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Google, local leaders say huge downtown San Jose village will be built

Top exec with Google owner Alphabet helps to kick off tech titan's Creekside Socials ahead of vast development



(George Avalos/Bay Area News Group)

People gather at the Creekside Socials block party in the footprint of Google's proposed Downtown West mixed-used neighborhood near the Diridon train station and SAP Center in downtown San Jose.



SAN JOSE — A top executive of Google’s parent company Alphabet joined a block party this weekend and made it clear the tech titan still aims to build a huge mixed-use neighborhood in downtown San Jose.

Ruth Porat, president and chief investment officer with Alphabet, was a featured speaker at the first of what’s expected to be a series of block parties — known as Creekside Socials — that Google and real estate developer Jamestown are planning to bring people to the area where the search giant’s transit village is to be constructed.



Downtown West, as the future neighborhood is known, is slated to sprout near the Diridon train station and SAP Center on the western edges of downtown San Jose.

“Here in Downtown West, with input from San Jose residents, businesses and civic leaders, we have created a multi-decade opportunity and development plan,” Porat said at the block party on Saturday. “We did that because we believe in the people who live here, who work here and are committed to being here in San Jose.”

The comments come months after Google said it was reassessing the development timeline for Downtown West, an adjustment the [company confirmed](#) to this news organization in February and one that set off speculation the tech giant might back out of the project.

Before the shift, Google had indicated it expected to break ground this year, although it never defined a clear timeline. Google is expected to build extensive infrastructure, including an energy plant, to support [the development](#) before the first buildings are constructed.



Creek bridge and nature areas near Diridon train station in Google’s Downtown West project in downtown San Jose, concept. (SITELAB urban studio, Google)

The company has not specified a new timeline, but Porat joining other top-level executives at the Saturday event was a clear bid to publicly signal the Google fully intends to build the game-changing project.

“Google having Ruth Porat at the event shows a high-level commitment to the Downtown West project,” said Bob Staedler, principal executive with Silicon Valley

Google's transit village — in a formerly industrial area of low-slung, nondescript buildings — is expected to accommodate up to 7.3 million square feet of offices, 4,000 residential units, 500,000 square feet of retail space that would include shops and restaurants, 300 hotel rooms and 15 acres of open space. Google expects to employ up to 20,000 of its workers in the [new neighborhood](#).



Gateway section near Water Company Building within Google's Downtown West transit-oriented neighborhood in downtown San Jose, concept. (SITE LAB urban studio, Google)



San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan (L), U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren (C) and Ruth Porat (R), president

“We are going to continue to see the development of some really exciting efforts, office development, residential housing, and something I am particularly excited about — acres of public space,” Porat said.

The social event also drew U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, the longtime South Bay Democrat whose district includes San Jose.

“The CEO and the executives have promised us that although the development has been slightly delayed, it is not in doubt,” Lofgren said in a speech at the block party.

Lofgren also announced that the philanthropic arm of Google is awarding a \$250,000 grant to People Assisting the Homeless, or PATH, to address the local homelessness crisis.



Painters craft artwork during a Creekside Socials block party in the area of Google's proposed Downtown West mixed-used neighborhood near the Diridon train station in downtown San Jose. (George Avalos/Bay Area News Group)

The just-completed initial Creekside Socials event is just one way Google aims to create lively streetscapes and building uses prior to the official start of the Downtown West development, in Lofgren's view.



Girls play chess during the Creekside Socials block party in downtown San Jose in the area of Google's proposed Downtown West mixed-used neighborhood near the Diridon train station and SAP Center. (George Avalos/Bay Area News Group)

San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan said during a speech that he appreciates Google's efforts to scout for ways to activate the Downtown West area. The mayor noted the city's downtown faces an uphill climb to rebound in the wake of coronavirus-linked business shutdowns imposed by state and local government agencies that largely emptied the downtown of office workers, dining patrons and shoppers.

"We are working very hard to get our downtown to be vibrant again," Mahan said. "We lost those office workers, but they are slowly coming back. As we come out of the pandemic, people are yearning for community. They want to connect with people face-to-face like we are doing today."

An estimated 1,300 people RSVP'd for the event, Google executives said Saturday. The company officials estimated about 250 to 300 people were present each hour at the Creekside Socials event.



People engage in activities as part of the Creekside Socials block party in the area of Google's proposed Downtown West mixed-used neighborhood in downtown San Jose. (George Avalos/Bay Area News Group)

Mahan believes Google's community-oriented approach to the Downtown West development is what San Jose is seeking from the tech company. "We couldn't ask for a partner that is more innovative, forward-looking, holistic-thinking and community-oriented than Google," Mahan said.

Details of the pre-development street and building activations weren't immediately available. Porat, however, did point to some specific endeavors in the works.

The tech company is working with area nonprofits, Porat said, including Local Color, Year Up and Good Karma Bikes, which has moved into a building across the street from Diridon Station. Good Karma is already a Google tenant. Local Color helps artists in the region find places and ways to display their crafts.

"We are going to be preserving the historic San Jose Water Company building," Porat said. "We are working with local artists to bring their work to the site."



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