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FOR A TASTE OF PARADISE (16)

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TO INDULGE IN THIS YEAR (23)

california

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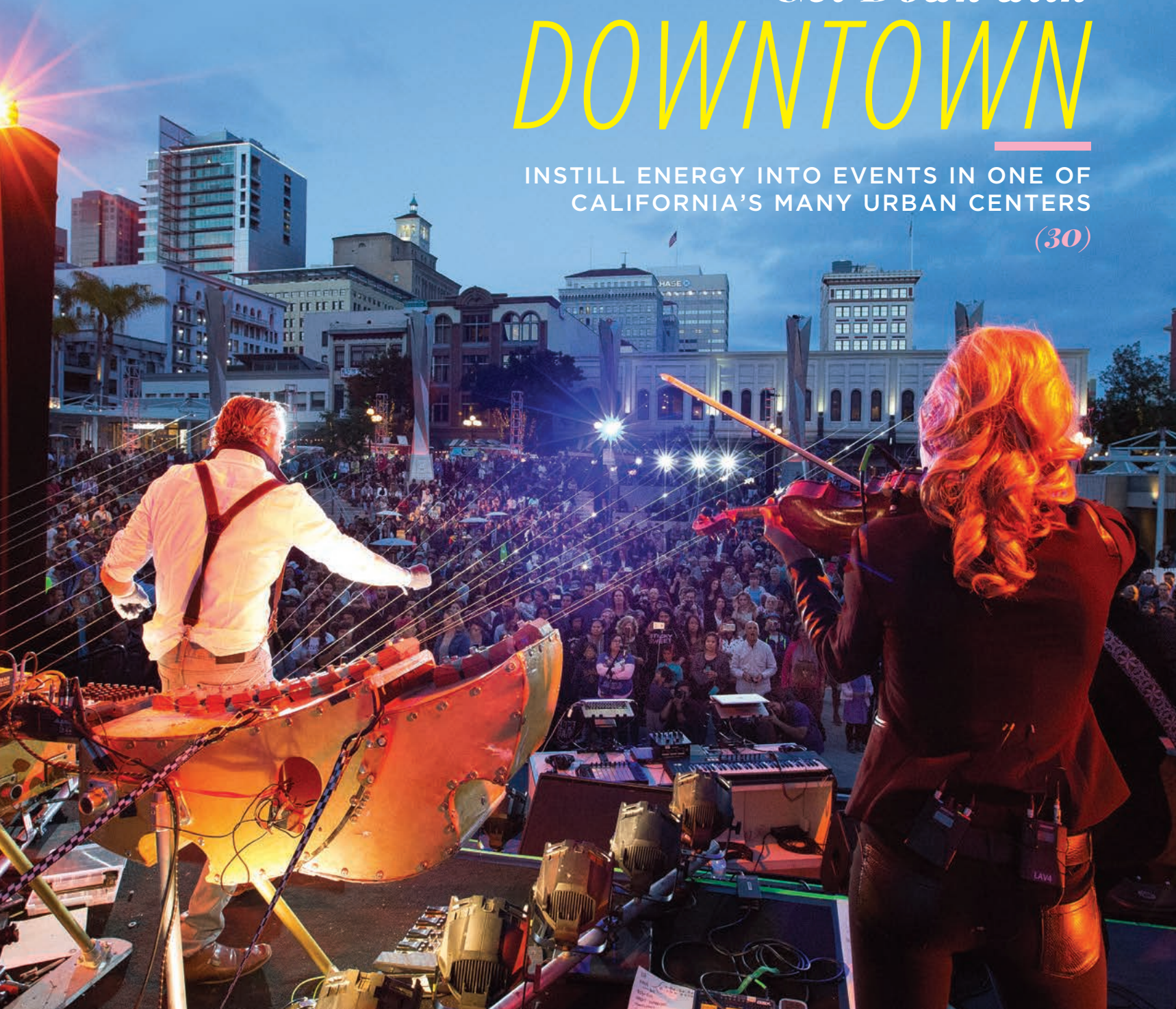
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Get Down with

DOWNTOWN

INSTILL ENERGY INTO EVENTS IN ONE OF
CALIFORNIA'S MANY URBAN CENTERS

(30)





IT'S ALL HAPPENING

DOWNTOWN!

FROM SAN DIEGO TO SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA'S URBAN CENTERS ARE BOOMING WITH VIBRANT NEW VENUES, EXPANDED AND UPDATED CONVENTION CENTERS, AND IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION.

BY JANET FULLWOOD, DANI HEINEMEYER AND VALLI HERMAN

New hotels: check! Updated arenas and convention centers: check! Restaurants offering every global cuisine imaginable: check! Urban parks with sprawling outdoor space: check! And everything within walking distance to make planning multiday events easier: absolutely!

California's varied downtown areas are thriving. Here's a look at the urban renaissance, from south to north.

Horton Plaza Park Grand Opening in San Diego

PHOTO: RENEE CASCIA

The result is a slew of new art galleries, restaurants, craft breweries, and wine tasting rooms making their debut downtown. The recently opened 450-square-foot Seeing Things art gallery is available for groups to rent for small events. The San Pedro Square Market, a lively dining hall-style food market, is the perfect communal meeting space for foodies. And if you're willing to travel a little outside downtown, San Jose's diverse cultural neighborhoods like Little Italy, Japantown and Little Saigon offer incredible dining options, including Little Portugal's Michelin-starred Adegas Restaurant—the first Michelin-starred restaurant in San Jose.

San Jose has also expanded its hotel rooms for the first time in seven years with the February 2017 opening of downtown's new AC Hotel by Marriott. The hotel features 210 guest rooms and 6,500 square feet of meeting and event space, accommodating up to 100 people in its largest space. Downtown will also see the opening of the boutique 44-room Hotel Clariana this spring. However, "the crowning moment from a meetings standpoint was the expansion of our convention center," says Kyle Schatzel, communications manager at Team San Jose. "It's got floor-to-ceiling windows with beautiful views of downtown and is a great addition to the event space we offer." The San Jose McEnery Convention Center's \$130 million renovation and expansion added 125,000 square feet of additional flexible ballroom and meeting room space, increasing the facility's usable space to 372,000 square feet. The convention center is connected to two hotels downtown and within short walking distance of many more.

▼ SAN FRANCISCO: The Eagerly Awaited Moscone Expansion is a Boon for Hospitality Industry

To say San Francisco is on an upswing is an understatement: The City by the Bay is in explosion mode when it comes to economic expansion and real-estate development. From

a meetings industry perspective, no undertaking is more eagerly anticipated than completion of the Moscone Center expansion, a \$500 million project that will help close the gap between increased demand for large conventions and exhibitions and insufficient space in which to stage them.

"One of the primary goals is opening the kind of space that is essential for attracting large conventions," says Paul Frentsos, executive vice president and chief operating officer for San Francisco Travel, the city's destination marketing association. With the expansion, he notes, "we'll have 509,000 square feet of contiguous exhibit space [current square footage is 260,000], putting us on line to compete with cities like Las Vegas, Chicago and San Diego."

The project, which is creating an estimated 3,400 construction jobs and as many permanent positions, involves adding new floors to the North and South buildings, along with connecting bridges, underground passages and other user-friendly features. A 50,000 square-foot, column-free ballroom; 107,000 square feet of function space with city views; and a 20,000 square-foot outdoor terrace are key features of the expanded complex. State-of-the-art technology and high-level sustainability will add to the facility's capabilities and appeal (Moscone is already LEED Gold certified). Among sustainability features garnering bragging rights: the city's largest rooftop solar array will help produce net-zero energy while a rain harvesting system will capture water for street cleaning and irrigation of nearby parks.

Moscone West, one of three main buildings in the convention center complex, has stayed open throughout construction on the North and South wings, which began in late 2014 and is scheduled for completion in 2018. It will continue to operate both separately and in conjunction with the new additions. "The expansion will allow us to fill North and South as one large block and keep West separate so we can overlay events," explains Joe D'Alessandro, president and CEO of San Francisco Travel. "It really will be a new building when completed, much more user friendly and versatile."

Even while under construction, the

Moscone expansion has spurred innovation throughout the city's hospitality industry. Reduced capacity has led to creative workarounds, including alliances formed between hotels to share facilities for large group gatherings. The project is also creating market demand for more hotel rooms.

New properties on the books, according to San Francisco Travel, include the Waldorf Astoria, Langham Place, Moxy by Marriott, Hotel San Francisco, San Francisco Proper, Hampton by Hilton, Yotel, Virgin Hotels San Francisco and Hotel Via.

Other types of venues already are springing up around the convention center, among them SPIN, a pingpong palace/nightclub/team-building venue, and Fogo de Chao, a Brazilian steakhouse. Another forthcoming economic driver, D'Allessandro notes, will be Chase Center, new home of the Golden State Warriors NBA team, which is set to open in 2019.

▼ OAKLAND: As 'Brooklyn by the Bay' Transforms, an Urban Hotel Hops the Trend Train

If there's one city in the Golden State that's garnering nonstop buzz right now, it's Oakland. Long viewed as an industrial stepsister to chic San Francisco, the city across the Bay Bridge has come into its own as an epicenter of creativity, innovation and transformation.

Old Oakland, the Victorian-era neighborhood, is booming these days with handsomely renovated 1870s apartment buildings, indie retail shops and cutting-edge taverns, bars, restaurants and entertainment venues. The 500-room, 21-story Oakland Marriott City Center, fresh from an \$18 million makeover, sits right in the center of the action, offering ringside access to some of the Bay Area's hottest hot spots.

"It's a new day in Oakland," says Jeff Martin, the hotel's destination sales manager. "Everything is transforming in a very positive way."