

# Pellier Park

Design Team: SWA Group with Norie Sato

2023

West St. James and Terraine Streets., San José, CA 95110 / Council District 3

## ABOUT THE PROJECT



Louis Pellier, a French immigrant, introduced the prune to Santa Clara Valley from his native France in 1856 and established a nursery, dubbed “City Gardens,” at the site of the current park, which is now marked as a California Historic Landmark. Inspired by Pellier’s signature Petit d’Agen plum trees and their iconic status in the state’s history, the park’s design was developed by SWA in collaboration with Seattle-based artist Norie Sato. Foundational to the team’s inspiration was historic research, site analysis, conversations with key stakeholders and extensive public input.

Seen from above, Pellier Park is designed in the shape of a plum, with the central “pit” delineating a common gathering space and grove, circulation paths and seating forming the “flesh,” tree-lined berms as the “leaves” buffering the park from exposure to traffic noise, and a northward paseo of flowering trees as the “stem.” Honoring the historic nature of the park, the design team collaborated on a 116-foot length Storytelling Wall, as a primary park feature. Against its split-faced granite surface, porcelain enamel photographic tiles are organized in three general interlaced story threads: the valley prior to Pellier’s arrival and his eventual impact on horticultural expansion; the Pellier family who imported the prune to San José and gave the cuttings to other Valley farmers, who learned to cultivate and dry the prunes; and the San José Community, specifically their contribution in developing the original park completed in the late 1970s. Members of E Clampus Vitus, Mt. Charlie Chapter, gave thousands of hours of labor to the pouring of concrete, laying adobe bricks, building benches and arbors, and installing wrought iron and laying walks and many donors contributed funds for the park’s construction. These stories are presented along with context-related content including poetry, cartoons, and historic photographs. Also featured on the wall are the original 22



*Pellier Park seen from above at night.*

cast bronze heritage donor plaques and the “Mount Charlie Chapter” Clamper plaque from the 1970’s park as well as historic commemorative plaques. The wall also includes one new plaque that tells the story of the heritage plaques.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SWA is a leading landscape architecture, planning and urban design firm practicing at various scales of complexity across the U.S. and abroad. Their mission is to enhance quality of life in the public realm by creating multi-benefit places for people and nature through the power of design. They are committed to the belief that landscape is the essential infrastructure to achieve this mission of defining the future of equitable and resilient cities.

Norie Sato is a Seattle based creating artwork for both a studio practice and for public places. She has created individual, collaborative, design team public art projects as well as creating various public art plans for projects both large and small. She works from site and context-driven ideas first, then finds the appropriate form and materials, striving to add meaning and human touch to the built environment. She is interested how the artwork is situated holistically within a site and environmental concerns of materials, concept and use. She believes in working collaboratively on big picture thinking and to allow for a more seamless integration. More information on the artist can be found at <http://www.noriesato.com/>

## ABOUT THE PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

The City of San José Public Art Program seeks to build community identity by initiating artworks and exhibitions that enhance the civic landscape. Through active community engagement, public art strives to reflect the City’s diversity, historic richness, and envision its present and future.

The Public Art Program is part of the City’s Office of Cultural Affairs, a division of the Office of Economic Development. The Public Art Program was established by a 1984 municipal ordinance that provides public art through funding from City capital improvement projects and eligible private development.

For further information and photos, please contact the San José Public Art Program.

