

ABOUT YOU

Please provide your name as it will appear on the ballot: Alex Shoor

What office are you seeking? City Council

Are you an incumbent in this office? No

Do you now or have you ever held elected office(s)? *If so, please list title(s), jurisdiction(s), and years in each office:* No

Where's your hometown? I lived 16 years of my childhood in Saratoga and have now been back in this Valley, living on The Alameda, for over 10 years.

What is your current city of residence? San Jose

What is your highest level of education? Master of Public Administration

What is your current primary vocation/occupation? Executive Director at Catalyze SV (nonprofit director)

Do you have an arts background of any kind? *If so, please explain.* I wish! Does being a good cook count? Or having a mother who was a painter?

ABOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN

Please share your candidate statement as it will appear in voting materials. (approx. 200 words)

My purpose is to build community. By building community, we address San José's most pressing issues including housing, homelessness, crime, and the environment. I have the policy experience and expertise to do just that.

I've dedicated my career to ending the housing crisis. I served eight years on San José's Housing & Community Development Commission and founded a local nonprofit to advocate for housing for everyone. I've ensured housing that's affordable for our community, benefiting new and existing residents, including teachers, nurses, and working families. My approach is upstream policymaking, meaning solving issues earlier before they get worse. My homelessness plan addresses root causes — preventing evictions; permanent supportive housing; safe and centralized locations to provide services; and mental health care.

I'll fight to reduce crime and increase neighborhood safety by filling police officer vacancies while hiring more community service officers and mental health professionals. I'll lead on the environment with initiatives to plant more trees, maintain parks, and improve transportation.

This is how we build a safe, thriving, and affordable community for all of us. I'm endorsed by Retired District 6 City Councilmember Ken Yeager, have a 100% rating from Planned Parenthood, and hope to earn your vote too. www.AlexShoor.com

What is your campaign budget? \$100,000

How much have you raised to date? *Please specify if you have loaned or contributed any personal funds to your campaign and how much.* I've loaned a few hundred dollars and raised \$86,000

How many doors have you personally knocked to date? To date, my campaign has knocked on nearly 7,000 doors. Of those, I have knocked on about 2,300 doors, with 30 volunteers knocking on the remainder.

ABOUT THE ARTS

What is your perception of the current state of arts and culture in San José? (250 words)

I know major parts of our arts and culture scene are thriving. One of my favorite activities in San Jose is the San Jose Jazz Summer Fest, which has bounced back since the pandemic. A longtime subscriber to local theater, choral, and symphonic organizations, my girlfriend has often invited me to numerous performances; each one leaves me proud San José has such quality productions. Big-ticket shows draw premium prices and typically fill seats at the Center for Performing Arts, while the much smaller San José Stage provides an intimate theatre experience to 30,000 patrons annually.

But having worked closely with artists and creatives in San Jose for years, I see some of the hardships they face in the day-to-day, especially being able to afford to live here. I consistently worry about how the housing crisis is impacting the lives and livelihoods of our artists. It's one of the reasons I'm such a staunch housing advocate. Artists need the mental and physical space to create their work; better, more affordable housing is the core of creating an environment that allows the Arts to thrive.

San José needs a postcard image of a place in our city that is universally recognized as ours, much like a bridge, statue, or public art piece. The arts have an opportunity to help San José find its postcard image!

There is still so much more San Jose's government and community can be doing to support the Arts here!

How would you define the role of arts and culture in San José's economy? (250 words)

Art events contribute millions of dollars to San Jose's economy. An example I treasure that is supported by the City is VivaCalleSJ.

Arts and culture also are essential to the soul of San José. Unfortunately, they are often an overlooked asset. They cast a valuable light over our city yet the hard work of the artists who live and work in San José isn't often seen.

Yet we must do more to draw both locals and visitors to San José to drive economic vitality through arts and culture. We must enable more opportunities for artists to exhibit their creative work, which not only drives stronger economic growth from sales, but creates more moments to celebrate the Arts. It also enables artists to sustainably and independently support themselves.

But the Arts still isn't accessible to everyone because many of the tickets for our arts aren't affordable for working-class folks. And some of those arts opportunities aren't culturally inclusive. So we need the Arts to be expanded to those who don't have access to them.

Later on in the questionnaire, I'll talk more about my ideas for supporting culture in San José.

Were you familiar with SJAA before receiving this survey? Yes

If yes to the above, are you familiar with our current [policy priorities](#)? Yes

ABOUT OUR PRIORITIES

The following questions are directly related to SJAA's policy priorities. Your direct responses are appreciated!

Would you support a policy requiring large private developments to contribute funding and/or space and other resources to public arts and cultural programs in San José — similar to existing policies in Bay Area cities like Sunnyvale and Berkeley? Why or why not? You can read an overview of SJAA's policy proposal [here](#).

This is a worthy idea that SJAA has been advocating for for a long time and it's dispiriting it hasn't yet been approved.

San Jose only built 26% of the affordable housing it needed in the last eight years. And right now, there is little market-rate development being built in San José. As I understand it from the development community, because construction costs are so high, many market-rate projects aren't financially feasible in San Jose. Taken together, this makes it hard for most working-class people - artists included — to live here.

While I always take what developers say with a grain of salt, in this case, the fact that construction has stalled is proof that what they're saying is probably true. As a housing advocate, I don't want to prevent more housing from being built and I carefully approach new policies that would add costs to construction. However, I believe that art, especially that's open and visible to the public adds value aesthetically and financially. It also helps develop a greater sense that San Jose is an "art city." What makes art an easy thing to support is that it's infrastructure you can see and enjoy! It also creates a distinct place that draws people to it.

In case it would add new life to the proposal's chances of passage, I am happy to take this issue on by championing it as a lower percentage in the short-term, say of 0.75%, to get the proposal passed. I would then ask arts advocates to come back in 3-5 years and advocate for a higher percentage.

Would you support reallocating the current 40% General Fund set aside from the Transient Occupancy Tax (aka TOT or Hotel Tax) to arts, culture, and tourism programs? Why or why not?

I haven't made up my mind on this issue. Like most of the topics in the questionnaire, I'm extremely open to a discussion with SJAA. And I'll keep studying and learning, as I did while researching the new law SF passed in 2018 to allocate hotel tax revenue to arts and culture. I'm supportive of this change in general, yet I'm sure if I'd go as far as SJAA wants.

Here are some of my thoughts on the proposal:

- I would be more supportive if it addressed arts and culture only, and excluded tourism initiatives. This is mostly because the the concept of tourism seems more vague and could potentially end up being exploited by big business and out-of-town interests.
- Along those lines, I prefer the tax to be used to support local artists and local community organizations from say the nine-county Bay Area.

- I'd be more likely to support the reallocation if a compromise could be reached on the 40% percentage to something between 10 and 30 percent.
- I'd be more supportive if there was a clause or trigger that allows the funds to be reallocated back to the General Fund exclusively, say during a year when the City is facing a budget deficit.

Would you support the creation of positions within city departments for artists in residence to coordinate with staff on community engagement and strategic planning — as other municipalities like [Los Angeles County](#) are already doing? Why or why not?

I am open to the city hiring a Chief Design Officer as LA had/has. I also support San Jose hiring a Chief Policy Innovation Officer.

I believe the City of San Jose needs a lot of help with community engagement. It needs to make its policies and practices more inclusive, collaborative, and transparent. As a nonprofit leader who has fought for this for years, I have been agnostic as to whether the City hires its own staff to do community engagement or hires outside experts.

For me, it's the outcomes that matter the most. Outcomes such as:

- Is the City reaching its target audience?
- Is the City connecting with underrepresented and/or marginalized groups as part of its efforts?
- Is that audience truly engaged in the conversation?
- Do the targeted communities feel affirmed by the engagement process?

I do believe the best experts at providing community engagement are community-based organizations (followed closely behind by community engagement professionals) because they are closest to the community that government needs to reach.

in 2022, when the City of San Jose issued an RFP inviting entities to provide community engagement services to the City, Catalyze SV led the effort crying foul at the City's exclusion of nonprofits to provide such services. We joined SVCN and Local Color in leading the effort to ensure the City of San Jose hired local nonprofit organizations. In 2023, thanks to our orgs, 24 nonprofit organizations were added to the City's bench of possible community engagement services providers.

So I'm incredibly supportive of the City hiring nonprofits to assist with community engagement.

This is work Catalyze SV has been doing with the City since 2020. In fact, as SJAA undoubtedly recalls, Catalyze SV and I worked with SJAA to plan a community engagement workshop in the fall of 2020 to engage the artist and creative community on the redevelopment of the area around Diridon. This was a great collaboration, thank you!

Nonprofits should be fairly compensated for the time they put into assisting the government with planning and community engagement. I believe the creativity of the arts community brings a lot to the community engagement table, helping governments better execute engagement.

I'm incredibly supportive of the City hiring individuals with artistic skills to assist with community engagement, though I don't believe it has to come in the form of an artist in residence, specifically.

OPEN FORUM

What are some other ideas you have for increasing City support for arts and culture?

Thank you SJAA for suggesting to Catalyze SV that we jointly plan that tour in 2023 of the new art-themed housing project Exhibit in Japantown. I'd be looking for similar opportunities as a Councilmember to showcase great places like this.

Speaking of community engagement and development, developers should build in a way that does the most good for the most people. I will ask every developer proposing a project in my district these four questions:

1. How many homes are you building?
2. How many of them will be affordable and how affordable will they be?
3. What is your community engagement process to hear community input and build community support for the project?
4. What community benefits will this project provide to benefit the broader neighborhood?

Community Engagement: Developers proposing projects in my District seeking my support will be urged to implement a thoughtful, responsive, inclusive community engagement plan to not just hear community input, but incorporate it. When the community is involved and invested, new development can increase neighborhood pride and trust in decision-makers. I will take a hands-on approach by offering to facilitate meetings between a developer and the community to ensure the community's voice is heard.

Community Benefits: As part of the community engagement process, I will push developers to ensure projects include amenities and benefits to the broader neighborhood (in addition to the residents or workers of the new building). Examples of community benefits include retail, restaurants, coffee shops, childcare, a community room, a community garden, public art, and streetscape improvements. This can bring homes closer to businesses, offices, and green spaces, which will benefit us all.

Vibrant Neighborhood Spaces: Enlivening neighborhoods with activities for people of all ages and interests is fundamentally good for San Jose. Some of my ideas for encouraging vibrant, fun community spaces include:

- Reduced fees for buildings that activate their rooftops for services such as parks or other usable places. We should change San Jose's ordinance code to allow or encourage rooftop gardens and create incentive programs to develop more community gardens. We should dedicate Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money to pay for them.
- Working with nonprofits like Village Harvest to create an urban harvesting program.
- Replicate in other D6 neighborhoods the Back Alley Block Party at Business Circle in Burbank which I worked on in 2016.
- Continue the tradition of sponsoring outdoor movie nights in neighborhood parks, rooftops, and parking lots
- Design pedestrian spaces by closing targeted streets off to cars, like what is currently being done with San Pedro St

Building an Entertainment District around the Sharks: Located in District 6, blocks from where I live, the San José Sharks is a beloved team, cultural benchmark, and an anchor business. We need to find additional ways to support the Sharks, as well as the area around it. That's why I propose we create a "Sports Entertainment District" around the Shark Tank. I propose incentives to businesses connected to

this theme that relocate here. I also support efforts to reinforce the branding of this area as connected to the Sharks. I have suggested to the team's leaders that we create branding, such as additional street signs around the Shank Tank, alluding to the Sharks. My two ideas for such a name are: like the cultural mecca Beale Street in Memphis, we call the area "Teal Street", or Connected to the concept of an entertainment district, we call it "The Teal Light District"

More "Districts" in San Jose: I'll propose designating multiple distinct "Districts" to make these areas more inviting for residents, visitors, and new investors. This could mean we Create a place to celebrate Cannery Workers of the past by renaming the area around Del Monte "The Cannery District."

Revisit a business improvement district on The Alameda, a model we have in other parts of San Jose. This would include implementing parking meters along The Alameda for visitors from out of San Jose. The revenue can then be dedicated to business improvements along The Alameda.

Silicon Valley African American Cultural Center: I strongly support bringing the Silicon Valley African American Cultural Center to its proposed site on The Alameda in my District. This mixed-use development will include housing, health services, and a cultural center community center focused on serving the African American community. I will work with the neighbors to ensure this project is a win-win and pursue funding opportunities to ensure it gets built.

African American homeownership has plummeted in our County from 40% to 26% in the last 21 years while San Jose has lost 17% of its black population in the last 30 years. We must build this project as part of sending a stronger, more welcoming message: black folks have been a key part of our community for generations and must remain for many more.

Revitalizing Existing Places: I am currently part of leading a collection of community members and organizations alongside the Preservation Action Council of San Jose in supporting the revitalization and restoration of the Burbank Theater. For places that could use revitalizing, I'll bring together property owners and community members to envision solutions and build support for them.

Historic Recognition: Rich, great cities recognize their history. San Jose has a long and storied history, which we must preserve and celebrate. Let's hire a city historian to identify places worthy of plaques recognizing historic sites or events. We have several historic sites in District 6 that are beloved by constituents. We should preserve these signs by incorporating them into the designs when new buildings are being proposed at the existing site.

Google Project: Fastrack Construction and Demand Promises Be Kept: My organization Catalyze SV and I enthusiastically supported Google's mixed-use development next to Diridon Station and pushed hard for ensuring affordable housing as a major project component. Google's community engagement efforts were excellent. It's \$150 million community benefits package was pioneering and one we should encourage on future San Jose projects. Google has assured me and others the project is moving forward, but not as fast as first expected or I'd like. I anticipate it won't be fully completed for 15-20 years. As your Councilmember, I will:

- Stay in regular contact with Google, collaborating provide my constituents and our broader community up-to-date information on the progress on the project.
- Push Google to maintain its promises to the community.
- Urge Google to begin distributing the \$150-200 million dedicated to community benefits sooner.
- Participate hands-on about the design of the project as it firms up to ensure it shapes an iconic new places in San Jose.

- And if, for some reason, Google decides to reduce or pull out of this project, I will join with City staff and the Mayor's Office and expend a great deal of time finding others willing to develop this prime piece of land that is worth its weight in gold to be the San Jose gem it can and should be.

What do you wish we had asked but didn't?

My personal experiences with the arts in SJ. How I've supported them in my career. That's okay. I like how forward-thinking this questionnaire is.