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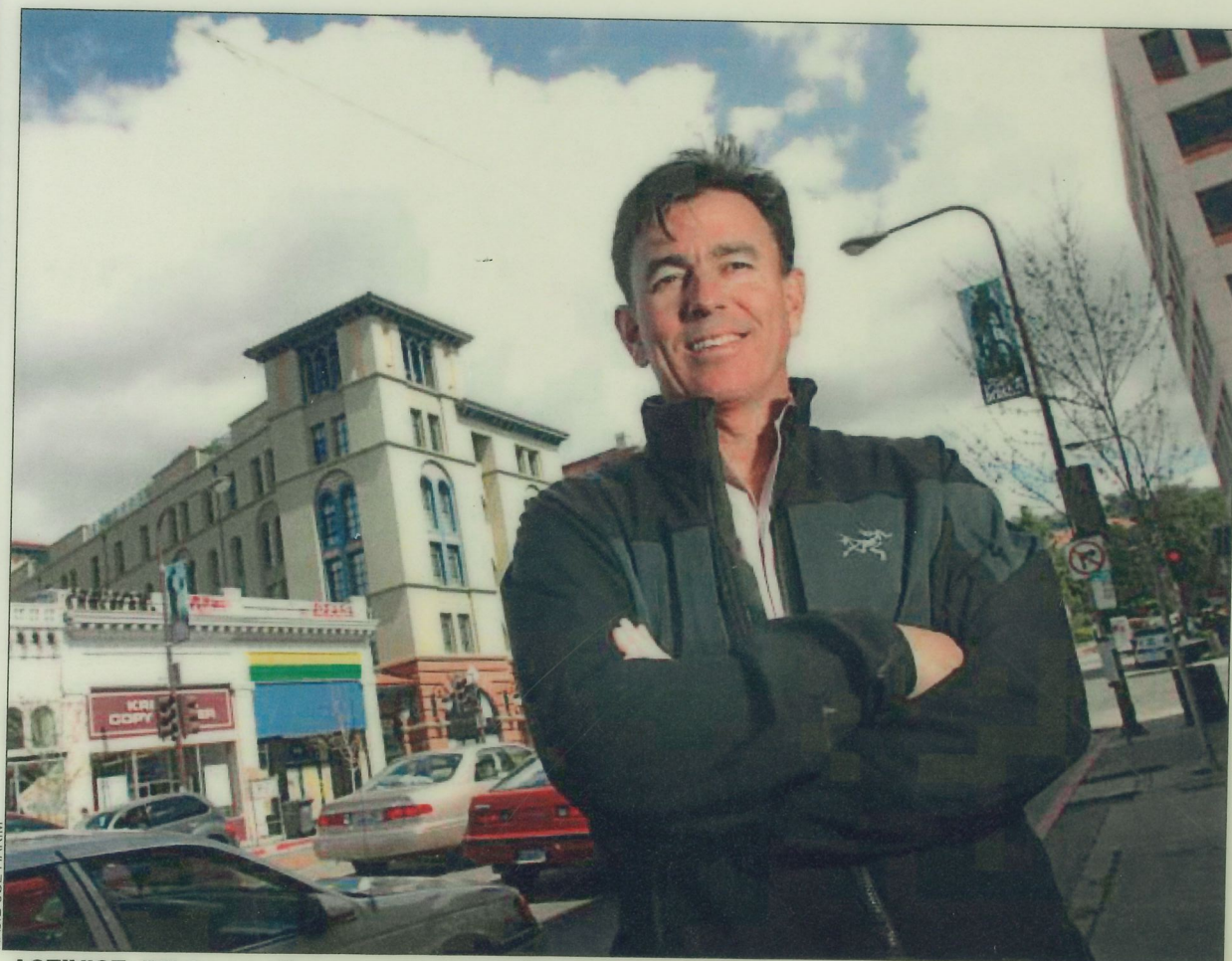
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TURNING AROUND: A NEIGHBORHOOD RENAISSANCE

Homes, nightlife, remake Berkeley main drag



NAJIB JOE HAKIM

ACTIVIST: "We're creating our own reason for coming downtown," says developer Patrick Kennedy.

BY LIZETTE WILSON
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Berkeley's got its groove back. The university town — known as much for its Nobel laureates as its progressive social policies — is aggressively revamping its downtown core with the help of private developers, non-profits and educators.

It's hardly by accident.

Once characterized by boarded buildings and urine-soaked sidewalks, the 10-block stretch of Shattuck Avenue just south of the University was tagged in 1999 as a locale in need of critical change.

In the past few years, it's gotten some of that overdue TLC, creating a small, Greenwich Village in the process.

Within a five-minute walk of the downtown Berkeley BART station, more than 1,800 residential units and more than 116,000 square feet of retail and commercial space have been added. More than \$150 million has been invested in arts and theater projects, renovating historic buildings and creating new ones.

And more is scheduled.

"We're creating our own reason for coming downtown," said Panoramic Interests' Patrick Kennedy, who has completed 11 mixed-use projects in Berkeley's urban core — three of which opened last year. "Berkeley has been in an ice age. It's starting to thaw."

Roughly a dozen new mixed-use and/or cultural projects are getting approvals, and a handful more are expected to open this spring and summer. Some 1,500 units are slated for construction in the next two years.

These include:

■ The David Brower Center. The 53,000-square-foot meeting space was designed to house numerous envi-

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BERKELEY: Arts turn district into a lively area

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ronmental groups. It also has a 200-seat high-tech theater, library, interactive gardens, cafe and a housing component.

■ The UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and the Magnes Museum will both relocate to the area. Another music and dance venue is also planned which, including the newly constructed Berkeley Rep, the Aurora and the School of Theater — will pump the neighborhood total to 11 arts venues.

■ Kennedy opened The Fine Arts Theater's 100 housing units last year and completed construction on the shell and ventilation systems for a 250-seat theater. He hopes to see it open by this summer.

■ Anna's Jazz Island, opening this month, will feature live jazz six nights a week. It's located at Shattuck and Allston Street across the street from Jupiter, a brick patio microbrewery and restaurant that features live music every night.

■ Gaia Arts Center, adjoining Annas Jazz Island, is also opening this month. The 7,000-square-foot swath will be a venue for live performances, private and public receptions and cultural events.

"Doing the arts district was the first major step," said Randal Wilson, president of the Downtown Berkeley Association and branch manager of the Mechanics Bank. "As more units come here, it drives more business to be here and more people. It's been a big change."

Lizette Wilson covers real estate for the San Francisco Business Times. ■