

OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (OCA) REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2024

Selected activities organized by goals in *Cultural Connection: San Jose's Cultural Plan*

The Arts Commission meetings are convening in person at City Hall and virtually on Zoom for members of the public. To speak to any item or speak during Public Comment, speakers must be physically present.

Support Diverse Cultural Spaces & Places Throughout the Community

The Community and Economic Recovery Task Force recommended several arts-related recovery strategies to the City Council, including removing cost barriers for small and mid-sized art organizations to access venues. The Council appropriated \$100,000 to implement this recommendation. OCA staff coordinated with City-owned theater operators to develop criteria and a process to provide partial venue rental subsidies. OCA allocated \$25,000 respectively to the operators of the Montgomery Theater, California Theatre, Hammer Theatre and Mexican Heritage Plaza Theatre for FY 23-24.

Integrate High Impact Public Art & Urban Design throughout the Community

The City of San José Public Art Program inspires community through artworks and exhibitions. We expand community participation opportunities and impact the economic and visual dynamics of the city. Our priorities are guided by the goals and values of project partners and the community. Through active engagement between artists and project stakeholders, we celebrate San Jose's diversity, innovative spirit, rich history, present and envisioned future. The program facilitates projects that are recognized nationally and internationally for innovative programming. For the most recent update on public art projects, please visit

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=114709&t=638628018234500000>

Illuminated Public Art in the News: *Sonic Runway* at City Hall Plaza and *XO* at Mineta San Jose International Airport were featured in the Bay Area News Group's Premium *GLOW* publication. See <https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/11/04/sparkle-and-shine-light-based-art-flourishes-in-the-bay-area/> also published in the *San Jose Mercury News*. The edition also included a special feature on *Sonic Runway*, sharing the public art work's history and intent with great conversation with the artists Rob Jensen and Warren Trezevant. The article can be found at: <https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/11/04/burning-man-light-sculpture-dazzles-downtown-san-jose/>.

Strengthen the Cultural Sector and Creative Economy

Cultural Funding Portfolio - Investments in Art, Creativity, and Culture

FY 2024-25 Cultural Grants – FY 2024-25 grant awards for OCA's three core grant programs (take pART, FPC, and Operating Grants) were approved by the Arts Commission

at their May 20, 2024, meeting and incorporated into the FY 2024-25 City Budget adopted at the June 11, 2024, City Council meeting. Grant agreements are currently being processed by the OCA Arts Industry Support team.

FY 2025-26 Cultural Grants – Pre-Application workshop sessions for OCA’s FY 2025-26 core grant programs (take pART, Festival, Parade, and Celebrations, and Operating Grants) are scheduled for December and will be held over Zoom. Details can be found on the [OCA Grants website](#).

Support Residents’ Active, Personal Participation in Arts and Culture

San José Creates and Connects

Launched in 2016, the San José Creates and Connects initiative aims to connect San José residents across communities and within neighborhoods through creative, participatory experiences. The initiative includes Make Music San José, #WeCreate408, and the Creative Ambassadors Program.

#WeCreate 408 – Plans are underway for #WeCreate408 2025! A month-long creativity challenge designed to inspire residents and celebrate San Jose, #WeCreate408 is held in April as part of Arts, Culture, and Creativity Month. The Office of Cultural Affairs challenges San Jose residents to use their powers of creative expression every day for the month.

Working with local artists, creative businesses, and arts organizations, OCA will send out prompts starting April 1 designed to inspire creativity. These daily prompts include creative actions that everyone can do on their own along with links to events and activities taking place in San Jose that day.

Creative Ambassadors Program – The 2025 Creative Ambassadors will be announced at the November Arts Commission meeting.

San José Creative Economy Fund – The San José [Creative Economy Fund](#) (CEF) is a partnership with the [Center for Cultural Innovation](#) (CCI) and provides grants to local, small arts-based businesses involved in the production or distribution of the arts, contributing to the City of San José’s cultural vibrancy. Competitive applicants will reflect the City’s diverse cultural communities and creative-based commercial landscape. Grants are up to \$8,000.

Applications closed June 17, 2024, and the CEF panel convened on August 14, 2024, over Zoom. The panel selected seven recipients for 2024. They are: [Convergence Arts Center](#), [Casita de las Artes](#), LLC, [Universal Grammar](#), DoViet LLC, [Arts Builds Community LLC](#), [Aretesanias Morelia](#), and [Elba Raquel](#). This year’s CEF recipients were announced at the September meeting of the Arts Commission.

San José Climate Art Program

Supported through a grant from the California Arts Council, the San José Climate Art Program’s objective is to build energy and community support around the City’s 2030 goal of

carbon neutrality by enlisting the support of and reducing the carbon impact of San José's arts and culture sector. To help build momentum and community support around the City's 2030 goal of carbon neutrality, fifteen San José artists were selected to join an Environmental Resilient Artists Cohort (RAC) to participate in a pilot program aimed to measure, assess, and adapt artistic practices to be more resilient to climate effects and lower in GHG emissions. Artists have been participating during the summer in intensive workshop learning from experts from around the globe alongside locals in San José encompassing an art-centered approach to environmental resilience.

OCA's San José Climate Art Program was featured on a segment of the [PBS News Hour](#) in August reaching a nationwide audience.

As a result of the success with the Climate Art Program, OCA has been invited to present at the 2025 Arts & Culture Summit hosted by California for the Arts. This annual arts/culture summit held in April to celebrate Arts, Culture, and Creativity Month (ACCM) brings a confluence of artists, cultural workers, advocates, and policymakers from all over California united by a shared vision to connect and relate, guiding all into a space of belonging in our community practices. The summit is scheduled for April 22, 2025 in Sacramento.

San José Climate Art Symposium

Presented by the San José Climate Art Program, the [San José Climate Art Symposium](#) was held Friday, October 11 at the [San José Museum of Art](#) with over 100 participants in attendance. Councilmember David Cohen spoke of the importance of the program and how the City of San Jose was leading the way with the Climate Art Program. On Saturday, October 12, OCA hosted Day 2 of the Climate Art Symposium held at the [San José Environmental Innovation Center](#). The second day offered creative workshops designed to mobilize and share best practices, focusing on energy, water, transportation, and circularity.

Destination Events in San Jose

Highlights of Recent Outdoor Event: October was a robust month for the OCA's Special Events team with 23 city events permitted. The Rock n' Roll Running Series, the Little Italy San Jose Festival, Dia San Jose, and Halloween in Japantown all returned with growing attendance numbers. The annual Dia de los Muertos Downtown Festival revived its parade for 2024 and was a sight for many downtown visitors as the procession ventured from City View Plaza to San Jose State University where a festival was held. The team also worked with three (3) churches to permit their annual festivals held on private property parking lots.

The SJ PLACES pilot project permitted four (4) new diverse events through its simplified process to activate public spaces.

Upcoming Outdoor Events: November starts strong with 14 events currently planned for the month. The Special Events team is supporting a new event called the Street Mob Tour to energize SoFA with its new music genre. San Jose will celebrate veterans with its annual Veterans Day Parade on November 11th, iconic downtown for the holiday events, Downtown Ice, Winter Wonderland, and Christmas in the Park will open in late November with many

new surprises in store. The 20th annual Applied Materials Silicon Valley Turkey Trot or Run Turkey Run events will be held on Thanksgiving Day.

On-Going Outdoor Event Support: The Special Events team is continuing to work to respond to the ever-evolving event industry. We press on with efforts to ensure our services and best practices to accommodate the changing needs of event organizers. The team is also working on how to support event organizers navigating the increasingly changing urban landscape which prompts for new event layouts, new routes, or in some cases understanding updates to policies or guidelines from other city or county departments that provide permits or services to these events.

For a full list of upcoming events overseen by the Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs' Special Events team, please visit SanJoseCulture.org.

Road to 2026 - On November 19th, staff will present an update to the City Council on the Road to 2026 workplan, involving preparations for the major professional sporting events held regionally. They include Super Bowl 60, NCAA Men's Regional Basketball Games, and the FIFA World Cup, for which San Jose expects participating teams to stay and practice in San Jose, and regional and destination visitors to "stay and play" in San Jose. Amongst the work plan's strategic initiatives includes art programming and activations, produced by the OCA and its partners including the San Jose Sports Authority, Bay Area Host Committee and nonprofit art organizations. Staff will update the Commission at its regular January 2025 meeting and conducting outreach to the local art sector in early 2025.

Arts, Destination Marketing, and Destination Events Funding City Council Study Session

The [Mayor's March Budget Message for FY 24-25](#) included direction for the Administration to return to the full Council evaluating the establishment of an Admissions Fee and other funding strategies. Staff is developing a process to approach this initiative. The proposed Operating Budget for FY 24-25 recommends \$500,000 for the arts from the General Fund and \$500,000 for destination marketing. The Mayor's June Budget Message for FY 24-25 was presented to the full Council for approval on June 11, 2024.

2023 Arts and Economic Prosperity 6 Study

Released in November 2023, the [Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Study \(AEP6\)](#) is an economic and social impact study of the local nonprofit arts and culture industry conducted by Americans for the Arts in partnership with the City of San José's Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs (OEDCA) and SVCREATES. The report highlights that San José's nonprofit arts and culture sector generated \$292 million in economic activity in 2022 – nearly \$100 million in spending by San José arts and culture organizations and an additional \$192 million in event-related expenditures by their audiences.

Other key figures include:

- Nonprofit arts and culture organizations in San José support 4,738 jobs, from direct support of employing staff and artists to indirect support of printers, hospitality staff, graphic designers and more.
- These arts and culture organizations generated \$18.1 million in local, state and federal government revenue.
- The typical attendee spends \$43.88 per event in San José, not including the cost of admission.
- 23.7% of arts and culture attendees were from outside Santa Clara County. They spent an average of \$65.69, vital income for local businesses.
- 86.4% of San José respondents agreed that the activity or venue they were attending was “a source of neighborhood pride for the community.”
- 85.2% said they would “feel a sense of loss if that activity or venue was no longer available.”

Upcoming Convenings

Artists for Understanding - On December 5th, an Artists for Understanding Cultural Convening will be held at the San Jose Museum of Art. In coordination with the White House, the [President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities \(PCAH\)](#), the [National Endowment for the Arts \(NEA\)](#), the [Institute of Museum and Library Services \(IMLS\)](#), and the [National Endowment for the Humanities \(NEH\)](#), *Artists for Understanding* promotes the arts and humanities as crucial in bridging divides through their capacity to foster dialogue, connection, empathy, and changemaking in communities. Through by-invitation-only forums, the initiative provides opportunities for engagement and increased awareness on the power of the arts and humanities to counter all forms of hate. *Artists for Understanding* is a new initiative that brings together a diverse community of artists and cultural luminaries. San Jose was identified as one of the six cities nationwide where these convenings are taking place. This convening will bring together approximately 70 individuals to facilitate the exchange of ideas with the goal of enriching cultural discourse and promoting social cohesion and inclusivity.

Artists for Understanding is supported by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the City of San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs, the local art agency host.

Artists’ Empowerment - On March 14, 2025, the OCA in partnership with SVCCreates will produce Artists’ Empowerment, a day of knowledge and resource exchange for local artists. Artists’ Empowerment will be held at San Jose City Hall and will include an afternoon of keynote speakers, different tracks with subject matter experts, and a resource fair concluded by a Content Magazine pick up party.

Other Important Updates

Councilmember Pam Foley (District 9) is serving as the new City Council liaison to the Arts Commission given the transition of Council District 3 leadership. Councilmember Foley comes to this new role with great personal and professional support for the arts in San Jose. Welcome, Councilmember Pam Foley! In January 2025, keeping in tradition with elected

changes to the City Council, the Mayor will make new City Council assignments to Committee, Commissions, and Boards.

The Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs is in the process of updating its *Economic Strategy Work Plan*, inclusive of the arts and culture. The strategic update will be presented to the Community and Economic Development Committee at its regular January 2025 meeting, and then cross-referenced for the full City Council's review and approval in February.

Mary Rubin will serve as the Interim Public Art Director as Michael Ogilvie is on paternity leave through early February.