

Home ownership development on VTA property at Branham's Light Rail station
SEE PAGE 4



\$60 million deficit
San Jose's projected budget deficit skyrockets
See page 6

Legacy of Susie Wilson to have lasting memory
SEE PAGE 3



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FEB. 14 - FEB. 27, 2025 ■ VOL. 38, NO. 4



Pile burns at Almaden Quicksilver County Park

Reduces fuel loads and wildfire risk

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

Pile burns at Almaden Quicksilver County Park took place on Monday, Feb 3rd at 10 a.m. In partnership with CAL FIRE and Santa Clara County Fire Depart-

ment, pile burns are a vegetation management tool that effectively reduces the fuel load of an area which reduces the risk of wildfire. If you see smoke coming from pile burn operations, please do not call 911. County Parks rangers and CAL FIRE and County firefighters are planning to be on the scene at future controlled burns.



Robert Peters, 47, a program participant, services a bicycle at Community Cycles of California in San Jose on Dec. 13. Peters was referred to Community Cycle Software California by a program director at the Recover Café as part of the requirements of his treatment court orders. Photo by Jungho Kim – for Calmatters

This San Jose nonprofit helps Californians get back on their feet — through bicycles

By Zayna Syed
Calmatters

People who have spent time in jail can learn how to repair and sell bikes if they get into a cohort program for Community Cycles of California.

The San Jose-based nonprofit, helps people who typically face barriers to employment, develop their business skills.

Community Cycles of California gives 10 people who are “justice-involved” the opportunity to learn how to run a business. Many of the participants are also veterans or have been homeless in their past, according to Colin Bruce, who co-founded the nonprofit with a friend, Cindy Ahola.

Participants spend about 40% of their time in the classroom completing various workshops and training and 60% of their time rotating jobs within the shop, such as marketing, accounting, office management, retail, bike repairs and building bikes.

What’s new about the program, Bruce says, is it’s able to offer a 40-hour work week for the six months it runs. This is different from similar workforce development efforts, which typically offer 20-hour or so gigs or limited services, such as résumé help. When Bruce and Ahola first started Community Cycles in 2017, they partnered with outside organizations who had a similar part-time model. But

See BICYCLES, page 8

Black History Month kickoff features African dance troupe Kuumba

By William Bellou
Publisher

Evergreen Valley College celebrated the kickoff of Black History month featuring West African Dance Group, Kuumba on Tuesday, February 4.

Typically, Black History Month’s Kick-off event is the first large event of the new year and is a gauge of the semester to come at Evergreen Valley College.

“We had a packed house in Gullo II with more than 150 students, faculty, and staff. The vibe was optimistic and full of communal energy,” said McTate Stroman II, Program Specialist. “As the DJ, it was beautiful to see this event come to fruition.”

Host Ebonnie Berry ushered in an affectionate vibe, as the featured African dance troupe inspired and educated the audience.

Black History Month kickoffs with the African dance Troup Kuumba. Photo Courtesy of Evergreen Valley College.



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Times **Local News**

Legacy of Susie Wilson to have lasting memory

Susanne B. Wilson Women and Children's Center dedication attended by her family, local officials, and VMA staff

By William Bellou
Publisher

The Susanne B. Wilson Women and Children's Center at Valley Medical Center was recently dedicated at a ceremony attended by members of Wilson's family, local elected officials, a number of Wilson's former colleagues and staff members and VMC staff.

The Center has been named to honor the late Santa Clara County Supervisor, who was a champion of the hospital throughout her time in elected office — and even after it ended. Wilson fought to save Valley Medical Center and its social programs when passage of proposition 13 resulted in budget cuts.

Wilson was the third woman elected to the San Jose City Council and second to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, where she served for 12 years before leaving office in 1990.

As a San Jose City Council member and later Vice Mayor, she championed efforts to make city government more transparent and ethical. Most significantly, she supported a change to district-based elections for the San Jose City Council, profoundly changing the makeup of that body by bringing in representatives from all parts of the vast city. She was also not afraid to take on controversial issues, including an attempt to pass a ceremonial resolution supporting the rights of LGBTQ people.

"When you leave here today, I hope that you find strength, as I do, in Susie's example, and I



hope that you find strength, as I do, in the battles that she fought and won to keep the doors of this hospital open to all," Valley Health Foundation Executive Director Michael Elliott said. "Because that fight is now our fight and if she can win it, so can we."

Santa Clara County Supervisor Susan Ellenberg said she has strived to build on Wilson's leadership by championing childcare and supporting the growth of the public hospital system.

In 2018, then-Santa Clara County Supervisor Ken Yeager, former Supervisor Cindy Chavez and then-VMC Foundation Executive Director Chris Wilder, led the charge to name the building in Wilson's honor. Wilson attended the Nov. 6, 2018 meeting and received a standing ovation following the board's unanimous approval. She died a month later from an illness at age 90.

"I know at times this job is hard," Wilson told the board that November day. "Sometimes, it's not easy to say no and sometimes we have to. But the most joyous time is to be able to say yes, and to say yes to life and to love life."

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Landmark home ownership development on VTA property at Branham's Light Rail station

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is taking a pioneering role in affordable housing in Silicon Valley, creating homeownership for extremely low-income residents of Santa Clara County.

VTA announced a long-term ground lease agreement with Charities Housing, which will build 45 townhomes on property next to VTA's Branham Light Rail Station. While most affordable and low-income housing being built in the San Francisco Bay Area is rental property, the development going up next to VTA's Branham Light Rail Station will be townhomes for sale.

About a quarter of the units will be designated for extremely low-income residents, earning 30% of the median income in Santa Clara County, or less. This is the first such housing development VTA has included in its broad portfolio of Transit-Oriented Development.

VTA announced the agreement to lease the property to Charities Housing at a press conference Thursday, January 30.

"At VTA, we are proud to be on the cutting edge of this opportunity, and we hope this is just the



beginning, with other projects and developers following suit," said VTA General Manager/CEO Carolyn Gonot.

The Branham homeownership project is one of several new housing projects benefiting from a cooperative agreement between VTA and the Santa Clara County Office of Supportive Housing which manages funds from the 2016 Measure A Affordable Housing Bond.

"This project is a good example of VTA's role as a leader in solving problems in our community,"

said VTA Board Chair and Campbell Mayor Sergio Lopez. "Hopefully we are paving the way for future innovations in affordable housing solutions."

The homes at Branham station will prioritize affordability, fostering an opportunity for owners to build equity in their own homes. Anticipating that some of the homes will be sold again in future years, the affordable Area Median Income levels will be guaranteed in perpetuity through recorded deed restrictions administered by the Office of Supportive Housing.

The Branham townhome project recently received a generous grant from Destination Home, a public-private partnership that has funded thousands of affordable homes throughout Santa Clara County. In addition, because VTA qualified for a Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Priority Sites designation in 2023, the Branham homeownership project has also earned a grant from MTC.

"The County of Santa Clara, MTC, and Destination: Home have provided the critical early-phase financing needed to get the project off the ground and to leverage additional funding sources going forward," said Charities Housing Executive Director Mark Mikl. "Charities Housing appreciates the trust our public and private partners have placed in us to complete this innovative development."

Through partnerships with non-profits, private developers, and public sector agencies, VTA's TOD program allows developers to lease under-utilized VTA properties near transit. This initiative aims to provide much-needed housing while increasing system ridership and farebox revenues.

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Times **Community News****IN MEMORY****Ronald R. James****6/1928 -1/2025***Resident of San Jose**Former Mayor of San Jose*

With much sadness we would like to announce that our dad, Ron James, passed away peacefully on January 5, 2025. He was 96 years old. But what a legacy he has left us.

I am writing this on behalf of myself and my siblings, dad's five children that he loved and was so proud of; Lauron, Cynthia, Charles, William and Alexander. We all were witnesses to the great and forward thinking actions that he took to guide his beloved San Jose from sleepy, agrarian prune and apricot capital of the world, to what is now Silicon Valley.

Dad's love of San Jose was deeply rooted in the three generations preceding his birth, when hearty English miners, by the name of James, packed up their families and left Cornwall, England, to live and work for The New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Co. in south San Jose. Using a buckboard wagon to convey household items and produce from the quicksilver mines to San Jose and back was the

birth of the family business in 1888, James Transfer and Storage Company.

Dad's very early years were spent in the Seabright neighborhood of Santa Cruz where, along with his beloved little sister, Jacqueline (Padia), were nurtured by their paternal grandmother, Effie James. Then moving to San Jose, dad settled into San Jose High School where he loved playing football, and met our mother, Laurel Schuetz.

Dad went on to Stanford University where he continued to play football and married his

high school sweetheart at the Stanford Memorial Church. Still in his early 40's and upon becoming the first directly elected mayor by the citizens of San Jose, garnering 80% of the vote, he brought together like-minded, knowledgeable civic leaders\ planners, to include the then mayors of the City of Santa Clara and Sunnyvale. Together they discussed what they saw coming in the form of a high tech/electronics industry and what it might mean for San Jose.

They got in front of what would be a wave of migrating population to our valley, by planning for what Dad always told us were the primary building blocks of a new or expanding community: water, garbage and sewage. To us it seemed so boring, but he was right and San Jose was ready, as was our dad. He was born ready.

See RON JAMES, page 8


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Times Local News

San Jose's projected budget deficit skyrockets

Deficit balloons to \$60 million

By Vicente Vera
San José Spotlight

As San Jose crunches the numbers in its upcoming budget, a larger than expected shortfall looms on the horizon, along with another round of department cuts and potential layoffs.

San Jose initially anticipated a budget shortfall of \$39 million for the upcoming 2025-26 fiscal year, but it has since ballooned to \$60 million, according to a memo from City Manager Jennifer Maguire. The almost 50% increase is due in part to an 11% drop in sales tax revenue from 2024.

The unexpected shortfall has led the City Manager's Office to propose \$50 million in budget cuts "as a starting point," — including \$12.6 million from the police department, \$9.6 million from parks, recreation and neighborhood services and \$5.9 million from the fire department.

Demetria Machado, spokesperson for the city manager's office, said if councilmembers approve a \$50 million reduction for the upcoming year, it may result in eliminated positions, which would be effective July 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

"The general fund reduction targets included in the 2025-2026 operating budget development planning memorandum are an early starting point in the budget process," Machado told San José Spotlight. "We want to stress that issuing targets by department and office does not mean that reductions will be applied uniformly across the organization. Rather, these proposals will help the organization evaluate options that can best address the budgetary shortfall while still prioritizing the most critical needs of our community."

She said the projected budget shortfall will be reexamined before Mayor Matt Mahan's March budget message, and a new forecast will be released at the end of this month.

"Looking ahead toward future budget cycles, we are also exploring new revenue sources for city services, including a potential ballot measure in 2026," Machado said. "We anticipate sharing the early results of this exploration at the Feb. 11 study session."

Pierluigi Oliverio, a San Jose planning commissioner and former councilmember, said layoffs should be anticipated if the revenue shortfall exceeds city reserves.

"Regardless, local government should have already responsibly modeled scenarios anticipating 'what if,'" he said.

Effect on public services

San Jose Police Officers' Association spokesperson Tom Saggau said the police department is already down about 120 officers, and with millions in further cuts the outcome could be a thinly operating staff.

"The proposed defunding of the police department will only further degrade 911 emergency response times that, on average, exceed 20 minutes for priority two crimes," Steve Slack, president of the police union, told San José Spotlight.

Another department with pending multi-million-dollar budget cuts includes the Department of Public Works, which is already struggling with an infrastructure backlog

due in part to insufficient developer fees. A department spokesperson referred San José Spotlight back to Machado's statement.

The Dec. 13 memo from Maguire also anticipates a \$30 million budget shortfall for the 2026-27 fiscal year. She said the city needs to be in a position to propose "realistic" recommendations to address the general fund deficit before Mahan's March budget message.

Mahan's office declined comment and directed San José Spotlight back to comments made by the city spokesperson.

San Jose mayor sees ADUs as housing crisis quick fix

By Vicente Vera
San José Spotlight

San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan said the Los Angeles wildfires created a rare opportunity for the state to build tens of thousands of new homes for displaced residents while simultaneously tackling the housing crisis.

Mahan made his proposal to the state housing and community development department in an opinion piece published last week where he advocated for affordable, quick-build accessory dwelling units (ADUs), also known as backyard homes. He said in his newsletter that state housing officials should negotiate the purchase of up to 1 million factory-made backyard homes.

"Backyard cottages or ADUs aren't for everyone," Mahan said. "But they can make a huge difference in our housing crisis, create income for middle class families, and extend the opportunity of homeownership to the next generation of Californians."

Housing advocates said backyard detachable homes are one solution to the housing crisis, but city and state officials should focus on securing more permanent affordable housing.

Ramping up the development of backyard homes would certainly increase the city's housing stock, according to Alison Cingolani, policy director for housing advocacy group SV@Home. But many of those detachable homes in the Bay Area end up being used by existing property owners as a hobby space, guest home or short-term rental space, she said.

"We're also seeing that there's no guarantee ADUs will necessarily rent for prices that are affordable to lower income households," Cingolani told San José Spotlight. "So far, none of our local jurisdictions have found a strategy to try to administer a program that would guarantee affordability of ADUs."

A spokesperson from the state housing and community development department did not respond to a request for comment.

San Jose became the first California city last year to allow the sale of ADUs as condos. More than 1,400 new ADUs have been built in San Jose since 2019, with thousands more in the pipeline. City leaders hope to reduce the affordable housing crisis by opening the door for homeowners to add ADUs and sell them as starter homes.

Huascar Castro, housing and transportation director for Working Partnerships USA, said backyard homes aren't tied to affordability levels, and shouldn't be seen as the

Continued, next page

Times Local News

Crisis, continued

end all solution to housing insecurity.

“What we need to do is to unlock funding for permanent sources of affordable homes,” he told San José Spotlight. “ADUs are one potential solution. But there’s so much we need to do, long-term property and affordable housing sources is really the goal here, or should be the goal here.”

Terry Christensen, San Jose State University political science professor emeritus and former host of Valley Politics, said Mahan announcing this proposal further raises his statewide political profile. The mayor continues to challenge Gov. Gavin Newsom and California Democrats on issues including retail theft, criminal justice reform and the Trump administration.

“He did that with Proposition 36 (and) he continues doing this sort of thing. He’ll set himself up to run for statewide office someday,” Christensen told San José Spotlight.

“The catch is that you could put out a proposal, but how do you actually move it forward?”

Mahan’s office declined to comment and referred San José Spotlight to his op-ed.

Christensen said Mahan is going to need allies in the state Legislature and governor’s office if he wants the proposed influx of backyard homes to move past just words.

“There’s not that much they can do without the governor and the Legislature authorizing funds,” he said. “It’s good that he’s taking initiative.”



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around 80% of participants left the program for full-time jobs.

"These are people that need every penny they can get to keep the roof over their head and pay for food," he said. "They left to go be short order cooks or a security guard or something like that. And rightly so, because they were working part time in these programs, they were often, 'Hey I can't come in tomorrow; I've got to go to my other part-time job.' They needed two or three part-time jobs just to survive."

Bruce and Ahola decided to focus the nonprofit on bicycles because of his personal passion for bikes. It also gives people who can't afford a car more independence over their transportation options.

"The first and last mile are critical," Bruce said. "Just getting to a bus or train or things like that, bikes are one of the best ways to do it. And commuting less than 5 miles or so is pretty common around the San Jose area."

Community Cycles was able to fund its cohort members \$23 per hour for 40 hours of work in large part because of a grant from the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative, a California state program that awards money to help people who face significant barriers to employment, such as those recently out of jail, get jobs.

Breaking Barriers has completed just one round of funding so far and is in the middle of its second round. In the first and second rounds, it has spent about \$27 million on 53 organizations, almost all of them community-based, according to Leti Shafer, a manager in the workforce development department of the Foundation for California Community Colleges, who administers the Breaking Barriers grant program.

Other examples of grantees include Homeward Bound of Marin and St. John's for Real Change, which assist people without housing. These organizations offer support services for participants, such as childcare and job preparation. Homeward Bound also provides six months of employment in different types of businesses, such as how to make and sell dog treats.

Like all grant programs, Breaking Barriers is "as stable as the budget," Joelle Ball, deputy director of the California Workforce Development Board, said. The initiative "hardly got anything" this past year, for example. Ball said the budget operates on a 10-year cycle, and in years where the California Legislature has more pressing payments, there's not much money left over for grants.

"It's reliant on the Legislature putting that earmark for the program into the budget," Ball said. "This is how it is for all of our grant programs. 'We don't have any control over it. We can't lobby, we can't ask the Legislature for money, we can't do any of that. What we do advocate for is if you want to put money into workforce programs with us, put it into our programs that exist.'"

Ron James*Continued from page 5*

After 31 years of marriage our parents parted ways. Dad remarried Dawn Stallings (1980/divorced 1991), Jill O'Brien (1992/deceased 1999), and Bertha DeRuyter (2005/deceased 2023). He greatly enjoyed their lovely families as well.

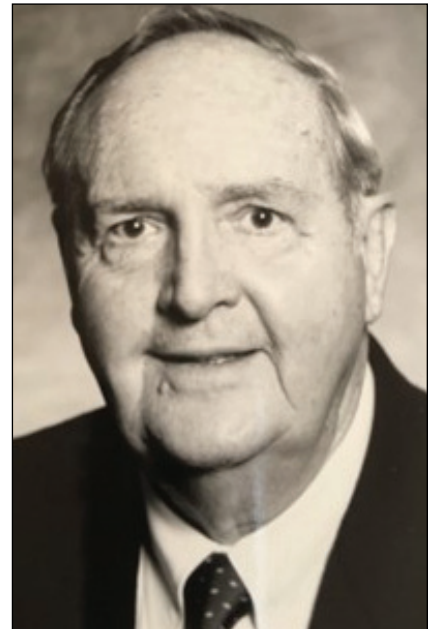
It is important to us that we share these and many other of his "growing up in San Jose" stories with his 18 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren, so as they travel into, around or through San Jose they feel proud of the grandfather that helped shepherd the City of San Jose to the next level.

Among his many accomplishments, of which he was proud and yet humbled were;

- Member of San Jose Planning Commission 1963-1965
- Elected to San Jose City Council and appointed vice-mayor 1965
- Appointed as Mayor of San Jose by the San Jose City Council 1966
- Elected as the first directly elected Mayor of San Jose 1967-1971
- Named "San Jose Man of the Year" 1970
- Chairman of the Board YMCA of Santa Clara County 1971
- President of San Jose Rotary Club 1972-1973 San Jose Water Company Board of Directors 1974-2004
- San Jose Mercury News named James among the 10 Most Influential People in San Jose 1979
- President and CEO of San Jose Chamber of Commerce 1974-1990
- Chairman of the Board of California State Automobile Assoc. 1999-2001

In his "spare time" Dad loved to golf and was a member of the San Jose Country Club for many years.

At his request, a private family service to celebrate Ron's life will be held at the Saint Francis of Assisi Memorial Garden in his beloved San Jose.

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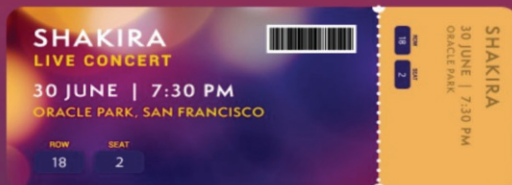
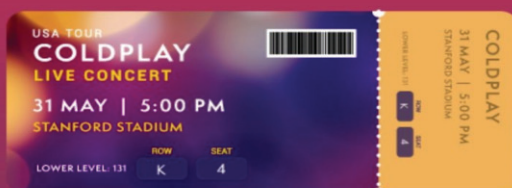
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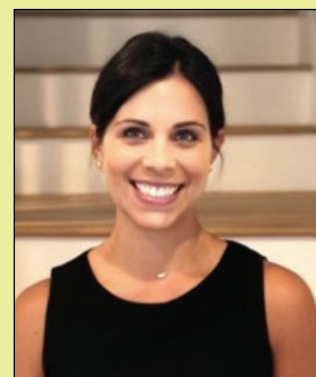
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San Jose council
appointment helps
mayor's agenda

By Brandon Pho
San José Spotlight

The mayor of the Bay Area's largest city may have scored a limited window to push through his agenda with the temporary appointment of District 3 Coun-

cilmember Carl Salas. Salas — San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan's pick during last month's appointment process — potentially secures the business-backed mayor a six-vote majority amid the City Council's labor and business divide. Salas is only in the seat for a couple months, giving Mahan an opportunity to advance policies such as temporary housing over permanent affordable housing, conservative spending and developer incentives.

The District 3 entrepreneur's selection could have profound impacts on the city budget and organization of City Hall, according to Bob Staedler, a business and land use consultant and former San José Spotlight columnist who unsuccessfully sought the District 3 appointment. "Mahan really wanted someone in there to help with this budget cycle and now he has the votes to bring an austerity budget through, so you can probably anticipate layoffs. Maybe even a reorganization," Staedler told San José Spotlight. "Mahan has all the control and what comes with that is accountability — like every mayor he has strove for a six-vote majority. Now all the excuses on why things aren't changing go away." Mahan's power during council votes is less expansive than that of a typical big city "strong mayor." That's because San Jose is a weak mayor-council form of government, where the mayor vote holds the same weight as the other councilmembers. His predecessor Sam Liccardo, now a congressman, unsuccessfully proposed a "strong mayor" system in 2020. Mahan has faced an uphill battle with two politically powerful, but opposing interests influencing the council. He took office in 2023 — right when candidates backed by labor interests won a council majority for the first time in years, locking the new



San Jose Mayor **Matt Mahan** at a City Council meeting on Jan. 28, 2025. Photo by Vicente Vera.

the challenges residents care about the most — including homelessness, housing and public safety." Salas didn't respond to requests for comment. The founder of engineering and technical services firm Salas O'Brien will represent the downtown core until district voters permanently select someone in an April 8 special election — though that could extend to the summer if there's a runoff. The results will install a District 3 representative until 2026, and could flip the council's dynamics once again. The special election is expected to be a duel between labor and business interests hoping to tip the scales of power. Labor-backed councilmembers held a narrow majority with former District 3 Councilmember Omar Torres on the dais, and would have continued to had he not been charged with child molestation. A key sign of the stakes appeared well before Salas' temporary appointment. Shortly after Torres' Election Day arrest, a historically labor-backed official proposed replacing Torres with a permanent appointment by council vote, which could have maintained the council's thin labor majority. But that was opposed by the city's pro-business faction under Mahan, which is supported typically by older and wealthier voters who are more likely to vote in a special election.

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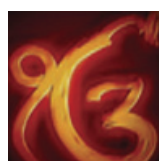


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