

Los Gatos private school expanding into historic downtown San Jose buildings

Hillbrook School announces plan to open a new high school in the old Armory and Moir Building



The Moir Building, an 1894 hotel most recently used as office space, is one of two downtown San Jose buildings that will become part of Hillbrook School's new high school campus beginning in 2023. (Sal Pizarro/Bay Area News Group)

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Two historic buildings in downtown San Jose appear to be headed to new lives with Hillbrook School — an elite private elementary school in Los Gatos — planning to use them as the campus of its new high school, expected to open in Fall 2023.

This could prove to be a great re-use for the San Jose Armory on North Second Street and the nearby Moir Building on North First Street. Both properties are owned by Urban Community — the development group led by Gary Dillabough and Jeff Arrillaga — and plans to revitalize them as an event space and a co-working office were dealt a serious blow by the COVID-19 pandemic. They've been vacant for a couple of years — the 1894 Moir Building was most recently used as the law offices for Robinson & Wood — and bad things tend to happen to old, vacant buildings downtown.





The San Jose Armory, built on North Second Street in 1933, is one of two historic downtown buildings that will be part of Hillbrook School's planned high school campus beginning in fall 2023. (Sal Pizarro/Bay Area News Group)

Chuck Hammers, president of Hillbrook's board, knows a lot about downtown San Jose as both the owner of Pizza My Heart and a longtime member of the San Jose Downtown Association board. He said Hillbrook had a strategic growth plan in place and was "ready to be lucky" with an opportunity like this.

"We looked into Campbell, we looked in Los Gatos, Santa Clara, other places in San Jose, and none of them were going to be a classroom like this," he said at a dinner for parents and donors held Wednesday night at the Armory, following a tour of the Moir Building. "It was really two factors that brought us back to downtown. It was 'city as a classroom.' And San Jose was so welcoming — downtown is such a great community — and we felt welcomed from the very first moment."



Parents and donors of Hillbrook School listen to Head of School Mark Silver in the Moir Building, one of two downtown San Jose buildings where the school plans to create a new high school, on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. (Sal Pizarro/Bay Area News Group)

Hillbrook will have long-term leases on the two properties, which will undergo interior renovations while maintaining their historic character. The Army — a Spanish Revival structure built in 1933 — will be used first, with a freshman class expected to start there in Fall 2023 while work continues on the 28,000 square-foot Moir Building. Head of School Mark Silver said Hillbrook has invited Preservation Action Council Executive Director Ben Leech to meet the school's seventh graders at the Moir Building and talk about its history, including early years as a hotel.

Hillbrook, which was founded in 1935 as The Children's Country School, expects to eventually have about 260 to 300 high school students. It'll be the second high school downtown, joining Notre Dame, an all-girls Catholic school founded in 1851.

San Jose Downtown Association Executive Director Scott Knies agrees with the "city as a classroom" concept, saying the Hillbrook students will have ample opportunity for community service and to engage with their urban surroundings. "They're going to be part of the revitalization of St. James Park," he said.

HISTORIC NIGHT AT HISTORY PARK: A coalition of history-minded groups, collectively known as the Santa Clara County Preservation Alliance, are hosting a Preservation Awards Night for the first time May 21 at History Park in San Jose.

The outdoor event will start at 7 p.m. with live music and a restored film on the history of the Santa Clara County Fair, as guests mingle at what's expected to be a real who's who of preservationists in Santa Clara County. The highlight award of the night is a lifetime achievement award for Kitty Monahan for her leadership with the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association, Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission, Peninsula Open Space Trust and the Umuñhum Conservancy.

Before that, however, the various organizations will honor 17 other people and groups — too many to list here, but you can get the full list of honorees (and purchase tickets to attend) at www.preservation.org/npm2022.

50 YEARS OF INDIE RADIO: KKUP-FM (91.5), the all-volunteer, listener-sponsored radio station based in Cupertino will celebrate its 50th anniversary on May 20, kicking off a special "Psychedelic Marathon" through May 22, playing music popular during its early days from artists including the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Moby Grape and more.

A radio station surviving for five decades is pretty amazing, but doing it without commercials is almost unheard of. Gratia Rankin, a KKUP board member since the 1990s, said many smaller "underground" stations have a college or foundation to help keep them afloat, but KKUP has existed entirely on donations from Bay Area listeners and now fans around the world through its online presence.

"During the pandemic, we learned from many listeners who called or wrote that we were saving their lives by bringing our best game during a very difficult



THEATREWORKS PUTTING ON A SHOW: TheatreWorks Silicon Valley is back with “A Muse Ball,” its spring fundraiser at the Fox Theatre in Redwood City on May 21, and it sounds like it’s going to be a colorful spectacle worthy of the company’s most entertaining shows.

On top of putting a spotlight on Artistic Director Tim Bond, the night will include live entertainment, a local art market and wrap up with a dance party. And, of course, you’ve got to honor a couple of Muses, and in this case its TheatreWorks Executive Director Phil Santora and TheatreWorks trustee Julie Kaufman, who will kick off the evening with a special entrance and welcome. Tickets are available for \$150 a piece at www.theatreworks.org.

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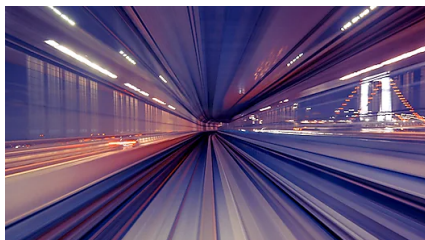
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