Change Remains a Constant in East Village

Developers Still See Potential Among Its Warehouses

BY BRAD GRAVES

All neighborhoods evolve over time. For East Village, the evolution is happening at breakneck speed.

The transformation of the eastern portion of downtown into something other than a warehouse district began with the San Diego Padres’ ballpark development. Petco Park was planned in the last part of the 20th century and opened in 2004. Since then, luxury apartment complexes as well as other types of buildings, including offices, have sprung up among vacant lots and 19th century houses.

The transformation continues. It won’t be the crack of the bat, but the life of the mind that promises to reshape East Village in a new way.

Already home to San Diego City College and the New School of Architecture, East Village’s educational bent will get more pronounced when UC San Diego opens its downtown center in the fall of 2021. The university will occupy a four-story structure at Market and Park Boulevard, recently

UC San Diego
Associate Vice Chancellor
Mary Walshok

Rendering courtesy of Carrier Johnson + Culture

UC San Diego’s downtown center, on Market Street between 11th Avenue and Park Boulevard, shares a block with Holland Partner Group’s new 34-story apartment tower, called The Merian.

THE LISTS

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Real Estate

built along with Holland Partner Group’s 34-story apartment tower, the Mews-
an at 11th and G streets. While the ex-
terior of the university building is mostly complete, the interior still needs finishing. The center was originally sup-
posed to open in the spring, but for safety and planning pur-
poses, it has been delayed until the late fall, accord-
ing to a university spokeswoman. The universi-
ty predicts big things ahead. “Unlike any-
thing else in the region, our downtown center strives to be a pivotal intersection for our global research university to engage with people, ideas and plans to address the re-
region’s biggest question: What’s next for San Diego?” said Mary Walshok, associate vice 
chancellor for public programs and dean of Ex-
tension at UC San Diego. Drawing People to Downtown

With its special programs and events, UC San Diego will attract different people to the neighbor-
hood, said Mike Stepner, professor emeritus at the nearby New School of Architecture. Because of UC San Diego, people who would not normally come to East Village will make the trip — and it will likely change their perspectives of the area.

The arrival of UC San Diego is “a real-
ly big deal for East Village and downtown,” said Betsy Brennan, CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership, a nonprofit serving businesses downtown. “It brings an inno-
vation economy with a demographic that

is highly desirable in a downtown.” East Village is a place for highly edu-
cated people to both live and work, Brennan said. There are 10,000 residents of East Village and city plans, which has already con-
sumed documents call for housing 30,000.

Developer Da-
vind Malmuth said that East Village has fundamental elements that de-
velopers, and the people who finance them, look for. Mal-
muth is one of the people who built the re-
cently completed, $91 million IDEA1 hous-
ing and office block on F Street at Park Bou-
levard. He is involved in another project a short walk to the east.

San Diego is a growth city with a large population of millennials, Malmuth said. “People want to come here.” Its universities turn out great talent. For its part, downtown has small, walkable blocks and great access to transit. “Companies realize they want to be where the talent pool wants to be,” he said. “I like the long-term prospects for East Village. . . . All of that, to me, says it’s a good place for a spokesperson and capital agrees.”

Recognizing Potential

Developer Jason Wood sees potential in East Village too. Wood is a principal in Cisterra Development, which has already con-
tributed to the new face of East Village. Cis-
terra built DiamondView Tower adjacent to Petco Park, as well as Tempo Energy’s new high-rise headquarters a short distance north of the ballpark.

Cisterra plans to follow that with two size-
able projects. It plans to break ground on its Cisterra Equinox project — named for the two streets that intersect nearby — during the first quarter of 2021. It is looking to the spring of 2023 to finish the building, slated to have a two-floor Target store and 241 apartments for a total of 255,000 square feet. Carrier Johnson + Culture is the architect. Carrier Johnson also designed a larger project for Cisterra. At 763,000 square feet, the 7th & Market high-rise complex will fea-
ture a Roomette hotel plus 59 residences associated with the hotel, as well as a special-
ty grocer, apartments and office space. Con-
struction is expected to start by next sum-
mer with an opening is anticipated in 2024. “We want them to get them going,” Wood said. “I look forward to having them under construction and delivered.”

Asked about untapped potential in East Village, Wood replied that it’s “been tapped. I wouldn’t call it untapped potential. . . . The question is how much of that potential will be realized, and how much will be lost po-
tential.”

A Foot on the Brake Pedal

Naturally, downtown developers are try-
ing to contend with COVID-19. “It’s definitely had everybody hitting the brake pedal a little bit,” Wood said. Whether development will simply slow or come to a halt has yet to be seen. Wood said he hopes for the former. He reported that people in-
nancing development projects are subjecting them to greater analysis than usual.

Brennan of the Downtown San Diego Partnership said she has seen construction projects continue without pause, though she has seen the financing process slow.

“We want to contribute to everything that is vibrant and vital about that pivotal East Village corridor.”

MARY WALSHOK

Pandemic or no pandemic, East Village retains a certain energy in its newly devel-
oped sections. On a recent Saturday evening, diners were seated outside restaurants on J Street on improvised patios — streets and sidewalks walled off by sections of concrete K-rail. The Quartyard beer garden, formed by shipping containers placed at Market and 13th streets, had groups of people enjoying beer. People were out for a run or taking their dogs for a walk. A restaurant in Mal-
muth’s IDEA1 building was serving Mex-
ican food.

Malmuth is at work with partners on an-
other nearby project, dubbed the “Super-
Block,” bordered by 15th and 16th as well as E and F streets. The vision is for creative office space. Both SuperBlock1 and IDEA1 are part of what promoters call the I.D.E.A. District. The abbreviation stands for Inno-
vation, Design, Education and Arts. There are plenty of other projects in process in East Village. Another Carri-
er Johnson-designed complex, Jefferson Quartyard, will soon go up on a re-
clearly cleared site near San Diego Police headquar-
ters, between 15th, 16th, Broad-
way and E streets. It will have 366 residen-
tial units.

A 1-acre park called East Village Green, with a recreation center, is expected to break ground in the coming year, Brennan said.

The city has requested proposals to rede-
velop the parking lots east of the ballpark, an area the city is calling the East Village Quarter.

Building a Downtown Presence

Against this backdrop, UC San Diego is work-
ing toward the day when it can open in East Village center. The facility will contain a mix of public, meeting, arts and educational spaces. The first floor will have community and event space as well as a restaurant. The second floor is being projected for a gallery and events space. The third floor will be a mix of uni-
versity and partner programs, courses, meet-
ing space and activities. UC San Diego said it will reserve its fourth floor for its commu-
nity partners.

The university said it plans to engage the community, students and alumni by offer-
ing learning, collaboration, civic and cul-
tural experiences in its new building. Pro-
grams will be geared toward people of all ages; university leaders spoke of youth sci-
ence programs, business executive training and post-retirement learning opportunities.

“The economic and cultural changes cre-
ated by the coronavirus pandemic have made us even more committed to creat-
ing a place for a cross-section of our vast community to gather, learn, collaborate and prosper together in downtown San Di-
go,” said UC San Diego’s Walshok. “We want to contribute to everything that is vi-
biant and vital about that pivotal East Vil-
lage corridor.”

Workforce development will be an im-
portant theme at the center, according to a

“Through economic research, business partnership, university education and train-
ing, the center will be uniquely capable of connecting our region’s richly diverse, un-
tapped talent pool with the skills they need most,” said Sophia Eichner, project director of UC San Diego Downtown Center. She added that national research suggests that up to 40% of pre-coronavirus jobs will not return with the new economy.

“The question is how much of that potential will be realized, and how much will be lost potential.”

JASON WOOD

UC San Diego seems to have plenty of reasons to like East Village, including a transpor-
tation benefit. Construction firms are pushing the net-
work of UC San Diego’s trolley tracks north. Once the new line is complete in 2021, a stu-
dent will be able to take the trolley directly from the main UC San Diego campus on Torrey Pines Mesa to the front door of the East Village center.

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1. 11TH & BROADWAY
Cost: Undisclosed
Location: 11th & Broadway
Description: 32-story, 641k SF mixed use 623 apartments, 10k SF retail and 6 levels of below grade parking
Developer: Pinnacle International
Contractor: Pinnacle International
Architect: Martinez+Cubri
Estimated completion: Q4 2020

2. Modera
Cost: Undisclosed
Location: 241 14th Street
Description: 7-story, 368 apartments and subterranean parking
Developer: MCRT Investments, LLC
Contractor: Undisclosed
Architect: Carrier Johnson + Culture
Estimated completion: Q1 2021

3. UC San Diego Innovative Cultural and Education Hub
Cost: $275 million
Location: Park & Market
Description: 34-story tower with 426 housing units and 4-story 53k SF office and classroom building, restaurant and amphitheater
Developer: Holland Partner Group
Contractor: Holland Construction
Architect: Carrier Johnson + Culture
Estimated completion: $42 million first phase 2020
GO RISING
More Than $1 Billion in Construction

5. Broadway Block
Cost: $200 Million
Location: 702 Broadway
Description: 2 Towers - 720k SF mixed use, 630 apartment units and ground level retail/commercial space.
Developer: Bosa Development
Contractor: Undisclosed
Architect: Joseph Wong Design Associates
Estimated Completion: 2020

4. 7th & Market
Cost: $400 Million
Location: 7th & Market
Description: 39-story, 763k SF mixed use with 153-room Ritz-Carlton hotel, 59 Ritz-Carlton branded luxury condominiums, 125 market rate apartments, and 34 affordable housing units; 150k SF office space and 40k SF retail space - including grocer. 5 levels of below grade parking.
Developer: Cisterra Development
Contractor: Suffolk
Architect: Carrier Johnson + Culture
Estimated Completion: 2024

6. Father Joe’s Village’s 14th and Commercial
Cost: $145 Million
Location: 14th and Commercial
Description: 14 & 7-story towers, 291K SF 407 affordable apartments.
Developer: Undisclosed
Contractor: Undisclosed
Architect: Joseph Wong Design Associates
Estimated Completion: 2020

2,869 MEMBERS in San Diego County
1,080 PARTNERS
1,600 AGREEMENTS

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