

## **ABOUT YOU**

**Please provide your name as it will appear on the ballot:** Anthony Tordillos

**What office are you seeking?** San José City Council, District 3

**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?** Pacific, Washington

**What is your current city of residence?** San José

**What is your highest level of education?** Bachelor of Science, Yale University

**What is your current primary vocation/occupation?** Engineering Manager and San José Planning Commissioner

**Do you have an arts background of any kind?** Yes, I was an active participant in music and theatre programs throughout my childhood. I played piano and saxophone in my public school's band program throughout elementary and middle school. In high school I discovered a passion for vocal performance, and I sang in three different choirs spanning traditional choral arrangements to vocal jazz. I was also deeply involved in my high school's theatre program, performing in both musical theatre and straight plays for four years. I continued to pursue my passion for singing and musical theatre in college, where I performed in theatrical productions and toured the world singing a capella with the Yale Alley Cats. Since college, I've spent much more time as a patron of the arts rather than performing myself, but I'd be eager to learn about new opportunities to get back on the stage some day!

## **ABOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN**

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

City Hall insiders have had their shot. But housing is still too expensive, our streets are too dangerous, and too many small businesses are struggling. I'm running for City Council because I'm tired of the excuses, special interests, and same old battles that are getting us nowhere.

Growing up in a working-class family, I experienced the importance of having a government that works. Thanks to quality public schools and a safety net that supported my disabled dad, I made it to Yale and became an engineer, helping build YouTube. There, I learned how to solve big problems: innovative ideas, data-driven decisions, and accountability. I took that approach to the Planning Commission, where I've worked to make it faster and cheaper to build affordable housing. As my neighborhood president, I've brought people together to clean up our streets, fund public art, and

foster community. At every step, I've demanded accountability from city staff, public officials, and, most importantly, for myself.

I believe in what San José can accomplish with a fresh approach. Together, we will tackle public safety head-on, combat our affordability and homelessness crises, and end the excuses.

I'll be a councilmember you can count on. [www.AnthonyForSanJose.com](http://www.AnthonyForSanJose.com)

**What is your campaign budget?** \$160,000

**How much have you raised to date? Please specify if you have loaned or contributed any personal funds to your campaign and how much.** \$120,000

**How many doors have you personally knocked to date? How many are you committed to knocking before Election Day?** I've already knocked 1,500+ doors. I've been walking every weekend and most weekdays; however, I'm beginning a leave of absence from my full-time job this week, and will significantly increase my time spent canvassing. By the end of the campaign, I am committed to personally knocking on 5,500+ doors.

## **ABOUT THE ARTS**

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

I am an avid supporter of our arts and cultural scene in San José. Convenient access to the arts was a significant factor in me and my husband's decision to live Downtown. We are both theatre fans, and we love being able to walk to the Center for the Performing Arts to see the latest touring production from Broadway San José, or hear live music at events like Music in the Park or the SoFA Street Fair. I am also a regular attendee at South First Fridays and frequent patron of our many downtown museums and galleries, with a particular soft spot for the Museum of Quilts & Textiles.

I also appreciate San José's growing collection of public art. Murals from local organizations like San José Walls and Local Color help to give our city a sense of place, celebrate our cultural diversity, and beautify our streets. I've been excited to support public art in my own neighborhood by helping lead the South University Neighborhood Association in transforming more than a dozen public utility boxes into art boxes featuring the work of local artists from our community.

San José, and in particular our downtown, is the heart of arts and culture in the South Bay, and the city should do everything in its power to support the continued growth and success of our arts industry.

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

Arts and culture play a fundamental role in San José's economy, and nowhere is that more true than in District 3. According to the most recent Arts & Economic Prosperity study (AEP6), nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences contribute nearly \$292 million of economic activity to San José's economy each year. These groups drive nearly 4.4 million in-person attendees to arts and cultural events in San José, and attendees spend an average of \$43.88. Those dollars help to support our local businesses, while also generating over \$6 million a year in local tax revenue. Arts and cultural organizations also support over 4,700 jobs providing \$173.4 million in household

income for local residents. Looking beyond the dollars and cents, arts and culture also directly support the social fabric of our city, and 86% of audiences surveyed reported that their attendance inspired a sense of pride in their local community.

As the city looks towards a post-COVID future, we know that we must evolve our downtown beyond its business district roots to become a vibrant, 24/7 destination that blends high-density housing, jobs, hospitality, and recreation. A thriving arts and cultural scene makes our city a more attractive place to live, work, and do business and is central to the future success of our downtown. Funding arts and culture in San José is a direct investment in both the quality of life for local residents and the future economic growth of our city.

**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**

**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?**

While I am supportive of efforts to increase funding for arts, culture, and tourism programs, I also want to be realistic about the significant budget shortfalls the city is facing over the next two years. With an estimated shortfall of \$60 million in the 2025-2026 budget cycle and a projected \$30 million shortfall in 2026-2027, I cannot commit to diverting the existing 40% General Fund set aside in the near-term. That said, I will support efforts to move towards increased arts and cultural funding in the future, including:

(1) I'd encourage study of the return-on-investment for TOT dollars invested in arts and cultural programs. We know that arts and culture are significant drivers of our local economy, and by better understanding the downstream impacts of these investments we can make more informed decisions about diverting additional TOT dollars to these programs.

(2) Learning from the current budget shortfalls, I would support funding allocations that can be more flexible and responsive to ongoing budget needs. For example, we could consider updating the General Fund set aside to be directed to arts, cultural, and tourism programs in years of budget surplus, with a provision to redirect them back to the General Fund in years of shortfall, similar to the recent policy change proposed for Measure E dollars.

(3) As our budget situation improves, I would explore measures to incrementally re-invest additional TOT dollars into arts and culture programs, like the one floated by several councilmembers in 2023.

(4) Finally, as our tourism and hospitality industry continues to struggle to return to pre-pandemic levels, the city should focus on efforts to bolster tourism to grow the overall pot of TOT dollars. Capitalizing on marquee events like the Super Bowl and the World Cup can help here, and the city should also focus on supporting the ongoing health of our downtown convention circuit.

**As an alternative to reallocation, will you support setting FY25 as the baseline for General Fund revenue from TOT and dedicating net new TOT revenue in FY26 and beyond to arts, culture, and tourism programs? Why or why not?**

I would work to ensure we're doing everything possible to fund arts, culture, and tourism programs, and I most likely would support an alternative reallocation like the one proposed. However, given the significant budget deficits we may face in the years ahead, ensuring we are able to fund our city's most basic needs—public safety, housing, and homelessness—must be our top priority. I would, however, commit to being an active partner with SJAA to evaluate our ongoing budget situation and explore new ways of directing additional funding to the arts.

**Will you support efforts to fund updates to the City's Cultural Plan and Public Art Master Plan, both of which expired several years ago? How would you do this?**

Yes, I will support efforts to update the City's Cultural and Public Art master plans. The needs of our city change over time, and given the central role that cultural development and public art play in quality of life for our residents I believe it's important to update these plans to align with our city's current challenges and priorities. Some of the modern challenges that should be accounted for in an updated plan include responding to the changing needs and priorities of our downtown in the aftermath of COVID-19, and considering the ways in which the city's need for significant new housing development will impact both cultural development and public art. That said, given the city's ongoing budget shortfalls, we should seek to make these updates as nimbly and cost-effectively as possible, so as to not risk diverting funds towards planning that might otherwise be more directly contributed towards supporting the arts. To support this, the city could consider combining these updates or seeking grant or philanthropic support to support their development.

**Will you commit to ensuring local creatives, arts practitioners, and culture bearers are centered in the planning, marketing, and execution of all arts and cultural activities related to major sporting events such as the Super Bowl and FIFA World Cup?**

Absolutely. When the Super Bowl came to Levi's Stadium in 2016, it generated hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity, but despite being in San José's backyard the vast majority of those dollars went to San Francisco. We can't let San Francisco eat our lunch again next year, and I'm optimistic that the city has learned from past experience and is devoting more attention to drawing visitors, activities, and spending to San José. On Council I'll work to ensure that these efforts center the ample local creative talent and culture bearers we have here in San José as we work to bring cultural activities to downtown and capitalize on the opportunity provided by the Super Bowl and the World Cup.

**OPEN FORUM**

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

The City should focus on continuing to partner with our local arts and cultural organizations in city led events like Viva Calle. We should also encourage the Office of Cultural Affairs to pursue new sources of funding to support the arts, including grants and philanthropic contributions from San José employers. We should also leverage existing programs like BeautifySJ to empower our neighborhoods to invest in murals and other public art projects, just as we've done in the South University Neighborhood. Finally, I'd encourage continued collaboration and partnership with organizations like the San José Downtown Association and institutions like SJSU. Last year, SJDA successfully transformed a vacant retail space with a new art installation called Dream Club Lab.

The City should explore additional partnerships like this to support local artists and fill vacant storefronts with public art projects that beautify our streets and give downtown a sense of place.

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

In the future, I'd love to talk with you about ideas for supporting equitable access to arts and culture, both in terms of consumption and education. We know from the data that access to the arts is correlated with better civic engagement, social cohesion, and higher rates of volunteerism. Meanwhile, access to arts education improves academic outcomes and after school arts programs have been shown to decrease juvenile crime. Given the broad cultural and socio-economic diversity of San José, I'd love to see a discussion focused on ensuring that all members of our community have access to the arts.