

San Jose

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Top 3 priorities citywide

1. **Affordable Housing.** There is no doubt that we are in a housing crisis, but what often is not mentioned is that the City is meeting all of its goals in the development of market rate housing. Where the City is failing is in building affordable housing. I want to see resources invested directly towards this goal by increasing the revenue going towards the construction of affordable housing, studying the issue of vacancy, and promoting targeted developments geared towards impacted professions such as teachers and emergency responders.
2. **Homelessness.** This issue is personal to me because I have been homeless, or more accurately, one of the working unhoused. What got me out of this cycle was the compassion of others, like Ash Kalra, who gave me a place to stay without question or need for compensation. This gave me the opportunity to get back on track, and that opportunity, along with encouragement from Ash, got me to law school. I want to devote additional resources to preventing homelessness by increasing funding towards programs that keep families on the brink in their homes, and towards the development of housing and services models such as Second Street Studios. Because we are in a crisis, we must also put temporary relief solutions on the table, such as sanctioned encampments and safe parking sites.
3. **Strengthening and Improving City Services.** Ultimately, what the City provides to its residents are services, and the people who deliver these services are the workers who were unjustly targeted by Measure B in 2012. While there have been some steps to rebuild the city's workforce, there are still 600 positions that are unfulfilled. While there have been steps to rebuild trust with the officers at SJPd, we cannot retain the officers we train and hire. While the City has made some investments in our firefighters, there are no plans to bring on more even though the City is planning to bring in another 8000 housing units in the North 1st Corridor alone. We must stop lollygagging with the unfilled positions, ensure that we provide competitive pay and benefits to attract talent, and keep our promises to retain the veterans who have dedicated years of service to the City.

1. Who is your Campaign Manager?

Huong Nguyen

2. What is your Campaign Budget?

City regulations prevent the fundraising period to begin until September 5, 2019. My goal is to raise at least \$100,000 for the March 3 Primary.

3. Please share your Top Ten Endorsements:

Ash Kalra, Assembly member Sally Lieber, Former Assembly Member Paul Fong, Former Assembly Member Magdalena Carrasco, San Jose Councilwoman Don Rocha, Former Councilman Rich Tran, Milpitas Mayor Karina Dominguez, Milpitas Vice Mayor Claudia Rossi, Santa Clara County Board of Education Peter Ortiz, Santa Clara County Board of Education Martha O'Connell, Golden State Manufactured Home Owners League, GSMOL A more complete list of support is available online at www.huytran4sanjose.com/endorse

4. Would you support or oppose a 3 county ballot initiative for a permanent 1/8 cent sales tax to fund Caltrain?

Support

Caltrain electrification is a big upgrade that is long overdue, but I am cautious to commit to more sales tax increases in order to fund our services and needs. The objective of providing financial support for the electrification and expansion of Caltrain is truly worthy of investment, but we are potentially facing several measures to increase our sales taxes, which places financial burdens on lower-income families, many of whom may not actually use Caltrain. We are in a very tender situation right now as a single person making \$66,000 annually is considered low-income, and each time we squeeze more of those dollars away, we make it harder to thrive in San José.

On City Council, I will work with our transit agencies and partners to find the financial means to support Caltrain. I know many community leaders have looked elsewhere, but resources are available, we just need someone with the energy to actually secure them. The cause is just and important enough to consider a sales tax, but we must be tender in light of multiple potential efforts to raise the sales tax so that we do not create an additional burden on our working families.

5. Do you support funding to complete a valley to valley connection through high speed rail?

Support

As San José grows, so grows our need for fundamental resources such as housing and services such as public transit. San José is becoming a center of economic growth with Google coming in and massive development being planned, particularly in North San José. With this growth, it is incredibly unlikely that San Jose alone will build enough housing to meet the demand that comes with our growth.

For a long time, San José was the suburb to our neighboring cities, which is shown in the jobs to housing deficit that we currently face. One of the best solutions to this is connecting San José with other parts of our region and state that have more land and more affordable costs where housing can be built. Expanding the ability of people to reach San José from south county, along the 152, and into the Central Valley creates an outlet for the housing demand that can be met in those areas rather than in the limited development sites that we have in San José.

The irony in the delays to completing High Speed Rail is that HSR can be one of the most environmentally friendly and safe modes of transportation in our toolkit. It is certainly better than having over 100,000 super commuters on the freeways that create massive traffic congestion and dangerous driving conditions on top of the environmental damage.

On City Council, I will focus on our responsibility to continue building housing, particularly for those families who fall in the low-income to extremely low-income range of wage earners. I will fight to prevent San José from having to continue to bear the burden of housing the workforce for the Bay Area. Our neighbors need to play a role in this, and if we can finally bring High Speed Rail to Silicon Valley, we will be able to create a new corridor and new partners in solving our biggest challenges.

6. *Would you support a measure dedicated to build and operate a world class, seamless integrated transit system to better serve Bay Area residents, funded through a one cent sales tax, to better serve the transit dependent and those of us still in our cars?*

Oppose

The entire Bay Area is growing, and the ability to commute from where people live to where they work is being stretched to its limits. The advent of the supercommuter phenomenon shows how we struggle with this. My own brother was a supercommuter for years, commuting from Richmond to Woodside until he could not bear it anymore. He joined the countless families fleeing the Bay Area and in the summer of 2019 transferred his job to Dallas.

Truly, we need a big solution to this problem because the massive number of people on the freeways is dangerous for our planet and dangerous for the drivers. I believe that we must transform our transportation infrastructure and how we think about commuting. However, I hesitate on this for the same reason I hesitate with any proposal for a sales tax increase - we are making it very hard for working families to stay here in San José.

On City Council, I will explore various means to fund our transit needs and see what we can do with community partners to make these big dreams real. I want to protect our families from bearing this burden through a sales tax increase, but I am supportive of putting this measure on the ballot to let the voters make the ultimate decision.

7. *Do you support Google's plans for the Diridon Station Area?*

Support

Google has so far shown itself to be a willing partner, and that makes me optimistic that the net effect of Google moving into San José will be positive. The fears that many have is that we will see the uprooting of the families that have been in these neighborhoods for generations and the project will only worsen the housing crisis due to the increased demand that comes from their workforce.

These concerns are valid. Creating 20,000+ new jobs would result in a lot more economic activity that benefits the City as an entity, but that begs the question of what a "city" is. Is San

José just a measure of the dollars that flows in and out of our local economy? Is it just the buildings that will transform our skyline over the next decade? For me, San Jose is the people it serves. It is the communities that have been here for decades and the new families that want to be part of it, not take advantage of it. It is the Berryessa Flea Market, where immigrant families found opportunities to open their first businesses. It is the culture that was created when working families bought their first home in Berryessa and opened their new schools.

Google has become the face of displacement because the question that looms for people who fear it is whether San José will include them in the transformation that is beginning right now, or if the new San José forces families to leave the homes that they have known to make room for potentially 25,000 people who come in to work for Google. This new San José must find solutions the 6500 homeless and unhoused residents, 83% of whose last address was in Santa Clara County.

On City Council, I will be supportive of companies, organizations and people that want to invest in San José, but I will always protect the families that are here because we cannot displace our community in favor of economic advantages for a select few. I will be transparent about this project and make sure we do it right. I am excited about this opportunity, because we have a chance to build one of the world's most premier downtowns and transit hub. The result will only be a hit if includes the families that have made San José the community these major companies want to be in.

8. *Do you support any revenue generating vehicles (please be specific) to build more affordable homes?*

Support

Each proposal is addressed separately:

I support a marginal increase in the real estate transfer tax. The average price of a home in Berryessa is close to \$1,200,000. The ability to buy a home in Berryessa at this point really belongs to those individuals or families that earn over \$250,000 per year. A fractional increase in the real estate transfer tax that brings our rate more in line with the rates set/or in effort to set by other cities such as San Francisco and Oakland can provide much needed resources towards addressing our housing and homelessness crisis. While I have not seen any formal proposal yet, I support an increase in the real estate transfer tax to help us address the housing crisis. These dollars can make a difference.

I do not support a commercial-only or general parcel tax at this time. Right now, the better approach would be to support the Split Roll initiative, rather than have the city assess its own parcel taxes. Prop 13 has been a systemic restriction on public funding that has impacted not just cities, but schools and counties as well. The initiative that is currently being proposed for the 2020 election splits commercial properties from the Prop 13 limits and allows commercial properties to be taxed at their true value. It also includes provisions that exempt small businesses to keep cost projections more predictable for the mom and pop entities. I am not in

opposition to a commercial-only or general parcel tax entirely, but I believe that a better option is already being presented.

I support a vacant land tax, if we do it right. Land is an incredible commodity right now, and its cost is one of the biggest barriers to development. We need to make use of the land that we have available within our urban growth boundary, and having empty units for commerce or housing is a waste. I support this in concept currently because the struggles that Oakland is having show how hard it is to define “use” and implementation of this fee.

On a related note, I believe that vacancy itself is an issue that must be studied. As of 2017, there were 11,000 residential vacancies in San José, 4000 of which have no clear reason as to why. Ryan Jasinsky, my former colleague on the San José Housing Commission representing mobile home park owners, informed me that even a fraction of these homes coming on the market can have an immediate impact on prices. The same potential applies to commercial vacancies as well.

9. Are you in favor of a ballot measure that will prohibit campaign contributions from advocates for development and tie the San Jose Mayoral term to the Presidential Election Cycle?

Support

Each issue is addressed separately:

I fully support shifting the mayoral elections, and have already submitted public comments in support of this. I quote that statement here:

“The strength of a democracy is measured in how its people participate. The multitude of voices representing every walk of life in a community is what makes a democracy strong. San José should be given the right to decide on how to elect the person that serves as the representative of the entire city.

There is only one elected representative at City Hall who is chosen by and accountable to every resident in San José, and that is our Mayor. San José’s Mayor is empowered with unique responsibilities, duties, and abilities because they represent our all of us. Our city should ensure that voting for mayor is done with the greatest participation, and because of this, I urge the Council to bring forward a ballot measure to let residents decide when we should elect our mayor.”

“While this may not be the biggest issue before us, it has been shocking to hear what those opposed to this change are saying. The most troubling argument has been that voters should not be presented with this choice because “people who care vote,” as presented in Councilmember Diep’s memo. It is deeply concerning to hear any government official, elected or not, make such a dismissive statement and suggest that presidential cycle voters are chaotic and random. San José is a welcoming diverse community where every voice should matter. We cannot dismiss our own residents because we don’t agree with their decisions.”

(full statement at <https://www.huytran4sanjose.com/mayoralcycle>)

I stand by this because I believe in democracy. Greater participation in who elects our mayor gives that person a stronger mandate to make the tough decisions for the benefit of our city. We should not fear or dismiss presidential cycle voters as people who do not care.

I am supportive but hold reservations with the limitations of contributions. In a democracy, the loudest voice must be of voters themselves, and not the money that is spent to buy influence or airtime. A lot of “dark money” is spent by PACs and locally as Independent Expenditure Committees to win elections so that they may control or influence policy to the benefit of profits and cronyism. Some of the individuals and interests that would be limited are many of the people already with a seat at the table or have major influence at City Hall, sometimes not for the benefit of the people.

This general desire to see the influence of money reduced in elections is tempered on this specific issue because of my profession as an attorney. I am hesitant on this issue because it may not be the best way to address campaign finance reform and transparency as it will face challenges in court and could be overturned.

There are other options that I believe would pass legal muster, such as public financing of campaigns, or vouchers that can be provided to residents to contribute to their candidate of choice, such as Seattle does with its democracy vouchers.

On City Council, I will always work to expand our democracy. There will be times that I am extremely supportive of a ballot measure and others when I will be opposed. I will always do my homework, and believe that presenting these issues to you is one of the best tools we have to ensure the voice of the people is heard. The more votes cast the stronger the push to advocate change.

10. Do you support requiring all new buses purchased with federal funds be zero-emission beginning on October 1, 2029 (which is California's deadline for transitioning all transit bus purchases to zero-emission buses)?

Support

I fully support this, but I would hope we could meet the zero-emission goal sooner. Climate change is a self-inflicted wound, one that has slowly bled for decades. However, when Greenland, Alaska, Siberia, and the Amazon are literally on fire, and when Iceland has lost one of its iconic glaciers, we must realize that we are fast approaching the precipice of a global catastrophe.

On City Council, I will embrace zero-emission programs and investments. I will look beyond just beyond busses and seek various ways to reduce our carbon footprint. Of particular note is how we manage our growth and development. I will advocate for a “green building code” to ensure

that our new developments are catered to the technologies that are environmentally friendly and that we manage our growth to expand our public transit options and reduce our reliance on cars.

11. Will you work with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group to secure additional funding to protect our region and help advance a common vision for a healthy and resilient SF Bay?

Support

One of the areas most at risk to the rise of our sea waters is Alviso, the northern tip of San José that has been neglected. Alviso is one of our hidden gems due to its natural beauty and juxtaposition to one of the most ecologically diverse habitats in the world. It is also the part of San José that will suffer the most if sea levels continue to rise.

Climate change is a global threat, and one that requires global attention. While that is unlikely to happen right now, we can still do our part regionally by working together to address the consequences of our long neglect. It is our duty to collaborate on how we address climate change and the consequences of climate change.

It would be a privilege to work with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group on this and any other matter of public importance, regardless of what title I have.

12. Do you support or oppose a proposed amendment to Proposition 13?

Support

The services that we take for granted and the infrastructure that we rely on in our daily lives requires funding. Our ability to respond to the housing and homelessness crisis requires funding. Expanding our vital systems to accommodate for commercial and residential growth over the next decade requires funding. Our safety, schools and so many other public goods require funding. Funding can come from a variety of sources, but one of the biggest sources was cut off when Prop 13 was enacted. This has left our public services and public infrastructure struggling to find ways to make up for the revenue it has lost. Schools have levied parcel taxes, we have enacted multiple bond measures to fund projects locally and across the state, and we look for ways to draw revenue from every other part of our lives, from toll bridges to sales taxes. We need to restore this as one of the avenues to generate revenue to give us another means to fund critical support for our schools, roads, and services.

On City Council, I will be laser focused to ensure tax dollars are spent wisely and we remain fiscally prudent so that we invest in the needs of the community. Residents work hard to earn their wages, and I will respect the dollars that are taken through taxes and fees. I will be willing to take bold leadership to present policies that will lift up our families in this new economy.

13. If a public charter school's petition is approved to operate within your local school district, meaning their proposal meets key pupil outcomes as indicated by state law, would you

approve the school's bid to rent or build facilities beyond those already owned by the district?

Oppose

I oppose this mainly because I do not believe it is the role of City Hall to turn over land when our school boards should be leading the efforts to assess these locations.

Speaking generally, my view of charter schools is that they may operate freely so long as they do not draw resources away from our public schools, and meet the outcomes they promise. Charter schools are very prominent in San José and have been an alternative for many families to do best for their children's learning, but charter schools are struggling to prove their overall effectiveness and ability to meet the standards that we expect of traditional schools.

Public education is the great equalizer for our society and lifts people up that otherwise would not have the resources to get a quality education. Our public schools truly are our most important investment. I believe that the grand vision of the American education system was to give every person the same starting point. Each child should have access to education to help them mature and grow into responsible adults. We are far from achieving such a system, but we cannot abandon the idea that every child deserves the same access and the same opportunity.

On City Council, I will be a passionate advocate for our youth. If the next generation starts steps behind because we were unwilling to support them, we are failing in our work. My entire academic career before law school was in public schools staffed by caring teachers and support that believed in supporting our youth, I was able to graduate from SJSU and start on a path that has led me to earn my law degree, co-found a law firm, be appointed to a city commission, and co-found and serve as President of the Vietnamese American Roundtable, a group of San José's younger Vietnamese-American generation, to develop a community to support each other and our city.

14. Tell us about a time when you were opposed to a position of one of your major supporters. What was the issue? How did you handle this situation?

I have been fortunate to maintain open dialogues and positive relationships with a full spectrum of individuals and organizations. I believe in earning respect is incredibly important, even with those that you may disagree, especially if you are neighbors seeking to work together for the advancement of our community.

Many of the differences that exist with my allies and supporters are usually based in approach or strategy rather than objective. I often support a strong and direct approach. I care very much about the issues and I know my passion is recognized by community members, that is why many of them encouraged me to run. Some issues call for bold action and some call for a more nuanced approach, I am thankful to have a network of supporters that share similar goals and values, and it's a network that continues to grow with the more people I connect with.