	Frequency	Fare
DASH Bus	San Fernando Street, San Jose State University, San Carlos Street	Weekdays: 6:30am-9:30pm  No weekend service provided	Every 6 to 30 minutes	Free to all riders
Light Rail (Green Line)	Mountain View-Winchester	Weekdays: 5:00am-12:25am  Weekends: 6:30am-12:30am	Every 15 to 30 minutes	\$2.25 Cash  \$2.00 Clipper

Walking around the station area, the intersections of Park Avenue and Delmas Avenue (with highway on- and off-ramps), and San Fernando Street and Delmas Avenue are unsafe for pedestrians, even during the day. Drivers tend to speed aggressively along those wide roadways that pedestrians feel vulnerable walking through this otherwise dense neighborhood. Furthermore, south of the San Fernando Street and Delmas

Avenue intersection along Delmas, the sidewalk narrows significantly, making the walk uncomfortable for large groups. The nearby Guadalupe River Trail is an excellent, yet underutilized, mixed-use pathway linking Downtown with other neighborhoods throughout San Jose. Issues found along the river trail include a considerable lack of wayfinding signage along both sides of the

trail to orient walkers and cyclists to nearby destinations, poorly designed ramps that hinder bike and wheelchair use, the presence of homeless camps, uneven pavement, and dark underpasses. These problems represent serious impediments to connectivity that undermine its potential as a suitable path for visitors to use between Diridon Station and Downtown.



## 5.2.2. CONVENTION CENTER TO SAN PEDRO SQUARE



Through observations, discussions with city staff, and interviews with convention attendees, San Pedro Square was identified as a popular destination for Convention Center visitors. There are several possible routes between the Convention Center and San Pedro Square. The most apparent route, based off land use, activity, and wayfinding potential is via Market Street past Plaza De Cesar Chavez. Additionally, a network of less visually obvious alleyways and pedestrian plazas (such as the one adjacent to the Tech Museum and through Cityview Plaza), can also lead people directly to San Pedro Square. While these alleys and paseos are currently less apparent to pedestrians near the Convention Center, further north at the intersection of Santa Clara Street and San Pedro Street the San Pedro archway serves as an ideal landmark indicating to pedestrians that they have arrived at their destination.



A summary of modes for travel between Convention Center and San Pedro Square Market

Mode Used	Cost	Minutes
Walk	\$0	15
Electric Scooter	\$1 to start + \$0.15 perminute	10
Ford GoBike	\$2 + tax	10
Rideshare (Ex. Uber/Lyft)	\$5	6

The Market Street connection is a more lively and simple route which uses the existing street grid as its connections. Along this route, visitors will pass by hotels, museums, public bathrooms, night clubs, plazas, historic sites, art, restaurants, and bars. Plaza De Cesar Chavez is a landmark connection that could serve to unify the urban fabric of corridors (this corridor and Paseo De San Antonio) and is a hub of activity or a resting place to enjoy the shade and art. However, Market Street poses several limitations which could deter pedestrian travel along this route.

The first challenge associated with Market Street is that it is not a multi-modal corridor. Despite having wide sidewalks and many crosswalks, there are no bike lanes along Market Street. As a result, Market Street is perceived as intimidating for cyclists to use when vehicles drive by at high speeds.

Furthermore, while the sidewalks are wide on either side of Market Street, there are few trees on the sidewalks between San Carlos and San Fernando Streets, further reducing the separation between pedestrians and vehicle traffic on the road and making walking this route during the hot summer months uncomfortable. Finally, the width of Market Street north of the plaza (90-feet from sidewalk edge to sidewalk edge) can add to the intimidation of pedestrians crossing the street.

The paseo connection takes advantage of both an alleyway between the City National Civic performing arts theater and the Hyatt hotel, and a pedestrian plaza within the Cityview Plaza development which link to S San Pedro St. To navigate this route, pedestrians must use two mid-block crossings where there are concerns for pedestrian

safety. Aside from these mid-block crossings, this route is dramatically different in terms of the level of stress from adjacent vehicle traffic. By using the alleyway and the plaza, pedestrians are fully separated from vehicles and can enjoy a comfortable walk between destinations. Once through Cityview Plaza, pedestrians must cross an uncontrolled intersection and make their way two blocks north to the San Pedro gateway at Santa Clara Street. These two blocks of San Pedro Street are not appealing as there are many vacant parcels, abandoned buildings, and unpopulated parking lots. The combination of conflict points and limited street trees, narrow sidewalks and underutilized spaces leave much room for improvement along this connection.

One way in which these challenges could be addressed is through redesign of the Cityview

Plaza. Recent acquisition of the Cityview Plaza site by a developer suggests that the City may have an opportunity to redesign this connection and strengthen both the pedestrian experience and the urban environment through the design review process. However, despite the current opportunity to redesign Cityview Plaza, neither route provides adequate bike facilities such as designated bike lanes or supporting amenities. Since neither of these routes are identified in the Better Bikeways SJ plan, additional signage is necessary to direct cyclists to San Pedro Square along Almaden Boulevard to Saint John Street. Of the two potential routes, the paseo presents the most opportunity to create a multi-use path through Cityview Plaza and terminating at San Pedro Street where sharrows could be used between San Fernando and Santa Clara Streets.





San Pedro Street

## 5.3 RESULTS

Community findings and analysis of the connections between Diridon Station, Convention Center, and San Pedro Square reveal that while pathways exist to link these destinations together, there are limited supporting elements that promote and facilitate pedestrian movement. As evidenced in the community findings, the lack of wayfinding, perception of safety, and needed streetscape improvements create both challenges and opportunities to address them. While there should be no one way to get to and from specific destinations in Downtown, there needs to be a conscious focus on improving specific routes which are both intuitive for pedestrians and which align with existing city goals and plans.

To improve the connection between the Convention Center and San Pedro Square, it is critical to improve alternative mobility options and wayfinding. The following chapter will pull from both the community findings and the connectivity assessment to form the basis of the recommendations addressing both the challenges and opportunities.



# CHAPTER SIX

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONTENTS

Introduction

6.1 Short-term Recommendations

6.2 Long-term Recommendations

6.3 Assessment Limitations

6.4 Next Steps & Ideas for the Future



Photo By: SPUR

# INTRODUCTION

For many people navigating between Diridon Station, the Convention Center, and San Pedro Square, biking, walking, or taking an alternative transport mode is not perceived as an enjoyable experience due to safety concerns, a lack of consistently clear and safe connectivity, and limited amenities. In order to address these challenges, the graduate student team developed the following short and long-term recommendations for the City's consideration.

## 6.1 SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are intended to be actionable quick improvements to mitigate current challenges and enhance connectivity for pedestrians between Diridon Station and major destinations in Downtown. Recommendations are based on, or inspired by, the following case-study examples:

- The wayfinding system of New York City
- The Placemaking Strategy for Stratford, London
- The Downtown Alley Project of Denver, Colorado
- The street art mural project for the South Monroe District in Tallahassee, Florida
- The scooter corral pilot program of Santa Monica, California
- The Food Truck Pilot Program in Pflugerville, Texas
- The pop-up music venue partnership under highway underpasses in Ottawa, Canada
- Street vendors at Canal Road overpass in Hong Kong
- The reduced fee program for commercial activity under expressways in Mexico City
- The East-West Alley Master Plan in Roswell, Georgia
- The NACTO Guidelines for Transit Corridors
- The City of San Francisco Legacy Business Registry and Preservation Fund
- The Code Tenderloin organization in the City of San Francisco

## 6.1.1. DEVELOP A WAYFINDING SYSTEM FOR DOWNTOWN

Introduce pedestrian wayfinding elements between the Diridon Station, the Convention Center, and San Pedro Square, highlighting suggested routes and estimated travel times.

One of the main conclusions of this community assessment is that Downtown San Jose is often difficult to navigate for seasoned residents and Bay Area natives alike, especially for those moving through the area at the pace of walking or bicycling. Under these circumstances, introducing wayfinding elements is critical for communicating to residents and visitors that walking, biking, using a scooter, or taking transit are competitive options for navigating between key downtown destinations. The graduate students have identified strategic locations for introducing wayfinding elements throughout Downtown San Jose, which will be described shortly. Additionally, alternative implementation options were identified for each of these areas, based on wayfinding case-study analysis involving aspects of mapping and aesthetics.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Lack of wayfinding has been identified as the main reason why visitors to downtown prefer hailing a ride over walking, taking transit, or using another alternative transport mode. Furthermore, intuitive walking routes between Diridon and other areas of Downtown can be intimidating due to unsightly areas and personal safety concerns, especially for women, children, and first-time visitors. Adding wayfinding elements to the following strategic locations could help mitigate these conditions.



# DIRIDON STATION AREA

## WAYFINDING TO THE STATION

To help individuals identify walking from Diridon to Downtown as a viable and attractive option, the station itself must be furnished with clear and consistent wayfinding maps that specify travel times to the Convention Center and San Pedro Square. These wayfinding maps should be accompanied by complementary services and amenities to mitigate the impact of less appealing streets, and the disorientation caused by acres of surface parking surrounding the station. Potential implementation strategies include:



Photo By: KCCI Tallahassee

Wayfinding mural in Tallahassee, Florida

### 1 Install consistently-designed and attractive, multilingual wayfinding maps and public art pieces.

Community engagement findings and interviews prove that street art enhances the pedestrian experience. Well-maintained art installations send a 'signal' that this is a part of the city that is cared about. Murals and maps should indicate navigation options and preferred routes. Similar versions of the maps at Diridon Station should be positioned on transit lines and next to bikeshare stations and bike/scooter parking areas to ensure a seamless experience as one moves between destinations.

### 2 Highlight amenities that one will find along the travel routes.

Indicate the location of major destinations and supporting amenities on wayfinding maps and signs along suggested pedestrian and bike routes. Supporting amenities could include important transit stops, grocery stores, parks, coffee shops, and restaurants.



Wayfinding sign in New York City

Photo By: Architype Review

### 3 Encourage a "wayfinding concierge approach" among Diridon Station employees to guide visitors to the wayfinding signage and provide a welcoming first impression.

The staff should be informed about walking routes and alternative transport options. This could be accomplished by providing basic training and information to Diridon Station personnel, including security guards, convenience store attendants, ticket dispatchers, and bus drivers with stops at the Convention Center and San Pedro Square.

### 4 Develop walking, biking, and scooter tours from and to Diridon, Convention Center, and San Pedro Square during important events in the City.

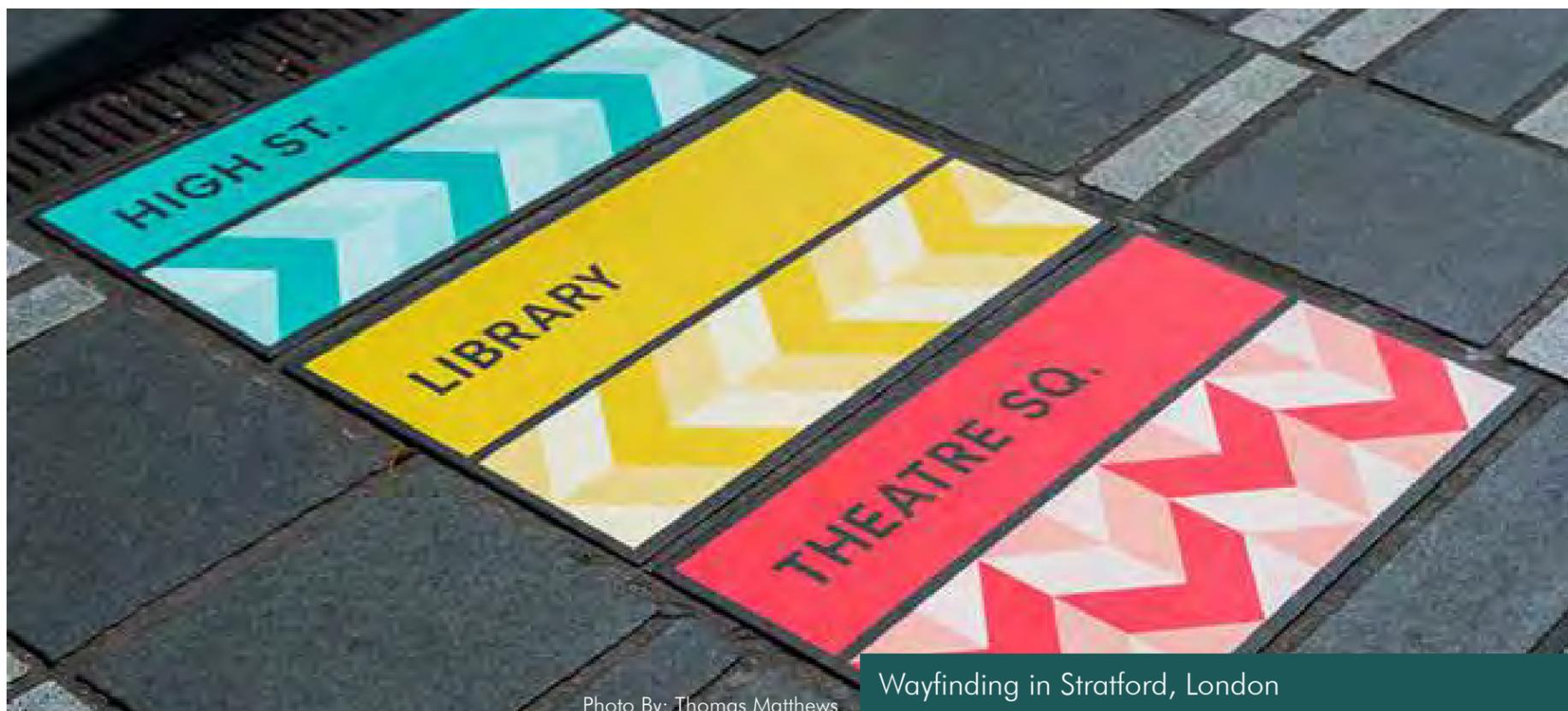
People should be able to join a tour with a local "ambassador" by chance upon arrival to Diridon Station. Such tours might be developed and supported by the San Jose Downtown Association and related partner organizations and people such as Delmas Park community members, Convention Center employees, leaders of station-area neighborhood associations, business representatives, Diridon employees, and city staff, depending on the type of event. Walking tours should start one hour before events begin, and end one hour after events are concluded.

## WAYFINDING ON CAHILL STREET

Cahill Street is the gateway to the Diridon Station area. It features wide sidewalks and shade, and it leads to a variety of pedestrian and biking routes. Introducing wayfinding signs on Cahill Street is critical to help orient pedestrians to the surrounding area. Since this is the gateway for many visitors coming to San Jose via bus or rail, a “Welcome to Downtown San Jose” sign or indicator will help visitors better read the location. Specific ideas to achieve this include:

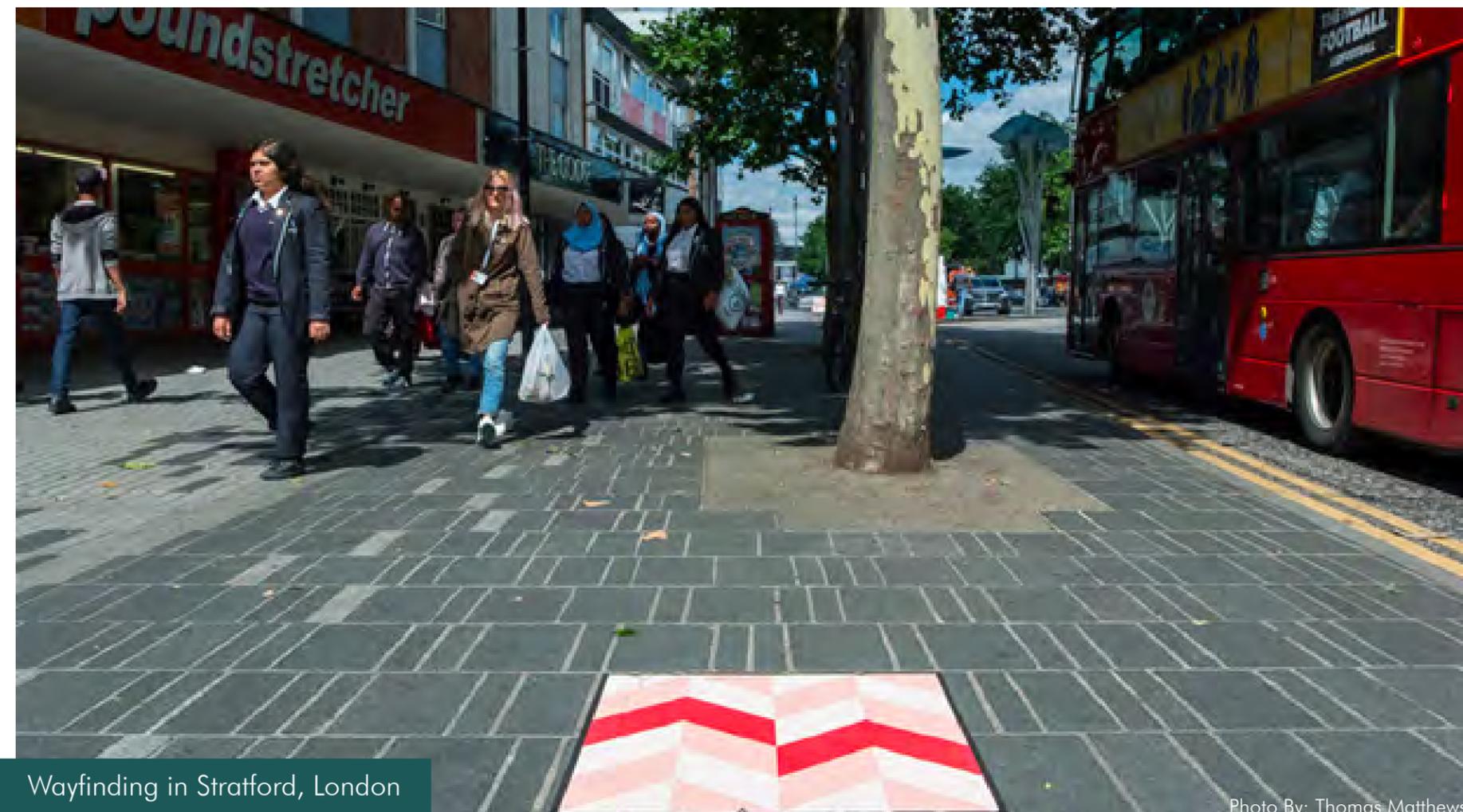
### 1 Introduce icons and arrows that lead to routes and nearby destinations.

Once on Cahill, pedestrians need sufficient indication about where to go. Icons and arrows on pedestrian-oriented, eye-level signs or painted on sidewalks (as seen in Figure X below) are important to reassure pedestrians that they are heading in the right direction. Icons should be distinctive to represent specific destinations, including the Convention Center and San Pedro Square.



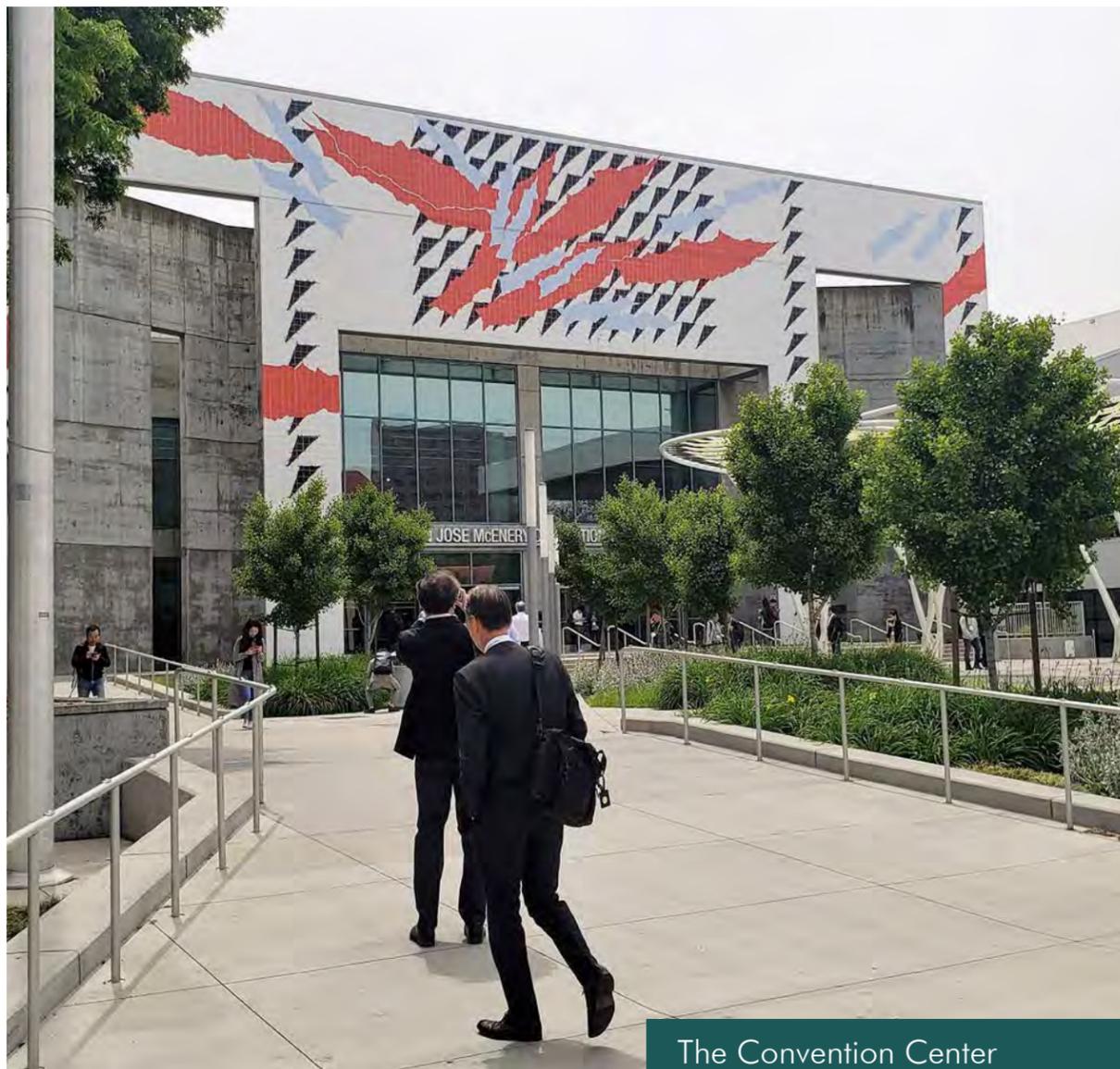
## WAYFINDING ALONG THE PATH TO THE SAN FERNANDO LIGHT RAIL STATION

One of the most intuitive routes to the Convention Center from Diridon Station should be the path that parallels the light rail tracks and leads to San Fernando Street towards the Lakehouse District. This route was also identified as the preferred route by pedestrians that participated in the community engagement event on May 4, 2019, noting time savings and separation from traffic. Introducing wayfinding signs along this route will help visitors identify this preferred route. Specifically, we recommend the installation of decorative painted guiding symbols on the pavement along the route that highlight direction and destination. We also recommend installing planters with trees, colorful flowers, and other landscape elements along the path to assist in intuitive wayfinding and beautification.



# CONVENTION CENTER AREA

Pedestrian-only paseos were identified as a unique San Jose asset by Convention Center attendees, but the area lacks wayfinding elements to guide conventioners to these spaces. The result is that most convention attendees miss out on these spaces. Additionally, the businesses along the paseos that rely on foot traffic, also suffer. We recommend the introduction of clear signage both outside and inside the Convention Center highlighting different routes and travel times to important destinations, including a scenic route to the Diridon Station that ties into the Guadalupe River Park, and preferred pedestrian routes to the different paseos and San Pedro Square. Highlighting nearby businesses (e.g. “coffee around the corner”) can go a long way to creating an image of a city that cares about its visitors and their needs.



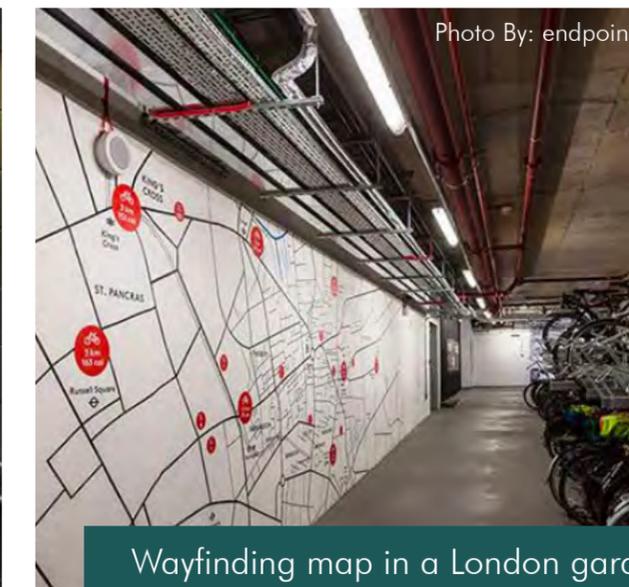
The Convention Center

# SAN PEDRO SQUARE AREA

San Pedro Square is one of the most vibrant entertainment districts in San Jose, a true gem in a Downtown that is often characterized as “sleepy”. Perhaps one of the most significant wayfinding strategies for this area is to introduce sufficient signage indicating preferred pedestrian routes to Diridon Station and other important destinations. Potential options of implementation include:



An example of an art installation in an alley, in Denver, Colorado



Wayfinding map in a London garage

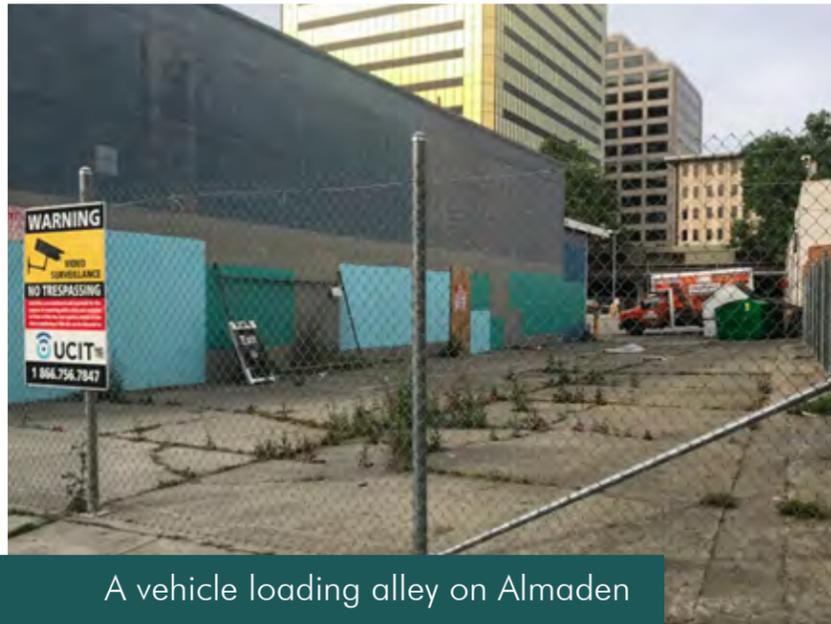
- 1 **Introduce icons, arrows, and signs on sidewalks and street pavement to assist pedestrians navigate to popular nearby destinations.** These signage features should lead to existing pedestrian alleys that may help cut travel time or keep pedestrians away from traffic.
- 2 **Introduce artistic elements on alleys, especially on Almaden Avenue and San Pedro Square Market.** These elements will make the alleys less intimidating and safer for pedestrians, women, and children.
- 3 **Introduce wayfinding maps and murals inside the San Pedro Market parking garage to encourage visitors to navigate downtown by foot, scooter or bike.**

## 6.1.2. IDENTIFY PREFERRED WALKING ROUTES

Designate preferred walking routes that physically separate pedestrians from traffic to the extent practicable by utilizing smaller streets, pedestrian plazas, and paseos to reduce travel time and improve the visual experience.

Downtown San Jose is full of service alleys for trash and vehicle loading that could become great assets to pedestrians, helping cut travel distances and time (see pictures below).

Most of these alleys are either closed to pedestrians, unsightly, or designed to discourage pedestrian pass-throughs. Similarly, there are smaller streets in downtown San Jose between important avenues, but are “hidden” due to little activity, unfriendly street design, and poor maintenance. These streets can be more pleasant and convenient to pedestrians and cyclists because they provide shade and protection from large volumes of traffic. The graduate student team has identified an alternative route linking Diridon Station, the Convention Center, and San Pedro Square by connecting pedestrians to these hidden city assets with existing plazas; sheltering pedestrians from traffic, providing shade, and reducing travel time, as seen in Figure XX.



A vehicle loading alley on Almaden



Alley in San Pedro Square

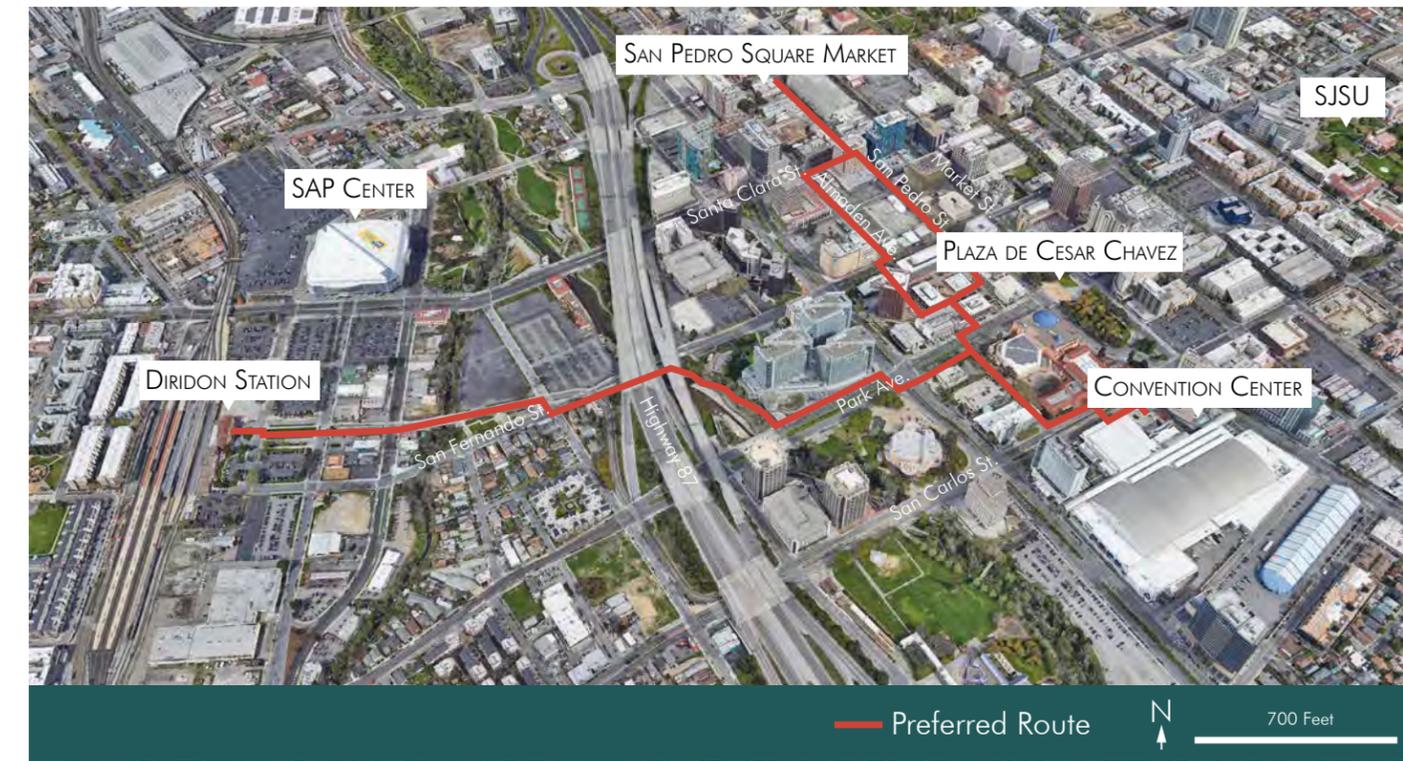
The proposed route begins at the light rail trail from Diridon Station, connecting to the Guadalupe Trail via West San Fernando St. The route continues on Park Avenue until an alleyway at the midblock crossing. Heading south, this alleyway leads to the Convention Center. From this alley, pedestrians can take the above-ground pedestrian plaza at the Cityview Plaza building in between Park Avenue and West San Fernando Street. At this point, pedestrians could continue towards San Pedro Street connecting to Plaza de Cesar Chavez, Paseo de San Antonio, and San Pedro Square Market; or towards Almaden Ave, connecting to other areas of North San Pedro.

This route keeps pedestrians away from traffic and dangerous intersections most of the way. By taking Almaden Ave and San Pedro Street instead of Almaden Blvd or Market Street, pedestrians can save at least four minutes that they would otherwise spend waiting for auto-favoring crossing signals at major intersections.

The Cityview Plaza commercial complex is a key connectivity piece linking the Convention Center area with Paseo de San Antonio and the North San Pedro area. Future redevelopment of this property should not block pedestrians from accessing these

destinations, but rather improve the existing connectivity to other areas of downtown.

The proposed route between Diridon and the Convention Center is one mile long and takes 20 minutes to walk at a regular pace. Alternative routes take the same amount of time and distance, but this route is arguably more scenic. The route from the Convention Center to San Pedro Square is 0.4 miles long, and it takes nine minutes to walk at a regular pace.



## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Beyond wayfinding elements that can help pedestrians identify preferred scenic routes between important downtown destinations, the graduate research team has identified the following strategies that could help increase connectivity along the proposed route:

- 1 **Encourage businesses and property owners to open service alleys to pedestrians to create passageways, especially on San Pedro Square and Almaden Avenue.**
- 2 **Identify smaller streets that could be more pleasant to navigate for pedestrians and that present fewer conflicts with high volumes of traffic.**

Streets like Almaden Avenue could be activated or adapted through the implementation of tactical urbanism strategies, similar to the pilot projects developed across the United States by the organization Street Plans, to promote more pedestrian, bike, and scooter use.

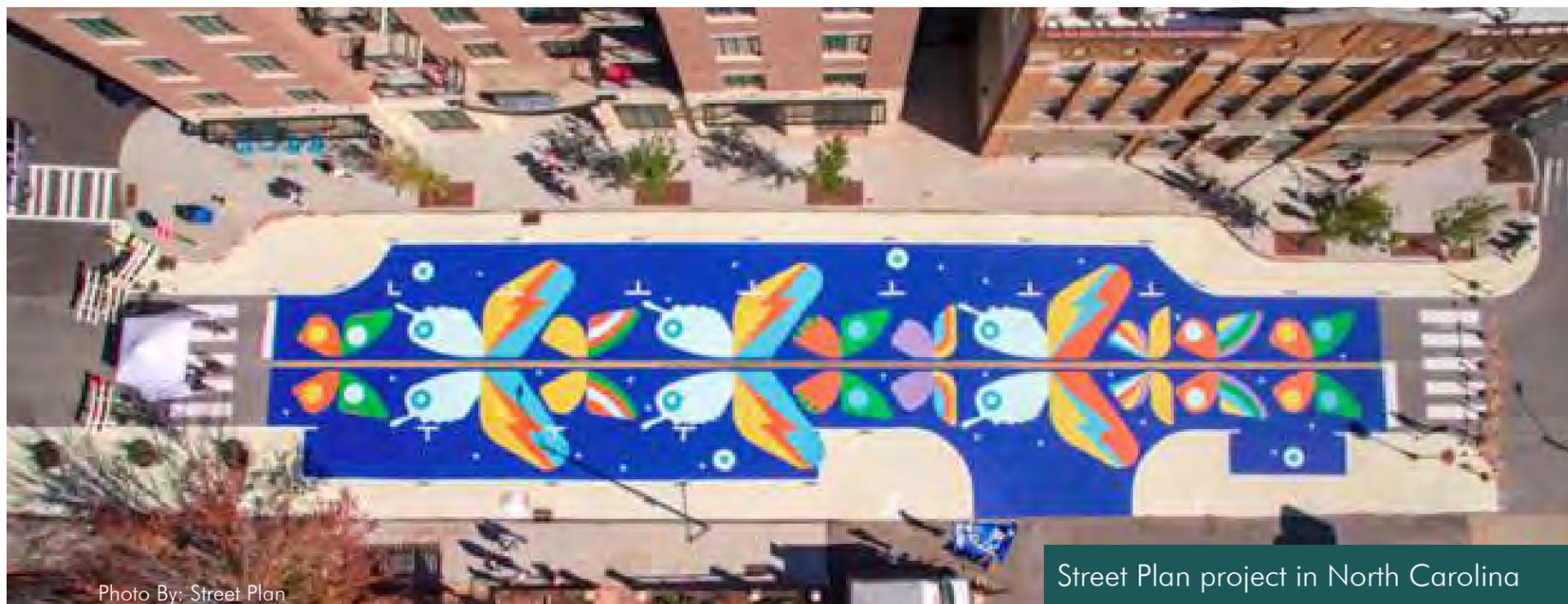


Photo By: Street Plan

Street Plan project in North Carolina

## 6.1.3. MAKE SPACE FOR SCOOTER AND BICYCLE PARKING

Create appealing spaces to park bikes and scooters in multiple areas around Downtown, including existing parking lots.

There are vast amounts of space dedicated to vehicle storage at the Diridon Station, Convention Center, and San Pedro Square, and yet parking is a very contentious issue among visitors and residents. Considering the current conditions for parking in these areas as well as future development, it is important for the city to start making space for alternative modes of transportation without taking away the limited space that pedestrians enjoy today.

Pedestrian space in Downtown San Jose



Limited pedestrian space on Delmas Avenue

is already reduced by utility equipment and landscape features, with vehicles taking much more than their fair share of street space. Signals for vehicular traffic are often placed on sidewalks blocking pedestrian travel. Considering this situation, space for bike and scooter parking should be carved out from the curb, and in existing parking lots, not from the already overcrowded pedestrian space. To reduce conflicts between pedestrians, vehicles, and other active transit modes, the graduate students propose the following implementation strategies.

## DIRIDON STATION AREA

**Make space for bike and scooter parking on the street, especially at the station and along existing biking routes like West San Fernando Street.**

Out of the three main nodes researched, the Diridon Station area presents the most challenges for pedestrians, especially for families with young children and individuals with disabilities. Around Diridon, pedestrians endure many conflicts with vehicular traffic due to the proximity to the urban highway system and congestion during events at the SAP Center. The following implementation strategy should help minimize future conflicts for pedestrians and promote the use of alternative transport modes in this area.



Photo By: Streetsblog

E-Scooter corral in Santa Monica, California

## CONVENTION CENTER AREA

**Develop highly visual spaces to park shared e-scooters and bikes in existing parking lots next to the Convention Center, and add wayfinding features or signs to these spaces (e.g. "Ten-minute ride to San Pedro Square").**

Scooters and bikes are a common feature of the streetscapes in Downtown as many residents and visitors are seen using these transportation modes in Downtown. However, some residents and visitors view scootering and biking as strictly recreational activities and not as viable transportation modes. According to interviews conducted at the Convention Center, this perception is more prevalent among visitors. The following implementation strategy is intended to better communicate to visitors that these modes are a good option for navigating Downtown San Jose, and for making more shared devices available for people that arrive to the city by car.

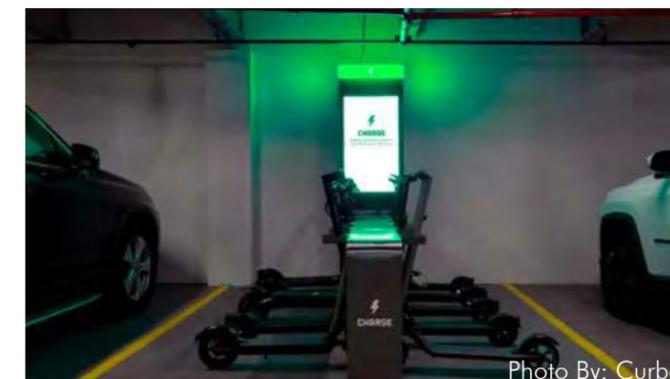
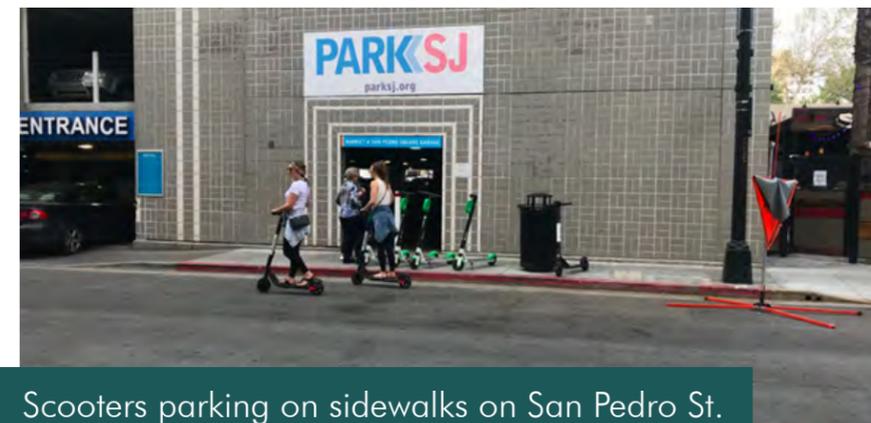


Photo By: Curbed

Charge docking stations, New York City

## SAN PEDRO SQUARE AREA



Scooters parking on sidewalks on San Pedro St.

Vehicle parking is extremely convenient in this area with the 1,393-space San Pedro Market Parking garage across the street from San Pedro Square Market. Additionally, many restaurants here offer parking validation. By contrast, there is very limited scooter and bike parking on the street, already competing with limited pedestrian space. To increase the space available for scooters, bike parking, and free space for pedestrians, the graduate students propose making space for scooter parking inside the San Pedro Parking Garage and adding wayfinding features clearly showing preferred routes for scooters and bicycles.

## 6.1.4. INTRODUCE ART AND TRANSIENT COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES ON THE STREET

Partner with landowners and parking lot operators to allow for street vendors, food trucks, and other commercial activity near the Convention Center and around Diridon Station, and activate existing alleys with music and art.

One of the findings from the May 4, 2019 engagement event is that San Jose's residents perceive street art and transient commercial activity as desired strategies to increase street activity, placemaking, and vitality. Furthermore, some residents that participated at this event identified street art and commercial activity as a way to address issues of safety. The following implementation strategies proposed here by the graduate students are focused on addressing these issues, and increasing amenities available to pedestrians between Diridon and Downtown.



Photo By: Spacing

Pop-up music venue in a highway underpass in Ottawa, Canada

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

### DIRIDON STATION AREA



Photo By: Steven Depolo

Food trucks in a highway underpass in Michigan

**Activate parking lots and freeway underpasses by allowing food trucks and mobile vendors to sell there free of charge (or at very reduced fees), especially at the highway underpasses on Santa Clara and San Fernando Streets.**

### CONVENTION CENTER AREA

**Implement tactical urbanism changes to temporarily activate underutilized paseos, alleys and plazas.**

These changes should include accessible music and art exhibitions, commercial activities, and the introduction of additional amenities like coffee and food push carts, especially along the Historic Route right across the Convention Center. Food vendors across the street from the Convention Center would immediately benefit from Convention Center attendees and serve a great demand for quick food and drinks in this area. These activities may also be extensions of the programs within the Convention Center.



Photo By: Roswell, Georgia

Rendering of an alley in Georgia

## 6.2 LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the findings from the May 4, 2019 engagement event is that San Jose's residents perceive street art and transient commercial activity as desired strategies to increase street activity, placemaking, and vitality. Furthermore, some residents that participated at this event identified street art and commercial activity as a way to address issues of safety. The following implementation strategies proposed here by the graduate students are focused on addressing these issues, and increasing amenities available to pedestrians between Diridon and Downtown.

### 6.2.1. ESTABLISH A LEGACY BUSINESS PROGRAM

This program would provide grant funding for longstanding businesses to remain through the re-development of the area. Businesses that the community would miss because of redevelopment, like the Poor House Bistro, could be relocated to a nearby location with the aid of these grants. Similar to the Legacy Business Program of the City of San Francisco, this program should prioritize funding for businesses that have existed for a certain amount of time, that have contributed to the history and identity of specific neighborhoods, and that are most likely to continue to serve communities in the future.

Depending on the type of business, its history, and ownership, sources of funding for this program could come from government funded historic heritage grants, like the California Heritage Fund Grant Program,<sup>1</sup> and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.<sup>2</sup> Additional funding could come

<sup>1</sup> California Department of Parks and Recreation, "Funding Opportunities," [http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=29742](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=29742), accessed May 13, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, <https://savingplaces.org/>, accessed May 13, 2019.

from corporate or private small business grants focused on specific types of businesses (e.g. women owned and micro businesses), government and state incentives, special financing, and crowdsourcing campaigns.<sup>3</sup> Grant funds should be matched by developers or companies that would be displacing these businesses in the first place.

<sup>3</sup> Value Penguin, "Thirty of the best places to find small business grants," <https://www.valuepenguin.com/small-business/small-business-grants>, accessed May 13, 2019.



Poor House Bistro, near Diridon Station

Photo By: Poor House Bistro

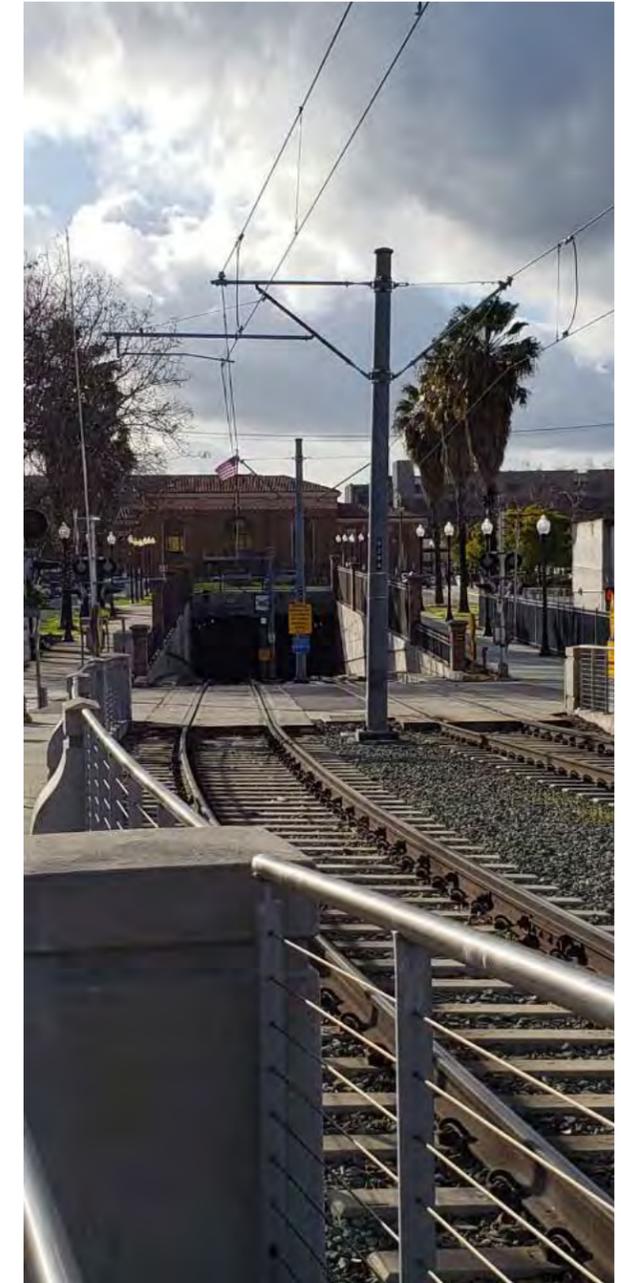
### 6.2.2. CONSTRUCT A MULTIMODAL PATH FROM DIRIDON STATION TO THE CONVENTION CENTER AND SAN PEDRO SQUARE

The graduate students identified two potential paths for new multi-modal connections to the Convention Center. The first path would run from the Diridon Station to the Convention Center parallel to the light rail and would strengthen the city's goals related to reducing vehicle dependence. As explored in previous chapters, the light rail tracks run along one of the most intuitive pedestrian routes leading to the Convention Center. A multi-modal path along the light rail could improve the conditions that affect pedestrian mobility by developing links between public transit modes and local active transportation modes.

The second path alignment proposed by the graduate students would extend Almaden Avenue as a pedestrian paseo south through Cityview Plaza, providing an improved connection between San Pedro Square and the Convention Center via the existing "Historic Route" paseo between Park Avenue

and West San Carlos Street. A pedestrian paseo in this location would extend the existing street grid of Downtown through the unusually large Cityview block. Furthermore, the development review process for the current proposal at Cityview Plaza provides a unique opportunity for the City to require this recommendation as a community benefit in the current development project.

Strong links between multi-modal transport modes are critical for people to begin to consider public transit, walking, and biking, as viable alternatives to personal automobiles. Focus groups and discussions with community members at both community events carried out by this research team suggest that infrastructure for active transportation would have a significant impact in the ability of the community to use alternative transportation modes.



Light rail tracks near Diridon Station



Homeless encampment near San Pedro Square

### 6.2.3. EXPAND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR THE HOMELESS TO REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

There are a large number of homeless encampments throughout the Diridon Station area. Due to the increasing cost of housing and high cost of living, San Jose's homeless population is not limited to the mentally ill or substance abusers. According to the Santa Clara County 2017 Homeless Census, the homeless population in San Jose includes families with children and young adults.<sup>1</sup> This recent census estimates that homeless youth (ages 18-24) has increased most significantly in the county.<sup>2</sup> Homelessness costs Santa Clara County \$520 million a year, as high as \$83,000 per chronically homeless individuals, according to the Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley.<sup>3</sup>

Future development projects in this area could contribute funding to address this humanitarian issue through the expansion

<sup>1</sup> Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey Reports, <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/ReportsandPublications/Pages/HomelessnessCensusandSurvey.aspx>, accessed May 11, 2019.  
<sup>2</sup> Santa Clara County Homeless Census, <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/ReportsandPublications/Documents/2017%20Final%20FAQ.pdf>, accessed May 11, 2019.  
<sup>3</sup> Economic Roundtable. Home Not Found The Cost Of Homelessness In Silicon Valley. Santa Clara: Economic Roundtable, 2015.

of the existing Downtown Streets Team/ Groundwerx program. The Downtown Streets Team goal is to transition homeless individuals into employment because, having a job restores hope and opens the door to other opportunities. This program provides employment opportunities to homeless individuals while also keeping the streets in Downtown clean. Expansion of this program to the Diridon Station area could improve the visual quality of this area both during and after construction of major development projects.

Alternatively, new developments like the Google Village could partner with organizations like Code Tenderloin from San Francisco to provide the local homeless with job readiness programs relevant to the local technology industry.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Code Tenderloin partners with tech companies like Google, Twitter, and ZenDesk to provide training services to vulnerable communities in San Francisco, <https://www.codetenderloin.org/about-us-1>, accessed May 11, 2019.

## 6.3 ASSESSMENT LIMITATIONS

The 2018 graduate students identified a number of limitations in conducting this assessment. One of these limitations was the lack of perspectives from a variety of community members, including children. To try to ameliorate this limitation, the 2019 graduate students adopted different user personas while analyzing the study area. Additionally, throughout the engagement process, efforts were made to contrast different community perspectives via multi-stakeholder focus groups, and by incorporating the perspectives of children via play-based activities at the May 4, 2019 community event. Furthermore, with the

encouragement of parents that participated in this event, older children were provided direct feedback to the issues being raised, while teenagers provided feedback through the ArcHub online platform. The graduate students also made significant efforts at the community event to record the concerns of community members of advanced age.

Regardless of these efforts, the recommendations developed in this assessment are at best informed suggestions based on the analysis of the study area and the community findings presented here. To try to find practical solutions to the problems

raised by city staff and community members, the graduate research team based its recommendations in well researched examples of what other communities have done, or plan to do, to address similar problems, while keeping in perspective potential synergies with existing projects and programs for the City of San Jose.

Due to time constraints and the nature of this assignment, the graduate student team could not explore in more detail some of the changes and recommendations suggested in this report.



Mural on St. John Street, near San Pedro Square Market

## NEXT STEPS AND IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

This chapter explored connectivity opportunities between Diridon Station, the Convention Center, and San Pedro Square based on wayfinding strategies, beautification amenities, and the introduction of art and commercial activities to improve the conditions for pedestrians in these areas of Downtown San Jose.

Despite the concerted efforts for this assessment, more research and community input is needed to explore the relevance, applicability, and potential impact of the proposed recommendations discussed in this report. Future studies to support the creation of Diridon Integration Station Concept Plan, Downtown Transportation Plan, update to the Diridon Station Area Plan, and wayfinding efforts from the Office of Economic Development, should focus on refining the recommendations presented in this report, identifying potential

pathways of implementation that the city or other organizations would like to pursue in coordination with existing plans and programs.

Through this assessment, the graduate student team sought to create a resource for the City of San Jose by exploring in depth the current conditions of these node areas of downtown while giving an active voice to the local community. The residents of the area want their neighborhood to be more connected to the surrounding districts of San Jose. They see an opportunity for the anticipated developments to improve the aesthetics of the area. Building on the existing assets identified in this report, they want green spaces, parks, and buildings that promote walkability and a sense of community. The community is eager for a change that will improve their community and access to sustainable modes of transportation, while being adamant that

those coming into the neighborhood are held accountable for acting with equity, keeping the needs and aspirations of the entire community in mind.

This assessment has found that the community around Diridon Station shares the aspirations and goals outlined by the City in its Envision 2040 General Plan. By pursuing those goals with the hopes and concerns of the community, the new Diridon Station and surrounding area can bring San Jose one step closer to becoming a world-class destination as an urban center, transportation hub, and cultural heart of Silicon Valley.



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