

ABOUT YOU

Please provide your name as it will appear on the ballot: Michael Mulcahy

What office are you seeking? San José City Council, District 6

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? San José, California

What is your current city of residence? San José, California

What is your highest level of education? Bachelor of Arts

What is your current primary vocation/occupation? Neighborhood Business Owner

Do you have an arts background of any kind? *If so, please explain.*

Yes, I do. I've spent nearly my entire life on stage in the theater and remain very close to the arts industry today, both local and national. Having grown up in the vibrant theater community as an actor, my passion for the arts evolved into a fulfilling journey in nonprofit work as the long-time Executive Director of Children's Musical Theater San José (CMT), a public benefit corporation I helped grow into one of Silicon Valley's most effective programs serving youth and families. The organization is nationally recognized for its unique use of an arts-based curriculum to teach life skills, teamwork, and responsibility to youth. I remain committed to CMT as a board member today and during COVID, my wife Kimberly and I chaired a Capital Campaign to raise \$2.5 million to help CMT open its new Creative Arts Center in District 6. I also served as the Chair of Team San José (and founding board member in 2004) responsible for managing the convention, tourism, and theater venues owned by the city. My experience as an actor and arts leaders has influenced a long-time connection with and commitment to raising up the arts in my community, and it will remain an important pillar for me if elected to the City Council.

ABOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN

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

Our neighborhoods need a strong voice at City Hall working harder to make our district safer, address homelessness with greater urgency and protect the quality of life in our family-friendly communities.

I will hire more police officers to patrol our neighborhoods. I strongly support Mayor Mahan's push for building homeless housing more efficiently so we can require everyone to come indoors. I will maintain the character of our neighborhoods by putting housing where it makes sense, not where it makes our quality of life worse.

I was born and raised in San José. My wife Kimberly and I raised our three daughters in Willow Glen. I founded and run neighborhood-serving businesses creating hundreds of high-wage jobs; I know firsthand that City Hall needs to make it easier for businesses to create good jobs.

My service to San José includes leading Team San José, the partnership to grow our economy with high-wage jobs; growing Children's Musical Theater San Jose into one of the nation's most effective programs for youth and families; and as Willow Glen Business Association President.

We can make San José better by protecting our greatest strength — our neighborhoods. Join us at www.MulcahyforSanJose.com.

What is your campaign budget? Anticipated Budget: \$250,000 for primary election, \$300,000 for general election.

How much have you raised to date? *Please specify if you have loaned or contributed any personal funds to your campaign and how much.* Raised to date: \$235,319.

How many doors have you personally knocked to date? I have personally knocked and dropped literature at 1,000 houses in our district. And over 100 volunteers have hand-delivered door hangers to all 25,000 households in the district — not just voting households — twice, and the third unique door-hanger will get walked out starting Saturday, February 3, 2024.

ABOUT THE ARTS

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

I believe that the current state of arts and culture in San José is vibrant, despite a difficult path with COVID, workplace changes, and uneven giving. The arts have always survived San Jose's challenging periods, always on the leading edge of the recovery. But there is no question in my mind that the arts need to be better understood and bolstered by our leaders to flourish even more. The last four years saw a major decline in audiences being able to support our local arts venues, but it's evident that our community wants artistic offerings to thrive in San José, as highlighted by a recent study that revealed an overwhelming 86 percent of respondents perceive arts and culture in San José as a source of pride. I personally share this pride, and am invested in the future of our city's cultural growth. I intend to carry this responsibility with me as I pursue a spot on San José's City Council. Advocating for equitable access and increased resource allocation to the arts is not just a political aspiration for me — it's a commitment to ensuring that every resident has the opportunity to engage with and benefit from creative expression. There is always room for improvement and growth, and I intend to foster an environment where the arts can grow so every one of my constituents feels a sense of pride and is able to see themselves represented in San José's art and culture.

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

Arts and culture play an integral role in San José's economy. The Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 study, conducted in collaboration with the San José Office of Economic Development, underscores the significant impact of arts on our local economy. In 2022, the nonprofit arts and culture industry generated an impressive \$292 million for our city, both in income for our neighbors and taxes to fund important city infrastructure and projects, playing a pivotal role in downtown recovery. The industry not only generates income directly, but also stimulates other income related to every event, showing and

concert they host – attendees visit local businesses for dinner, drinks, transportation, and other goods and services. These cultural institutions employ many of our city’s talented local artists, but also professionals who run day-to-day operations, customer service, technical staff, and more. In fact, San José arts organizations and their audiences created 4,738 jobs – and our neighbors deserve well-paying jobs like these that ensure they can pay their bills and support their families.

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](#).

I think it’s fair to say that Bay Area cities have mixed reviews in terms of their overall commitment to the arts, and our tech companies, while generous at times, should be doing more to invest in the arts. As a member of the City Council, I would support measures to require large private developments to contribute resources to public arts and cultural programs in San José – but it must be done right to ensure we encourage investment in San José, not stifle it. These types of policies not only enrich a city's cultural landscape but also foster a sense of community and identity. In my professional life, I have invested in a number of properties along historic Lincoln Avenue in downtown Willow Glen, helping to revamp the area and stimulating our local economy. By integrating elements like live music, artistic sculptures, and murals, and a myriad of cultural elements into private developments, San José can promote a sense of community, inclusivity, creativity, and civic pride while enhancing the overall quality of life for its residents. This would continue to make San José a city people aspire to live in; one where business leaders invest back into the communities they serve, because leveraging private resources for public good reinforces the notion of shared investment in the city's future. I practice reinvestment into the arts in my professional career – for example, I donated retail space in a historic building I refurbished in downtown Willow Glen (Garden Theater) to a local art nonprofit called ArtHouse Studio for much of 2023. The space transformed into a student art gallery, hosting field trips and children's art projects, becoming a community center facilitating culture exchange, a sense of identity, and bringing young people together. The Bay Area is not alone, cities across the country are taking similar approaches. Philadelphia's Percent for Art program has resulted in numerous iconic public art installations, contributing to the city's cultural identity. Portland's Percent for Art ordinance, has successfully supported local artists, enriched public spaces, and contributed to the city's reputation as a hub for creative expression. Implementing these policies would be a forward-thinking approach to urban development and community enrichment in San José.

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?

Yes, I am on the steering committee currently working to make this happen with our next study session rescheduled to Friday, February 16, 9 – 11am. I support reallocating funds from the Hotel Tax to arts, culture, and tourism programs because San José residents deserve to reap the countless benefits they provide — and it is GOOD BUSINESS — as we can show that every dollar invested returns significant

actual dollars to the general fund and millions in economic impact spending as a result. There is real data to back this up. We can take a look at other city programs and trends to show just how much they contribute to the community. According to the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 survey, 80 percent of attendees to arts and culture events agreed that “the event they were attending inspires a sense of pride in the neighborhood or community.” And as noted, these events strongly and positively influence the local economy. Those same attendees spend an average of \$38.46 per person with local merchants beyond the cost of admission, and the one third of event attendees who travel from outside the county in which the activity takes place spend twice as much as their local counterparts – bringing in revenue which would otherwise not be in our city. Visitor spending is the lifeblood of the TOT and what Team San Jose was founded to drive. As for tourism, tourists often seek destinations with a diverse cultural scene, and San José is a premier destination — at least the arts community knows it — and we need to get louder on this point specifically. San José’s rich history and multiculturalism should be leveraged and invested in – there is no better use of funds gathered from the Hotel industry than reinvesting it in the industry’s future. Redirecting funds from the Hotel Tax towards these efforts not only serves the interests of residents but also secures the future of San José’s tourism industry.

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?

Yes, I would support the creation of positions within city departments for artists in residence to collaborate with staff on community engagement and strategic planning. By embedding artists San José can leverage its local talent to foster community engagement and find solutions to complex social challenges. Integrating artists into city departments brings diverse perspectives, creativity, and innovative approaches to addressing community needs and challenges. This can look like hiring a Creative Strategist, much like in the LA County program, where the artists have played a key role in supporting change, strengthening relationships between government and communities, and advancing LA County’s cultural and racial equity goals. Artists possess unique skills in storytelling, empathy, and creative problem-solving, which can enhance public participation and generate creative solutions.

OPEN FORUM

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

I think city council and other stakeholders should look into establishing a program that leverages Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to expand arts education and provide opportunities for hands-on learning through public internship and apprenticeship programs. This type of program would engage with San José’s visual art studios, theater producers, performative art studios, graphic design agencies, digital media companies, and other creative enterprises to offer immersive experiences for students interested in pursuing careers in the arts. It would also offer opportunities for students that don’t know what they are interested in pursuing the opportunity to explore alternative paths. By bridging the gap between education and industry, PPPs can help inform those decisions and give San José’s students a leg up. Through mentorship, workshops, and practical training, students will gain valuable skills, insights, and real-world experience while contributing to San José’s vibrant cultural scene.

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

The incorporation of arts education in schools and the expansion of youth arts programs remain a passion of mine and questions about these topics are always welcome. Furthermore, questions about how we can all ensure equitable access to arts programs and cultural opportunities can provide

invaluable insight. Simply having programs, like Artists in Residence for example, without ensuring that they remain accessible to artists of all economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds does not deliver the results that we intend, when what we strive for are diverse perspectives and equitable civic engagement.

Lastly, City Hall red tape hampers organizations — arts, neighborhood associations, etc. — from truly celebrating, expressing themselves, and to just have some plain old good fun in our public parks, streets, and city facilities. I believe we can show a net positive return on the investment of waived fees and reduced red tape that would far outweigh the risk averse posture City Hall takes in these areas.