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San Jose Quilt Museum Expands Downtown location
Redevelopment Agency program retains key tenants

San José --- The country's first quilt museum will expand into a Downtown building location four times larger than its current space in the heart of San José.

The San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles has partnered with a private investor group to form the 520 South First Street LLC, which has purchased the South of First Street area building. With assistance from the San Jose Redevelopment Agency (SJRA) through its Commercial Building Loan Program, the museum will soon begin renovating the facility as its permanent home.

“This is the fourth non-profit group we have assisted in managing their real estate futures,” said Steven Oliver, lead investor of Oliver & Company and partner of the 520 S. First Street LLC. “Taking the best elements of urban renewal and the creative nature of public-private partnerships, we are able to build resources for non-profit organizations and help small and mid-size organizations grow.”

“By combining innovative redevelopment assistance with the creativity of our local cultural organizations, we can help community organizations thrive in San José and create opportunities that enrich the lives of our residents” said Mayor Ron Gonzales.

Located in the Downtown since 1984, the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles is the only museum in California dedicated to the promotion of the art, craft, and history of quilts and textiles. Each year it presents nine exhibits and provides 400 in-school educational programs and 12 on-site adult education programs.

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It currently attracts approximately 18,000 visitors to the Downtown annually, and it is projecting at least a ten percent increase in attendance and membership at its new location. The new site will accommodate additional traveling exhibits, a library to store archives of the California Heritage Quilt Project—a collection of over 800 interview tapes, CDs, and photographs documenting the history of California quilt making—and a section for retail. It will also have a “tech-style” art studio where the museum plans to offer both a textile art summer camp for middle school students and a job-training program for textile artisans.

“The expansion of the Quilt Museum is an excellent addition to an arts and entertainment district that already includes the Institute of Contemporary Art, the Stage and City Lights Theaters and the soon-to-be completed California Theater,” said Councilmember Cindy Chavez. “These partnerships foster San Jose’s vision of a creative community that nurtures innovation among technology, business, culture, and community.”

The LLC will contribute approximately \$1.5 million toward the purchase and renovation of the building. Located at 520 S. First, the building was constructed in 1923 and is considered a City Historic Landmark. The museum will be open at its current location, 110 Paseo de San Antonio, throughout construction. Construction is expected to be complete by early 2005.

“This move to a larger facility fosters sustainable program growth by increasing our organization’s capacity to generate earned income and by making us more competitive for diverse federal and foundation grants,” said Jane Przybysz, executive director of the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles. “By leveraging rather than relying on local resources, we have acquired an ownership interest in a facility where we can implement new programs that will serve the community and ensure the organization’s long-term health.”

“Our loan and grant programs are designed to be flexible and meet the needs of the small businesses and non-profits,” said Leslie Little, SJRA Director of Downtown Management. “Through these programs we can meet business objectives and the community’s goals by increasing employment opportunities and creating a vibrant arts district.”

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The Agency will provide the Quilt Museum with \$1,290,000 loan through its Commercial Building Loan Program. The no-interest loan is structured consistent with the terms of the SJRA’s Retail, Entertainment, and Arts Loan and will be forgiven at a rate of 10% annually, or 100% if the museum stays in its new location for 10 years.

Other recipients of the Commercial Building Loan Program include the Camera Cinemas and Santa Clara Valley Corporation for the rehabilitation for the Knights of Pythias and Foto Mexico buildings—now the location of P.F. Chang’s China Bistro.

The San Jose Redevelopment Agency is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all who live and work in San José. Governed by the City Council, the SJRA facilitates and oversees comprehensive programs for development to revitalize the City’s Downtown, neighborhoods, and industrial areas.

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