

ABOUT YOU

Please provide your name as it will appear on the ballot: Gordon Chester

What office are you seeking? San Jose City Council - District 9

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 Jose - District 9

What is your current city of residence? San Jose

What is your highest level of education? Associates Degree - Business Admin.

What is your current primary vocation/occupation? Engineering Technician with the City of San Jose

Do you have an arts background of any kind?

If so, please explain.

My arts background includes architecture and photography. Not only do both start at an early age, the appreciation I have for my practices helps me extend that value to other art forms.

ABOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN

Please share your candidate statement as it will appear in voting materials.

Husband. Father. Lifelong San Jose resident. City of San Jose union worker.

I was born and raised in District 9 and attended Union Middle and Leigh High Schools. I'm running for City Council to build a Safe and Sustainable San Jose for everyone.

I am serious about safety for all residents of our district. That means safer crosswalks, reliable bus shelters, protected bike lanes, clean and well-lit streets, improved traffic safety, and more firefighters, police and community service workers in our neighborhoods. We can only fund these basics with a financially strong, sustainable city.

For decades, outdated land-use policies have pushed out young families, worsened our housing shortage, and driven school closures. In my work for the City of San Jose, I see how the wrong red tape blocks good projects. I want to cut it so we can build more homes families, young people, and seniors can afford, creating jobs, saving our schools, and expanding our tax base.

Proudly the only endorsed candidate of the Working Family Party and the Democratic Party of Santa Clara County. www.gordonford9.com

What is your campaign budget? \$200,000 goal

How much have you raised to date? We have raised roughly \$35,000 since the Primary.

How many doors have you personally knocked to date? How many are you committed to knocking before Election Day? I knocked on over 10,000 doors in the Primary. Since the Primary, I have knocked on over 2,500 doors and intend on knocking on an additional 5,000 doors in the final 8 weeks (while working 35 hours weekly so my family can have health care).

ABOUT THE ARTS

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

I think arts and culture downtown is growing, compared to 10 years ago. As a District 9 resident, I feel it is underwhelming but the public art we DO have is great. I think we need more of it and believe it improves people's feeling of community, which I heavily support.

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

Arts and culture is a key driver to supporting and improving our local economy, particularly our locally-owned, small businesses. From conventions to film festivals to public art, each supports our economy and fiscal strength as a city on multiple levels (such as hotels to restaurants to retail). As a candidate who is running on Sustainability, economic sustainability being one of the two sustainability components, I want to ensure our arts community is strong.

Recently, I was able to appreciate the living arts that was at the 9/13 Viva Calle event.

Were you familiar with SJAA before receiving this survey? Yes

ABOUT OUR PRIORITIES

The following questions are directly related to SJAA's current advocacy 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?

If that's the current percentage, I would only consider this if it was directly tied to saving City of San Jose public-employee jobs. The city just lost 80 positions due to the latest budget and we are projected to see improved, so I do not believe any reallocation should be considered during my term. And since I plan on proposing policies to improve our economy through land use, our General Fund should be strengthened if I win, practicing new policies compared to the same policies we've practiced for five decades.

As an alternative to reallocation, would you support setting FY26-27 as the baseline for General Fund revenue from TOT and dedicating net new TOT revenue to arts, culture, and tourism programs? Why or why not?

I believe more of our city should see public art in their neighborhood, so I would certainly want to see net-new revenue be added to the arts, culture, and tourism program. I cannot commit to that without the commitment to maintaining public, City of San Jose jobs because those support our arts, culture, and tourism programs. I am confident that these support one another.

Would 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?

I would work with the past artists who helped to create the Arts Master Plan as well as listening to new and young artists, incorporating both the plan to enhance our city's art and cultural significance as well as being a voice for creating housing for creative minds.

Would you support efforts to establish local cultural districts in San José, such as SoFA, Japantown, La Avenida, Little Saigon, and more? Why or why not?

While I am not sure how to formally establish these districts, it would an honor and pleasure to be a part of establishing more of these districts in San Jose. They create organic meeting grounds for neighbors to meet each other, to participate in the local economy (largely without the requirement of a car), and create a sense of place, which increase how people feel about their neighborhood (from pride of place to their safety). This is what creates a full community compared to building a neighborhood.

Would you support efforts to provide affordable housing for the creative workforce leveraging State Assembly Bill 812 (2023)? Why or why not?

I don't know if I would strictly use inclusionary zoning to achieve this, however some degree of financial investment on behalf of the city in specific places and specific developments are something I can absolutely support at this time.

Currently, the inclusionary zoning rule the city currently has needs to be reformed to even accomplish those goals. For that reason, I would not want to commit to that same rule specifically using AB 812.

Do you believe arts and cultural nonprofits with budgets under \$2M should be required to perform annual audits in order to be eligible for city grants? Why or why not?

Generally, I think it's reasonable to perform audits for all money spent (public and private). I am unsure of the best frequency of audits and want to find the best balance of time spent and ensuring public money is spent appropriately. I would like to work with various groups to determine how we can achieve that.

OPEN FORUM

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

I am optimistic of the new TOT. Separate from private fundraisers, I don't know what other realistic avenues the city has to raise money for arts and culture. I think a goal would be to increase local attendance and spread events throughout the city that are linked to downtown may be an interesting venture. This may increase buy-in from residents, broadly.

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

What are some of your favorite arts or culture sites, events, or activities in San Jose?