

**Business:** Hospital 'facility fees' targeted. C7



**Local:** Punk In The Park makes first foray into Northern California. B1



**Sports:** A's Miller, Giants' Doval among best closers in baseball. C1



**Nation:** Trump wants \$1 billion from Big Oil. A3



The newspaper of Silicon Valley

# The Mercury News

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## REPORT CITES GOOD POST-PANDEMIC NEWS



SHAE HAMMOND — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

People walk in downtown San Jose on Thursday. The area saw a 28.2% increase in visitors, according to a new report.



JANE TYSKA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Cathedral Building is seen in March in downtown Oakland, which also has seen a recent visitor bump.



KARL MONDON — STAFF ARCHIVES

While the skyline of San Francisco can be a beautiful site, the city's downtown is sliding when it comes to visitors.

# Things looking up in downtown San Jose

### City's increase in visitors puts it in the top 10 in North America, with Oakland also bouncing back but San Francisco retreating

**By George Avalos**  
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**SAN JOSE »** Visits to downtown San Jose have soared over the last year, providing a welcome counterpart to the forbidding economic trends that bedeviled the Bay Area in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Oakland also saw a jump in visitors, while San Francisco continued to stumble.

San Jose's 28.2% jump in downtown visits ranked eighth in North America, according to a new School of Cities report produced by the University of Toronto, which analyzed cell phone data to determine visits to 64 down-

town districts in the U.S. and Canada. Visits to downtown Oakland rose 20.6%, giving Oakland the 16th-best increase among the cities that were surveyed during the 12-month period that ended in March, according to the report.

The increase in downtown Oakland "is contrary to the narrative about how Oakland has been struggling," said Stephen Baiter, executive director of the East Bay Economic Development Alliance. "Green shoots are appearing in downtown Oakland."

San Francisco's visitor activity, however, showed a nosedive, the university report found. Activity dropped

by 21.6% and may reinforce the perception that a "doom loop" scenario plagues the city's downtown. San Francisco's performance was the worst of the cities in the University of Toronto report.

The economic "doom loop" scenario has surfaced for San Francisco because of the downtown's cycle of a retail exodus, crime woes, office and hotel foreclosures, and office vacancy rates that have soared to record levels.

The fading of the coronavirus-linked business shutdowns that devastated the Bay Area and California economies may have helped to spur

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## SAN JOSE

# BART extension to receive \$500M in federal help

**By Grace Hase**  
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In a boost to the long-awaited San Jose BART extension, the federal government announced Thursday an infusion of \$500 million into the megaproject that's faced escalating costs and repeated delays in recent years.

The Federal Transit Administration revealed that it's earmarked the half-billion dollars for BART's Silicon Valley extension in the upcoming United

States budget — a sign to local transit officials who are looking to complete a ring of rail around the Bay Area that the project is of national significance. The money comes more than a year after the Biden administration made the request.

The six-mile, four-station line is expected to open in 2037 and will run from the Berryessa Transit Center in north San Jose, through downtown and up to Santa Clara. By 2040, it's expected to deliver more

**BART » PAGE 5**



KARL MONDON — STAFF ARCHIVES

An extension project surrounding the BART station in San Jose will get a cash infusion from the federal government.

## 'THIS WILL HURT'

# Agency approves utilities rate hike

### PG&E customers, and others, will soon see a fixed fee of up to \$24.15 on their monthly bills

**By George Avalos**  
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As California's residential utility rates soared to second-highest in the nation, the state's utility regulators Thursday approved a fixed-fee billing plan for customers of PG&E and two other utility behemoths aimed at shielding the poorest consumers while promoting electric car and appliance use to meet climate goals.

The California Public Utilities Commission voted 4-0 to allow a fixed charge of up to \$24.15 a month for customers of Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric.

Critics blasted what they described as a plan to impose even higher costs on many consumers while rewarding high electricity consumption in a state that has struggled to keep the lights on during peak-demand summer months and punishing frugal energy misers.

"This will hurt PG&E customers and other utility customers," said Loretta Lynch, a former member of the commission and a harsh critic of the state regulatory agency and of PG&E. "A lot of customers are going to be paying more."

The fees are slated to go into effect in late 2025 for customers of San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison and in early 2026 for PG&E customers.

"Nothing will happen immediately," PUC Commission President Alice Reynolds said before the vote.

But consumers whose lower household earnings qualify them for reduced utility rate programs would pay lower fees.

- Here's a breakdown:
- \$6 a month for those in the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program, typically
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## 'ATM OF CALIFORNIA'

# Biden returns to the Bay Area to meet, greet and raise funds

**By Julia Prodis Sulek and Harriet Blair Rowan**  
Bay Area News Group

The presidential election will be fought in the battleground states of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin. But President Joe Biden's reelection campaign will be paid for, in no small part, by Bay Area billionaires.

Biden, who landed at Moffett Field on Thursday evening, planned to meet and greet Silicon Valley's tech elite at two megawatt fundraisers today: one in Portola Valley at the home of venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, and the other with former Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer in Palo Alto.



Biden

"You come to the ATM of California to tap into the dollars from tech zillionaires," said David McCuan, a political science professor at Sonoma State. "The only thing that matters is money, cash, dollars. M-C-D."

California has proven to be the Democrats' largest cash cow state — bringing in \$60 million to Biden and affiliated organizations and political action committees that support him since the election cycle began last spring, amounting to nearly 25% of all his fundraising nationwide.

San Francisco alone contributed some \$23 million, while the Oakland and San Jose metro

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