

SURFACING



THOR SWIFT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In Redwood City, Calif., the courthouse, which turns 100 this year, in the newly installed Courthouse Square.

A Silicon Valley Relaunch

By LANI CONWAY

REDWOOD CITY, about 25 miles south of San Francisco, was a bustling shipping and lumber town in the mid-19th century, until it fell off the radar in the '70s — owing, in part, to major retail development in nearby Palo Alto — and was tagged with the unfortunate nickname Deadwood City. But over the last few years, this sleepy Silicon Valley suburb has begun shaking off that moniker, re-emerging with an influx of new restaurants, shops and theaters. The town is also striving to preserve historic landmarks, like the glass-domed courthouse, which celebrates its centennial this summer with outdoor concerts and a Fourth of July dedication ceremony.

"Redwood City used to be so quiet, you could throw a bowling ball down Broadway at six o'clock at night," said Pat Webb, sitting in the newly installed Courthouse Square, a European-style piazza sprinkled with Italianesque stone fountains and wooden tables and chairs. Ms. Webb, the city's housing and economic development manager, helped spearhead a \$50 million downtown revitalization project, which added retail shops and restaurants along Theater Way, and created more pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

There's a buzz of activity along Main Street and palm-tree-lined Broadway, which runs in front of the square. Re-

cent newcomers include **Martins West** (831 Main Street; 650-366-4366; martinswestgp.com), a gastropub that opened last May. Housed in the century-old Alhambra theater, this cozy brick-walled spot is packed on weekends with crowds enjoying dishes like smoked rabbit sausage (\$6) and chicken breast cooked sous vide and served with savory soda bread pudding (\$17).

A few doors down, **Angelica's Bistro** (863 Main Street; 650-365-3226; angelicasbistro.com) is the only place in town where you can dine on French crepes (\$7.50) and tap your toes to a Wednesday night jazz jam session, surrounded by European paintings and 200-year-old Italian statues.

Another standout is **Donato Enoteca** (1041 Middlefield Road; 650-701-1000; donatoenoteca.com), which opened last June. The chef, Donato Scotti, dishes up Italian specialties like grilled calamari (\$9) and satisfyingly simple buckwheat pasta with wild mushrooms (\$15). The wraparound patio with red sofas is perfect for sampling the grappa list.

Although Redwood City is not known (yet) for shopping options, **Pickled** (2652 Broadway; 650-299-0990; pickledclothing.com) is one promising pick. The trendy women's boutique sells items like casual Michael Stars tops (\$58) and Citizen designer jeans (\$159).

If you happen to be in the market for vintage fittings, head to **Old Truck Antiques** (2400 Broadway; 650-367-9625; oldtruckantiques.com), which opened last fall. It's packed neatly with an eclectic collection that includes Saturn sewing machines, 19th-century brass bed frames and military uniforms.

The German store and bar **Gourmet Haus Staudt** (2615 Broadway; 650-364-9232; gourmethausstaudt.com), run by the Staudt family for 35 years, is stocked with foods and gifts, like eight-pound jars of sauerkraut (\$16.25) and boot-shaped beer mugs (\$96). The real treasure is Volker Staudt's beer garden, with 11 German beers on tap. "We're kind of like a German speakeasy," Mr. Staudt said. "People hear about us mainly through word of mouth." ■



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