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BAY AREA BUSINESS

RETAIL HAVING A RENAISSANCE



Zeniah Guzman, 10, of San Jose jumping on a trampoline at Altitude Trampoline Park in San Jose on Thursday. It is one of three activity-oriented businesses that opened in a former Walmart supercenter. DAI SUGANO — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Activity centers and ethnic grocers are reviving big-box spaces and malls

By George Avalos
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SAN JOSE — Just a few years after experts insisted an Amazon-spawned “retail apocalypse” would doom several of the Bay Area’s big-box store sites, a growing number of the large commercial properties that once were home to Walmart, Kohl’s, Fry’s and other chain stores are finding new life.

While some have pushed for the expansive land hosting these stores to be turned into housing, a fresh crop of merchants is busy scouting for existing locations that could help them tap into a Bay Area economy awash in wealth created by the AI boom.

“Retailers want to be here,” said David Taxis, a partner with Meacham Oppenheimer, a commercial real estate firm. “This area has so much disposable income.”

As of March, the San Jose metro area had the nation’s

highest median household income at \$175,500, according to a report from market-focused digital publisher Visual Capitalist. The San Francisco-San Mateo metro area was second at \$141,300.

“The South Bay is so strong, it’s a very resilient market,” said Jim Fletcher, a Bay Area commercial real estate executive. “The Valley Fair-Santana Row corridor and the Blossom Hill Road corridor are some of the strongest retail areas in California.”

Former shopping malls set to be repurposed include Vallco, a dead and mostly demolished retail center in Cupertino that is slated to be replaced by a mixed-use neighborhood of homes, shops, restaurants and offices.

The purchase by a real estate firm of two empty retail buildings at Stoneridge Mall in Pleasanton leaves the future unknown for the sites that once hosted Nordstrom and JC Penney.

In North Oakland, the



Fry’s Electronics shut down in 2021, leaving large spaces like this one in Fremont vacant. It is being marketed toward AI or industrial reuse. JANE TYSKA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

proposed development of two housing towers could trigger the demolition of an existing Trader Joe’s grocery store.

A new wave of ethnic markets is also taking over empty stores around the Bay Area.

“We are seeing a fairly significant push from ethnic grocers — South Asian, East

Asian, Hispanic,” said James Chung, founder and principal executive with The Econic Co., a commercial real estate firm. “They have entered the market fairly aggressively the last five years.”

The opportunities for transformation are plentiful.

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HEALTHCARE

ERs see more go without coverage

Executives, advocates expect problem of uninsured patients to worsen with federal cuts

By Grant Stringer
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More than 1 million Californians could lose health insurance as the Trump administration restricts access to Medi-Cal, the government coverage program for low-income people. In an early warning sign, more patients without insurance are already arriving at Bay Area hospitals.

Hundreds more uninsured patients per month were treated this summer at Santa Clara Valley Healthcare hospitals and emergency rooms, said CEO Paul Lorenz. The major safety net health provider plans to spend at least \$25 million more this year on subsidized care for those who can’t afford to see a doctor and is redesigning programs to absorb more patients.

“We’re just seeing the beginning of what we see as a major problem for access to healthcare,” Lorenz said.

At Santa Clara Valley Healthcare’s four emergency rooms, visits of patients without insurance grew from about 2,300 in January to 2,600 in July, a 13% rise, said spokesperson Roger Ross.

About 125 uninsured patients were hospitalized each month in the fiscal year that ended in June. That number has since doubled to about 250 per month, Ross wrote.

The Silicon Valley health network isn’t alone in treating more uninsured patients.

At St. Rose Hospital in Hayward, part of Alameda Health System, staff participating in a “die-in” protest of the Trump administration cuts to health spending said the number of uninsured patients seen each day has spiked there as well.

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OUTDOORS

Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park to reopen after fire

On Saturday, the Timber blaze was 97% contained after burning 25,352 acres over two months

By Paul Rogers
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Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, the oldest and most popular state park along the Big Sur coast, will reopen Friday after being closed for more than two months due to a major wildfire in the area.

The park, which opened in 1933 and draws an average of 750,000 visitors a year, is well-known for its 189 RV and tent campsites, Big Sur River Gorge swimming hole and redwood trails. It is the last state park in Big Sur to reopen as the Timber Fire winds down.

On Saturday, the fire, which began Aug. 8, was 97% contained.

“We’re super excited to have the public back,” said Sgt. Tom Cunningham, supervising ranger for the California State Department of Parks and Recreation Big Sur Sector. “We were happy to support the fire operations. But getting day use back is awesome.”

During the fire, which threatened homes and famous businesses including the Nepenthe restaurant, Post Ranch Inn and Deetjen’s Big Sur Inn, more than 1,000 firefighters from across California and

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COMMENTARY

49ers show how the (NFC) West is won



Dieter Kurtenbach
COLUMNIST

The 49ers are battered, bruised and routinely playing guys who coaches don’t particularly want on the field or including some who were signed mere hours before the game.

On Sunday, their offense spent most of the game looking like an engine running on badly mixed lawnmower gas.

And yet not an ounce of any of it seems to matter.

Because while the 49ers might not have a compre-



Quarterback Brock Purdy and the 49ers faced the toughest test of this season in a narrow victory Sunday over the Seahawks in Seattle. STEPH CHAMBERS — GETTY IMAGES

hensive understanding of who, in fact, is on the roster, this team does have an obscene amount of intestinal fortitude.

Oh, and it has Brock Purdy

and Mike Evans, too. Pair those three things together with a defense that is playing better than anyone (including the 49ers) could have expected, and you

have a 5-0 record and a spot firmly atop the NFC West — and, ergo, the NFL — pecking order.

San Francisco beat the defending Super Bowl champion Seahawks 32-29 in Seattle on Sunday.

Analyzing the film will be blow-up plays and silly penalties marred the tape. But the game? Well, that was a triumph.

Even if it was one of the most chaotic football games you could possibly imagine. The 49ers went into the locker room at halftime up 21-13 despite accomplishing very little on offense. Seattle basically wrapped up three touchdowns with a bow

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