Welcome to Eastside Art & History

San José’s Eastside is one of the city’s most vibrant, colorful, and historic areas. For many years of the 20th century, this area was widely known as Sal Si Puedes (Get Out If You Can), a name that reflected the many environmental and socio-economic challenges of the place for the community residents.

Eastside Art & History focuses on six key sites to provide an introduction to the Eastside’s history, culture and important legacy. Each of these sites reflects parts of the past that are largely unseen today, and each has artwork that speaks directly to the history, culture and people who have made the Eastside so remarkable. Eastside Art & History brings these together in a way that will shed new light on familiar surroundings.

How to Explore

• Use this map to create your own tour to explore the sites and the neighborhood in person. (This map can also be downloaded at www.EastsideArtandHistory.com)

• Go to www.EastsideArtandHistory.com to learn more. View the map on this website and click on each project site to learn more, see images from the past and learn more about the artwork in each location and how it is connected to the community.

• Visit the Resources page at www.EastsideArtandHistory.com to discover ways you can learn more.

Credits

Eastside Art & History is a project of the City of San José Public Art Program in partnership with History San José, funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

All public art commissioned by City of San José Public Art Program unless otherwise indicated.

The Eastside story is much larger than this project. Eastside Art & History is not a comprehensive history of San José and the Eastside. It is hoped that this project will help deepen the understanding and appreciation of the area’s history, and spark interest and imagination to learn more.

City of San José Public Art Program
www.sanjoseculture.org
History San José
www.historysanjose.org

www.eastsideartandhistory.com
Plaza de San José Retail Center
1730 Story Road, San Jose, 95112

The site of a former dairy farm where many residents of the San José Pueblos neighborhood worked as migrant workers. Today, as in the past, this intersection is often the starting point for marches focusing on a range of social justice issues that follow a route north along King Road and then west on Alum Rock Avenue into downtown San José.

Public Art: Placed throughout the retail center; sculptural pieces include Costilcape Shopping (Corner of King & Story Roads), Tula Sentíces (parking lot walkway), and Mandalas, two large glass mosaics that resemble ancient Mayan calendars on two exterior building walls facing King and Story Roads and a third on a wall facing toward the parking lot. Created by brothers James & Edar de la Torre, the artwork draws on Indigenous Mexican symbols and images. Commission: Blake Hunt Ventures in partnership with the San José Public Art Program (2005)

Tropicana Shopping Center
1690 Story Road, San Jose, 95122

At one time this was part of an extensive commercial orchard. Some community members still recall working in this orchard back when the neighborhood was still known as Sal Si Puedes. Eventually, the orchard and farmlands were sold and Tropicana, one of the first housing developments in the area, was built to also include the shopping center. In later years it became a hub for low-income and car-cruising activity in the region.

Public Art: Cultivating Community by Valerie Raps, a mixed-media sculpture that plays tribute to artists working in unity. Of special note, the bronze arms in the artwork are castings of the arms of actual community members, each wearing a co-worker’s residential and community work. Commission: San Jose Public Art Program & the San Jose Redevelopment Agency in partnership with Imwalle Properties (2011)

Emma Prusch Farm Park
647 South King Road, San Jose 95132

Once a large dairy farm owned by the German immigrant Prusch family, their daughter Emma Prusch (born in San José in 1876) donated 87 acres to the City of San José upon her passing in 1962 with the stipulation that it retain a rural character. The original farmhouse and barn remain, and today the park features a range of innovative and community farming projects to help broaden awareness of agriculture.

Public Art: Gloria Bonstien’s Monument to the Last Born is a tribute to the barns that used to be a familiar sight across the landscape of the Eastside and across the region. (2006)

a. Mayfair Community Center
Corner of Kammerser & Sunset Avenues

This land, originally part of the Mayfair Packing Plant located across Silver Creek, was the site of the original Our Lady of Guadalupe Church on land donated by the plant. A church building donated to the newly-formed congregation was moved here from across town in pieces to this location in 1953 by the Holy Family Catholic Church and other church members; that building was later moved 100 yards over onto its current site and today is named McDonnell Hall.

Public Art: Garden of Strength by Fernando d’Agostino celebrates history, culture and community through imagery and photographs in sculpture, glass and hand made elements throughout the Center. Las Tres Hermanas (The Three Sisters) sculpture group in the courtyard pays homage to the sustaining crops beans, corn and squash, often planted together; artist Emmanuel Guerrero created the bronze branch with hand-blown glass apricots in the entryway alcove as a reminder of the apricots harvested and processed here; the bronze worker’s hand on the alcove wall plays a video loop of images of Sal Si Pueblos history; entryway windows feature images of corn stalks from the nearby garden and folkloric dancers, with inspirational quotes from human rights leaders. (2009)

b. Mayfair Community Garden
Corner of Kammerser & Sunset Avenues

On land that was once the edge of a large family farm, this all-organic community garden is the oldest in San Jose, predating the 1977 start of the City’s Community Garden program. At 2.75 acres it is the 2nd largest community garden in San José, providing many neighborhood families with plots ranging from 100 - 800 sq. feet.

Public Art: Entryway cut metal gates by Victor Maria Zaballa display Opuntia, a familiar cactus for many who traveled here from Mexico. A source of edible nopalitas and prickly pears, Opuntia are grown in the community garden for food. Commissioned by the Mayfair Improvement Initiative. (1997)

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
2020 East San Antonio Street, San Jose, 95116

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church has been an important force in the Eastside community since Father Donald McDonnell established its Mission in Guadalupe in 1953 to provide mass in Spanish for the many agricultural workers here. The church has provided many kinds of assistance and ideas that César Chávez encountered here, notably Fr. McDonnell and Fred Ross, inspired and helped shape his life’s work as an activist. (Note: A California Historic Landmark, McDonnell Hall is under consideration for National Historic Landmark status.)

Public Art: The glass mosaic mural created by Katherine Oppenheim, Marie Hutton and Lois Cronemiller on the exterior church wall depicts several aspects of this area’s history in rich detail. Commissioned by Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Parish, (circa 1967)

Mexican Heritage Plaza
1700 Alum Rock Avenue, San Jose, 95116

In the mid-1960s a Safeway grocery store that stood here was the target of one of the first grape boycotts; led by the United Farm Workers with César Chávez’s leadership, the boycott spread; bringing national attention to the farm workers’ cause. Mexican Heritage Plaza, built in 1999 is the architectural style of a traditional Mexican plaza, today serves as a hub of community and cultural activity under management of the School of Arts and Culture.

Public Art: The site is particularly rich in public art.

• Altar with El Señor de Guadalupe and Santo Domingo by Osvaldo Ochoa (2005)
• Altar next to the Señor de Guadalupe by Osvaldo Ochoa (2005)
• Altar to the Virgin of Guadalupe by Osvaldo Ochoa (2005)
• Altar to the Virgin of Guadalupe by Ana Vik (2005)
• Altar to the Virgin of Guadalupe by Ana Vik (2005)

• Sites on the César Chávez Memorial Walkway.
• César Chávez Memorial Route
• Learn about the César Chávez Memorial Walkway
www.sanjoseca.gov/documentcenter/view/5813

EASTSIDE
ART & HISTORY