



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE SHOW NOTES

Episode Title: Downtown San Mateo Association

Episode # & Date: Episode #39 – July 23, 2020

About this Episode: Judy highlights the Downtown San Mateo Association—what it is, what it does, and what that means to the citizens, visitors, and businesses of San Mateo.

Episode Web Page: <https://sanmateofocus.com/dsma/>

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

I'm Judy Gordon, and *this* is San Mateo Focus. As long-term residents who have raised six kids here, we thought it was high time someone shined a light on the good things in San Mateo to enrich the lives of those living here, and the businesses that serve them. Right now, we need your help to make San Mateo Focus even better by answering a few survey questions. Please visit our website at sanmateofocus.com and click the "Take Our Online Survey" button. Then, listen to this week's episode, and come back every Thursday for new episodes. And please be sure to click the 'subscribe' button on your favorite podcast app. Now, onto this week's episode.

I worked for two years at the Downtown San Mateo Association, or DSMA, and it took me a while to understand what a Business Improvement District is, and what it means to have one in a downtown area. If you've sometimes seen Facebook or Instagram posts from Downtown San Mateo, have checked out the downtown website, or have subscribed to the monthly newsletter, then you're seeing some of the marketing that the DSMA does to make people aware of what downtown offers to those who work, live, and visit there. A Business Improvement District or BID is a geographical area where local stakeholders oversee and fund the maintenance, improvement, and promotion of their commercial district. BIDs offer programs that range from marketing support to family events and gatherings.

The website says that the DSMA is a coalition of San Mateo businesses who promote business and civic activity and work to improve the downtown experience for all. Businesses located within the downtown Business Improvement District geographic boundaries are automatically enrolled through a fee on their business license.

The DSMA manages the downtown BID, so we'll just refer to all of it as the DSMA from here on in. When you move in or start a business in the geographic area of the DSMA, you are automatically a member. Primarily, members of the DSMA are represented on the Board of Directors. You pay an assessment based on the type of business, or the location of your business. The city will collect the assessments and then transfer them to the DSMA. Each year, the DSMA will go in front of the city council to discuss what they've done the previous year and their plans for the next year. The council will approve the funds for the following year. It's a close working relationship—the city will sponsor events that the DSMA puts on, and the DSMA will sponsor city events. When the DSMA BID was started over 20 years ago, downtown was primarily a storefront retail and dining district, with doctors and professional offices on the upper floors. A lot has changed in the last ten years. Many startups occupy portions of, or entire buildings. And because of online shopping, there is very little retail



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

anymore. Downtown San Mateo has become known as a dining destination, along with other services. Downtown is, however, still a unique area full of independent business owners who depend on local patronage to survive.

In the years pre-COVID, the DSMA was run by a small staff that managed different committees, held the monthly board meetings, put on public events and mixers for the downtown businesses, and provided the social media and marketing support for the downtown. Committees consisted of the interested members of the community, city staff, and DSMA board members. Over the years, the DSMA put on an annual Wine Walk, sponsored the North B Street Festival, and sponsored the MLK Celebration Train and the Holiday Train. Last September, the city and the DSMA worked together to put on the well-attended September Nights program on B Street. The DSMA also produces a restaurant guide that is both printed and located on the website. They bought advertisements for downtown in the Daily Journal, and tourist publications. The decision was made a few years ago to operate without a paid staff, so that the funds could be spent on a full time downtown cleaning porter service, to stay on top of dropped coffee cups, litter, and overflowing trash bins that were the result of a very active downtown with lots of options for portable food. Having the DSMA board members operate as a volunteer organization, in addition to running their own businesses was not sustainable. The board was working with a consultant in conjunction with the city to more fairly distribute the business assessments among the different types of businesses that represent the downtown currently. This would allow for a small paid staff to manage downtown events and continued cleaning services.

All those plans were set aside when downtown businesses had to close down in March. Instead of redistributing business assessments, the DSMA has decided to cut in half the assessments for all businesses for one year. Where on a Friday night in February, downtown was bustling with visitors to the movie theater and bars and restaurants, in July many of these independent small businesses are living one week at a time, unsure of their future and unsure when their loyal customers will return. Because people are unclear what restaurants are open for outdoor dining, for (briefly until last Monday) indoor dining, and for takeout, a member of the DSMA board is walking around taking notes about the status of each restaurant. They have purchased a weekly two-page ad in the Daily Journal with that information and update the website also. Keeping the public informed and coming back downtown is their focus. DSMA Board members Robert Anderson and President Lew Cohen meet with the Deputy Mayor Eric Rodriguez and others every Tuesday night on Zoom to try to keep up with the changes that have happened, and to think about how to creatively encourage people to safely come back downtown and to other areas of San Mateo. Closing down portions of B Street and creating outdoor dining areas for restaurants around San Mateo are the result of those meetings.

It's probably never been a more important time to think about joining the Board of the DSMA and *Here's the Deal*: They are looking for new board members from the downtown business community. You'll find contact information on the website or you can call Lew Cohen at B Street Books if you're interested.



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

Okay, that's all the time we have for this episode. Have a great week. Don't forget to subscribe to San Mateo Focus on your favorite Podcast app. As always, if you'd like more information about the topics in today's episode or any of our sponsors, visit sanmateofocus.com.

HELPFUL LINKS:

[Instagram: Downtown San Mateo Association](#)

[Facebook Page: Downtown San Mateo Association](#)

[Website: Downtown San Mateo Association](#)

[DSMA BID Map](#)

[Webpage: DSMA Board of Directors, et al](#)

[PDF: Downtown San Mateo Guide](#)

[DSMA Newsletter Signup](#)

[DSMA 2020 Fiscal Year Annual Report](#)

[Webpage: City of San Mateo - Outdoor Dining Requirements](#)

[Webpage: Definition of a 501C \(6\) organization](#)

TAGS:

#sanmateofocus @dsma.org (fb) @downtownsanmateo (IG) #shoplocal @cityofsanmateo @ericrodriguez (twitter) #downtownsanmateo #sanmateofocus @judygord @pradsliff #judygordon #peterradsliff @sanmateo @sanmateocounty

— end of episode information > podcast show notes below —

SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT



PODCAST SHOW NOTES

Podcast Name: **San Mateo Focus**

Logo:



Description: We created San Mateo Focus to shine a light on the good things in San Mateo in order to enrich the lives of those living here and the businesses that serve them.

Website: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>

Email: info@sanmateofocus.com

Host & Founder: Judy Gordon

Producer/Co-host: Peter Radsliff

Where to listen: [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Google Podcasts](#) | [Spotify Podcasts](#) | [Stitcher Podcasts](#) | [TuneIn Podcasts](#) | [iHeartRadio](#) | [Facebook](#) | [San Mateo Focus Website](#)

How to listen:

- 1) On your favorite **iPhone** or **Android** smartphone podcast app:
i.e. Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, TuneIn Podcasts, Spotify Podcasts, iHeartRadio Podcasts
- 2) On the San Mateo Focus **website**: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>
- 3) Full episodes posted weekly on San Mateo Focus' [Facebook Page](#)
- 4) Full episodes posted weekly on San Mateo Focus' [Instagram](#)
- 5) Full episodes posted weekly on San Mateo Focus' [LinkedIn Profile](#)
- 6) Full episodes posted weekly on San Mateo Focus' [YouTube Channel](#)
- 7) On your favorite smart speaker:
 - For **Amazon Echo**, say: *"Alexa, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*
 - For **Google Home**, say: *"OK Google, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*
 - For **Apple HomePod**, say: *"Hey Siri, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*
- 8) Using Siri on **iPhone**, just say:
"Hey Siri, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."
- 9) Using Google Assistant on an **Android** phone, just say:
"OK Google, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."