



Santa Clara Downtown Journal

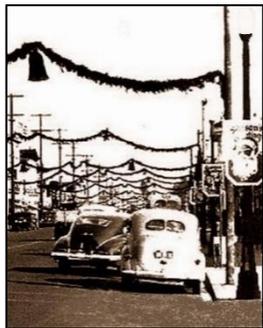
December 2017

The Miracle on Franklin Street

By Ana Vargas-Smith

The air felt crisp and folks were taking advantage of the unseasonal, sunny weather to decorate their store fronts and prepare their shops for the Christmas shopping rush.

The Trolley was clanging down the



center of Franklin Street stopping only to collect and deposit Santa Clarans as the local rush

to start their workday in 1961.

Fast forward 55 years, the trolley tracks are now covered by a variety of parking lots, apartments, and two-blocks of small shops in a mall.

The 120-unique mom and pop diners and cafes, hotels, movie Theatre, pubs and retail businesses were all bulldozed in a failed 1960s urban renewal project—now a distant and painful memory for most of our grandparents.

My family moved to Santa Clara in the mid-1960s, I went to St. Clare's school, and later Santa Clara High, and moved away for college. For more than half my life, I never knew that those eight blocks of old Santa

Clara Downtown existed, until I came across a Facebook site called *Reclaiming our Downtown* founded just over a year ago by Rod Dunham, a third generation Santa Claran. It was an epiphany; the pics and posts were like discovering a gateway to a past life dating back to Santa Clara's founding. How was it possible that so much history lay dormant and unknown to majority of kids born after 1961? Was there a stigma about talking about the history of the demolished downtown? Not even in grade school was Santa Clara's local history a topic. We learned about American and European History but nothing about what existed in our backyards—mind boggling.

The miracle? Timing is everything and technology gave us Facebook which has made it possible for Rod to connect with likeminded people and collect all that would have been lost and forgotten about Santa Clara's past life. Rod's dream was to piece together Santa Clara's colorful past, from local resources about its Wild West pioneer beginnings through its industrial farming, and small college town parade days, to becoming Silicon Valley's home of

the 49ers. His personal history project became a go-to community repository for long lost family videos, photos and anecdotes, genealogy posts, and more importantly a voice for many of our residents, some who were just as surprised as I was that Santa Clara had an old Downtown. In two short years Santa Clarans may just get what they wished for—the **miracle** of a downtown on Franklin Street—a "place" to connect, gather, and celebrate as Santa Claran's again for generations to come.

To all the 2,500 members who have joined our cause to Reclaim Our Downtown on Facebook and at our website Reclaimingourdowntown.org—thank you and Happy Holidays!

YES, there is a Santa Claus and YES, Dreams do come true!!!!

By Mary Grizzle

I woke up early, energized, and ready to go to the Farmers Market as usual to spread the word about our vision for rebuilding our downtown, and share the history of our old downtown before it was sadly demolished over half a century ago. Our Reclaiming our Downtown



petition has been very successful. It's safe to say that our grass roots effort over the last few months has touched the hearts and minds of Santa Clarans, and inspired thousands to join our Reclaiming our Downtown cause. In keeping with the holiday spirit, and to show our appreciation, my sister Connie Costa (aka Santa Claus) surprised the loyal Farmers Market attendees with an appearance. It was a joy to see all the faces light up as Santa, decked out in a bright red suit and California style sunglasses strolled down Jackson Street onto the old Franklin Street footprint and straight into the heart of old downtown Santa Clara. Even the Firefighters stopped by to get their wish list to Santa.

Indeed, Santa caused quite a stir and



even a bigger surprise when, with great ceremony, presented the dynamic duo and co-chairs of

Reclaiming Our Downtown, Rod Dunham and Dan Ondrasek, with the keys to the new Santa Clara downtown! With great care Santa checked his list twice, then advised the team that we all just needed to work a bit harder and smarter to achieve our goals—and they are definitely in sight. To celebrate the festivities, Santa brought donuts, coffee and candy for the children. Adding to the holiday cheer was Linda Mello, a long time Santa Claran who came all the way from Modesto to support the cause, Donna West of "Let's Talk" and of course myself and Connie. Jim Crouch and Ana Vargas were not able to attend this time, but present in spirit.

I am just saying, I couldn't have wished for a better outcome. Thank you Santa Claran's for making this an exceptional day and coming out to support Reclaiming Our Downtown's vision for our new downtown.

For more details on how you can join



the cause, or sign our petition online go to ReclaimingourDowntown.org and our Facebook page.

Reclaiming Our Downtown lost a Mentor

By Dan Ondrasek

We lost an incredible asset to our effort to return a Heart to Santa Clara...and I lost a dear friend.

Bruce Liedstrand recently passed away. He oversaw the revitalization and rebuilding of downtown Mountain View, Redwood City and other cities. This man quietly



helped "Reclaiming Our Downtown" in immeasurable ways. Speaking nearly daily, Bruce quickly became a mentor on how to return the "heart" back to Santa Clara.

In our very short time together, he taught me: This is up to THE COMMUNITY, not a consultant; to follow 'best practices' of other cities; and to create a PLACE NOT A PROJECT.

"A downtown is the opposite of the suburb — so treat it that way." We would talk of creating "an outdoor community living room" that can continuously change and make us feel different things each day we are in it.

He first saw this in Paris. As he and his wife walked the streets. They witnessed how differently people interacted in that city and how differently the city interacted with them. They both needed each other to be incredible. People sat in cafes

on sidewalks; played music in bars; and walked together watching one street's vibe change into another. The "Place" is alive; the people, its bloodstream.

I believe that art and architecture evoke feelings and emotions; but are stationary. The beauty is taken for granted and fades. The way we plan our city creates an art piece that actually "interacts" with us. It changes, evolves and, if planned right, always reminds us



of its beauty – both of form and function.

Bruce's last words to me were: "I'm not planner – I'm a lawyer. You don't need to be an architect to get this done, you just need to really love it."

I and this team do love it – and we will see it done. There are NO other projects that are more important to the Santa Clarans I have spoken with. We have waited over fifty years for this, let's come together; find solutions; and get this done. Let's not create a project, but a "place."

Thank you, Bruce.

With love,
Dan

How the Grinch Stole Downtown Santa Clara



By Donna West

Deep down inside of the [archives tunnel of our city library](#) in plain sight lies a truth unveiled of the frequented asked question, "Where is our Downtown Santa Clara?"

As one of the brand new 30 year residents, I have not had this answer until this year. I even missed keywords when searching through these old city directory archives for my cousins in my family history.

I love driving throughout our historic Victorian homes neighborhood located between El Camino Real, Lafayette Street, Scott Blvd, and Homestead Road next to our beloved Santa Clara University because these homes remind me of small downtowns where I grew up in the Midwest.

Where is Downtown Santa Clara?

Where do I go for fun nearby? This is a frequent question I am asked as I greet visitors and residents daily. I am conflicted because my heart wants to say go to Downtown Santa Clara, Franklin and Main Streets. I have to point to other downtowns and neighborhoods because I want to give people the best experience of our iconic Silicon Valley region.

It took getting acquainted, listening, and absorbing stories with a third generation Santa Claran, Rod Dunham, this year which revealed what happened. It is through Rod's grandparents' stories we learned about the Miracle on Franklin Street and Main Street in our Downtown Santa Clara.

Who was the Grinch Who Stole Downtown Santa Clara?



The saddest part of the story is this area was never fully developed the way our city leaders dreamed of after it was torn down. Santa Clara was one of the many cities where the people from City Councils voted for the urban renewal projects and in 1963 after several years of debate leading up to what happened, our downtown was stolen from us, the eight block grid was destroyed.

Urban Renewal is an urban revitalization of places or a program of land redevelopment that began in the United Kingdom. Urban Renewal was popular in the 1950s and 1960s to receive federal funding for land expansion across USA.

Looking back now it is difficult to imagine how some of these fabulous architecturally designed buildings like the Santa Clara Theater and City Hall were torn now and watching a [home video](#) that we found of the

destruction of our old City Hall brings tears to my eyes.



How might the Grinch knock these fabulous buildings down?

This was a dream that was never completed by our community as a whole as Silicon Valley grew in scattered directions from orchard fields to technology insights.

New Dream Emerges

We learn important lessons from the Grinch who stole our beloved Downtown. These lessons empowers all of us as we create our new vibrant, modern eight blocks of this downtown neighborhood community together in Santa Clara, CA.

A huge thank you for creating this opportunity to co-Leaders Rod Dunham and Dan Ondrasek and our core team and our 2,500 growing members to consistently keep unveiling this part of history that was lost and assembling our plan with current actions to execute together with our city leaders, residents, and businesses to create our new vibrant, trendy, fun Downtown community

for all to enjoy as described in the article, Miracle on Franklin Street.

From the Grinch to Miracles – all roads lead to our beloved

Downtown Santa Clara

Many Hearts, One Vision!

Happy Holidays!



Join Us Now At:

[Reclaiming Our Downtown website](#)

And Reclaiming Our Downtown on
Facebook



Come meet our core team at our table
at the Farmers Market on Saturdays:

Reclaiming core team:

Rod Dunham

Dan Ondrasek

Connie Costa

Jim Crouch

Mary Grizzle

Linda Melo

Aaron Reales

Mary Silva

Ana Vargas-Smith

Donna West