

# THE RESTAURANT STANDARD

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## The Next Big Thing

Restaurants  
play a crucial  
role in  
neighborhood  
renewal

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**TIME IS A LUXURY** most restaurateurs don't have in surplus. With businesses to run, staffs to motivate and menus to fine-tune, to-do lists are never-ending and 14-hour workdays are commonplace. While squeezing in one more extracurricular may seem impossible, restaurateurs like David Cohn have found that a little community activism can go a long way. Read more about his involvement in turning around San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter on Page 14.

Getting out of the office to attend business district and city council meetings will keep you abreast of the neighborhood's happenings, as well as provide some handy connections when your own pet projects come up for debate.

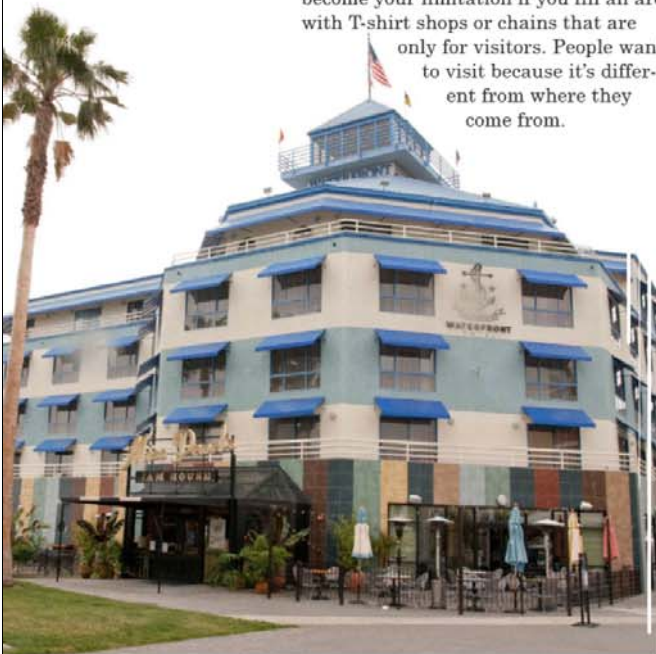
Whether you're concerned with new parking meters, a street improvement project or a huge urban redevelopment venture - building a solid reputation as a contributing business owner will pay huge dividends in the end.

Tell us your thoughts at [feedback@calrest.org](mailto:feedback@calrest.org).

*Angelica Pappas / Editor  
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◆ Though the Gaslamp Quarter is now considered a must-see on the list of San Diego attractions, Cohn said the business owners have done what they can to prevent it from becoming too touristy.

"One of the things (the association) discussed was not trying to gentrify it too much," Cohn said. "Your success can become your limitation if you fill an area with T-shirt shops or chains that are only for visitors. People want to visit because it's different from where they come from."



"We've received so much national media exposure this past year regarding the influx of new, great restaurants."

**MANETTE BELLIVEAU** president / Oakland Convention & Visitors Bureau

"There are definitely characters that inhabit redeveloped areas and downtowns – and we didn't want to sanitize that. It's very tricky to find that balance."

## Downtown Oakland building buzz

Cities across the state are in a constant state of improving their downtown districts, knowing that a healthy urban core is key to the overall wellbeing of a city.

Oakland's downtown area, for instance, is in the midst of a rebirth – charged with an injection of new housing and retail development projects.

Former mayor Jerry Brown's 10K Initiative campaigned to bring 10,000 housing units to downtown Oakland and is in the midst of execution with several high-profile apartment and condo projects completed and in the works, which mean a built-in customer base for new stores, galleries and restaurants in the area. It's a project that has garnered a lot of national interest in the city, with *Outside* magazine recently naming Oakland one of the 20 Best Towns in America.

"We've received so much national media exposure this past year regarding the influx of new, great restaurants – the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* have called Oakland the new Gourmet Ghetto,"



said Manette Belliveau, president and chief executive officer of the Oakland Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Belliveau said the bureau has even launched a campaign around the culinary scene in Oakland, complete with a Web site and e-newsletters detailing the city's more than 550 dining destinations.

Developers are investing \$375 million into turning Jack London Square into the next great Oakland neighborhood, a project with an enormous emphasis on creating a culinary epicenter in the East Bay.

"Right now Jack London Square is in transition," said John Dern, owner of Dern Greinetz and Co., a hotel and restaurant advisory group. "The developers have bought out or excused most of the old tenants that didn't fit the profile, but it's going to fill up very quickly and it will be a

Jack London Square in Oakland is enjoying a stream of new gleaming eateries such as Miss Pearl's Jam House, left, while taking care to protect its history. Heinold's First and Last Chance, above, has been in continuous operation since 1883 and sits steps away from the entrance to Jack London Market.

very vibrant destination for the East Bay, as well as visitors coming to the Bay Area."

Dern is the man responsible for securing the crème de la crème in the Bay Area dining scene for the waterfront district, and, so far, he's been successful at bringing in bold-faced names, including San Francisco luminaries Meg Ray of high-end bakery Miette, Daniel Patterson of Coi and Rick Hackett of Market Bar.

"It's always hard to convince somebody of something before it happens," Dern said. "But 10 years ago South of Market (in San Francisco) was a ghost town, and now most of the great, new restaurants are there." ◆

## In the game

### RESTAURANT OWNERS CAN'T AFFORD TO SIT ON THE SIDELINES

"I like to think of myself as a community activist," San Diego restaurateur David Cohn said. "We've always been involved in the communities we've been in. I've seen people not get involved for whatever reason. But I think you would want to make sure that you're part of the decision-making process, and part of the growth of the community."



Cohn said his efforts in the Gaslamp Quarter Association and other community groups have translated to close relationships with city government and police that come in handy when his businesses or neighborhoods are trying to accomplish something, such as street improvement and beautification projects.

So, considering all the potential rewards, why would a restaurateur resist getting involved?

"Certainly time is the biggest reason," Cohn said. "There was a point when I was spending a tremendous amount of time in various groups."

Cohn said he considers his years of playing a huge role serving on committees as "paying dues." At a certain point, established business owners can hand over responsibilities to younger entrepreneurs, while still offering their perspective and experience, he said.

"In the end I would suggest you get involved in any way that you can," Cohn said. "It's hard to get out with such a time-consuming job and sometimes have to force yourself. But I'm a great believer in karma, and if you do good things it will come back to you, even if it's not clear how."

## "Jack London Square is going through a pretty serious makeover right now and recreating itself."

DAVE HOEMANN president / Joie de Vivre Restaurants

➤ Oakland – notoriously known as a stepsister to the other glittering city by the Bay – is notably attracting the attention of top restaurateurs because of it's significantly less expensive to run a business there.

"There's cheaper labor, cheaper rent and landlords are more flexible," Dern said. "Talented chefs are going to gravitate to Oakland because all the reasons why it's difficult to go to a restaurant in the city (including parking and cost) is going to be taken care of at Jack London Square."

Much of the success of the square, however, hinges on Jack London Market – a massive food center promised to surpass the Ferry Building in San Francisco and Pike Place in Seattle.

Vendors for the market are being similarly cherry-picked, and the open date has been pushed back several times to ensure the highest quality purveyors. It will feature local and sustainable sources, as well as dining options and cooking classes.

"The market is going to be a place where the culinary community can come together and interact," said Jordan Pierce, spokesman for Jack London Square. "The space is going to be really dynamic."

An early investor in Jack London Square was Joie de Vivre, which opened Miss Pearl's Jam House, a reincarnation of the former San Francisco institution, on the waterfront in August.

"Jack London Square is going through a pretty serious makeover right now and recreating itself," said Dave Hoemann, vice president of Joie de Vivre Restaurants. "We're on the ground floor of the redevelopment with a new hotel, meeting and banquet space and restaurant, but there was definitely a footprint of traffic that had been coming to the area for years."

Hoemann said it was the potential to be part of an innovative culinary community that attracted Joie de Vivre to the area.

As an early player in the square, though, the 8,000-square-foot restaurant is counting on many of the office projects under construction to bring in mid-week and lunchtime crowds.

"The more there is to do down here, the more people will come," said Erin Gilchrist, regional manager for Joie de Vivre. "Twelve to 16 additional restaurants will only help us, because it will make Jack London Square a dining destination." **TRS**

Jack London Market promises to rival Pike Place Market in Seattle.

