
Landmark Kendall Building will be home to SJCOE tech hub

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Posted Sep 4, 2019 at 8:31 PM

STOCKTON — The historical Kendall Building in downtown Stockton — though desolate and has seen better days — will soon be brought back to life and thrust into the 21st century.

The five-story building on 430 E. Weber Avenue is slated to become the new headquarters for the San Joaquin County Office of Education's Center for Educational Development and Research department and Code Stack Academy, the city's first accelerated not-for-profit software engineering school.

"We are so excited about this project, about moving here to downtown Stockton," county Superintendent of Schools James Mousalimas said Wednesday.

The SCJOE purchased the building for \$3.4 million, which includes approximately 25,000 square feet as well as two large parking lots near the location. Ten Space will be tasked with renovation and officials said the revamped Kendall Building will be fully operational by summer 2020.

The Kendall Building is seen as the answer to an expanding software department and coding academy that simply have outgrown its current space located at the SJCOE's main offices in southeast Stockton on Transworld Drive, according to Mousalimas.

The first floor will be leased back to Ten Space to provide an additional use such as retail, while the academy will occupy the second floor and the software department with a staff of 78 will be housed above it.

"I think this is just going to be an incredible place, not just for Stockton, but really for the whole county," Mousalimas said. "Our software development department has about 60 coders that are employed by us ... they have experience on a level with Google, Facebook and Twitter because the coding that we do is high-level, so this is our opportunity now to give back to the community."

The Kendall Building was first occupied in 1925 by W.J. Horan Furniture through 1940, according to Wright Realtors and Stockton city directories. Five years later, Kendall's Stationery took over, where it remained a fixture until the 1970s.

Since then, it's been the subject of a number of would-be renovations and projects from multiple developers with ideas ranging from ground-floor retail to residential units, according to Record archives.

In 2001, Monte Vista Development, a Turlock-based company of developer T.W. Starkweather, proposed turning the Kendall Building into an interior-design center. The building was then said to be made into a parking lot in 2008 before the City Council effectively blocked the action by imposing a moratorium.

Ten Space Development CEO Zac Cort said renovations will utilize the building's original brick while update window panels, storefront and create large open floor plans to fit the needs of the SJCOE.

"It's the center of an iconic block in an iconic building, so the building itself, the people that will be occupying this space, its vital not just for downtown, but the city as a whole and the county."

The SJCOE's software engineering department develops software used in 58 counties across California, Mousalimas said. On top of creating and maintaining applications used by school districts — such as the education job-posting site EdJoin and the SEIS (Special Education Information Systems) records management system — software engineers also provide services to various statewide agencies like the California Department of Education, the California Department of Health Care Services and the California Community College Chancellor's Office.

The department also oversees the Code Stack Academy, which began operating last year and creates web, software or mobile applications. The academy offers a combination of hands-on workshops, one-on-one mentoring with career-experienced developers, peer-to-peer learning, and real-world project experience.

CEDR director Johnny Arguelles said out of the first cohort of 25 individuals in the first class, only 10 completed the program and graduated last Friday.

"That's not a very high percentage of graduates, but those students are good," said Arguelles. "They committed over 960 hours of coding in classroom time, they had numerous assignments, over the weekend work they had to do (a) 6-week internship with our department."

In a statement Wednesday, Mayor Michael Tubbs said the SCJOE's move into the Kendall Building represents a new trajectory for Stockton, where tech companies and their employees can take advantage of everything that downtown has to offer, while building a foundation for a new generation of skilled workers ready for today's and tomorrow's technology jobs.

Mousalimas agrees: "That need is here, what we want to do is develop coders that will then attract software companies from the Bay Area (and) bring them here to Stockton and San Joaquin County."

More information about Code Stack and how to enroll can be found at <https://codestackacademy.org>.

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