

**CITY OF SAN JOSE ARTS COMMISSION:
ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR FY 2020-2021**

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

CHAIR (Candidate 1)

Lynne Brown

Position: Chair, San Jose Arts Commission

Hello Commissioners,

I am requesting an opportunity to complete my term of office by asking to be re-elected for the 2020-2021 year.

Before the Shelter in Place Order was issued the Commission had completed 6 months of work including the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Equity and Access in San Jose Schools, which was preparing its final report and recommended action plan; the start of a plan to work with local developers; and the work of the Public Arts Committee, who was examining the historical support of local artists on City projects. Unfortunately, none of this work was completed as the Commission was dismissed because of the City's Emergency Response. We were not able to participate in the revision of OCA's Work Plan, the reformulation of the Art Commission budget or the setting of priorities for 2020-2021.

As we begin a new term the Commission must develop new approaches and ways of thinking about supporting the San Jose Art Community, yet honoring past commitments. Since the Great Recession of 2008, the concern about the major funding platform of the Commission, the TOT or Transition Occupancy Tax, has been its stability. Even at the start of 2020, the Mayor was warning of a reduction in TOT funds and, of course in March, as our tourist business essentially collapsed so did the TOT. It is not expected to generate much revenue for several years. The Mayor has signaled a willingness to explore other options. It is imperative the Commission focus much of its attention and energy on this issue. But at the same time, we cannot lose sight that resources we do have must be distributed with great fairness. One of my constant demands during my six years on this Commission, has been for an equitable distribution of arts funding for all districts in San Jose. While I agree that most of our cultural resources reside in the City Center, I believe the cultural heart of the City, resides in its varied and unique districts. For me, the districts outside of City Center have for decades been short changed, particularly on the east side. One of my great concerns, *is scarce resources becoming the excuse for no resources to the outlying districts*. Our resources new or repurposed must be shared equitably. And as important, recovery plans must recognize equity as fundamental to success. As Chair, I would make every effort to see this happens.

These times also demand the Commission take its liaison role with our neighbor cities seriously. Many of our arts patrons live outside of San Jose, as do our artists and some of the arts programs. There are many examples of programs originating in other cities within

the county that fill the gaps San Jose programs have not addressed. Shared advocacy for the Arts, does not always involve money. Often it is simply a commonality of purpose. This is also true for art education. In the best of years, art education in schools located in low income school districts is problematic. I have long been involved in efforts to keep art in the schools or, failing that, create other access points. Although almost never mentioned in the current discussions about reopening schools, the loss of art in some form for our children is of great concern to me. There is no better outlet to express the deep impact the experiences of the past 6 months have had on our children than some form of art. If elected I will make sure art education is part of our agenda.

During my six years as a member of the Commission, I have served on Public Art, the Executive Committee, the Cornerstone Committee and the occasional ad hoc committee for special purposes and as a grant evaluator. I believe that part of our task as Commissioners, is support of the wide variety of art throughout our City, which includes preservation of public art, support for new work, such as the Urban Confluence Landmark Competition, helping organizations pivot to online presentations of the performing arts, as well as the visual, mural or street art, fiber, and historic arts. In brief, I believe the Arts Commission serves as the Nexus of the many dimensions and expressions of art created by our astounding and diverse residents. I have and will continue to advocate for the arts in all its many forms recognizing there is no one best way to serve this City and its residents. As the City undergoes great transformation in the coming years, our Commission must and should provide the authentic vision of our residents. I bring experience, vision and a commitment to open doors to new opportunities, both for myself and for other Commissioners. But as a friend is fond of saying, we also must keep the plane in the air, while we build the airport. I hope, with your support, to continue flying the plane.

Thank you
Lynne Brown, District 10 Commissioner

(See next page.)

CHAIR (Candidate 2)

Charlie McCollum

Position: Chair, San Jose Arts Commission

To my fellow Arts Commissioners:

As we approach what will be a very challenging 2020-21 year for the arts in San Jose, I would be honored if you would consider me to be your Commission chair for the next 12 months. For those new to the Commission and don't know my background:

- I joined the Commission in January 2017 to fill the vacant District 2 seat and was appointed to a full term in the summer of 2018. I have served on the Commission's Executive Committee for the past three years and, twice, I have been a member of the panel reviewing applications for Operating Grants.
- I spent almost 43 years as a journalist, working at papers in Boston and Washington, D.C. before joining the Mercury News in 1984. I was an editor and writer at the paper for almost 30 years. I held a number of positions including city editor and executive news editor but the last 14 years, I worked in the paper's Arts and Entertainment Department, covering – among other things – theater, visual arts and the future of the arts in San Jose. I retired in the fall of 2013 as the paper's Arts and Entertainment editor.
- Following my retirement, I began a second adventure, working with arts and community non-profits. I have served on the boards of the City Lights Theater Company (one term as president), the Happy Hollow Park & Zoo Foundation and the San Jose Downtown Association Foundation (which oversees the Downtown Doors program). I have also worked with and supported a wide range of local arts groups including San Jose Jazz, Children's Musical Theater and the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art.
- I am also a member of the Rotary Club of San Jose, focusing on the work the club does with local arts organizations and individual artists.

I feel my background and ability to work with others will help the Commission tackle the key issues we will face in the coming year: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts world's already fragile economic standing, including the funding the city can provide, and the long-standing need to bring equity, diversity and inclusion to the ways we support the arts.

We need to work to find ways to provide immediate support for arts groups and individual artists and develop a new long-term source of city funding; to ensure that monetary and other forms of support are guaranteed for BIPOC artists; to help to create promotional

platforms for arts organizations when they can reopen; and to open partnerships with other city organizations and arts advocates to achieve these goals.

It won't be easy and not everything can be accomplished in one year. But I think we can move things forward on these important goals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Charlie McCollum

(See next page.)

VICE-CHAIR (Candidate 1)

Juan Carlos Araujo

Position: Vice Chair, San Jose Arts Commission

I, Juan Carlos Araujo, am applying for the Vice Chairperson role within the SJ Arts Commission. Although I am fairly new in my position, I believe my 12+ years of experience working within the Arts (from the streets of graffiti to new contemporary art) and my project management skills will bring value to this role.

As much as I look forward to giving, I also look forward to taking in knowledge from my colleagues to educate myself further into all the complex levels there are within the Arts Commission for the aesthetic, artistic and cultural visions for San Jose.

Some topics I'd like to address are as follows:

- Issues with TOT funding and how it impacts the arts
- How to prioritize the funds that will be coming in
- How to distribute the funds we currently have across the arts community

Thank you for your consideration.

(See next page.)

VICE-CHAIR (Candidate 2)

Smita Garg, Ed. D.

Position: Chair, San Jose Arts Commission

Smita Garg joined the City of San Jose Arts Commission in 2017. Since then, Smita has been a part of every significant grant panel and participated in numerous OCA activities. She has also enjoyed being a member of the Public Art Committee for last two years and was Vice Chair of the same this past year. In her role as arts commissioner, Smita has supported various culturally diverse arts groups. She was also part of an ad-hoc committee that was formed to study the issue of equity and access in arts programming, in San Jose's arts ecosystem. Smita came on board with a strong background in Arts Education with Master's and Doctoral degrees in Arts Education from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her dissertation topic "Contextualizing Art in the Socio-Cultural World of An Indian-American Child," was novel, extensive ethnographic and interdisciplinary research on contemporary South Asian American culture. She studied socio-cultural influences that helped shape and define identities of Bi-cultural and South Asian youth in high schools and universities across America. During her research she found the crucial role played by visual and performing arts in helping youth create a sense of belonging in their smaller and larger communities. The study proved how and why arts are an essential medium of communication and expression for youth, who may be at risk, and looking for a place or group to belong. Within the field of Arts Education, her work was deemed unique and important, and she was invited to present at national and international venues.

Over the years, Smita has been a relentless advocate for causes supporting educational opportunities and equity for youth. When 17 years ago she moved to San Jose and found to her dismay that her daughter's school did not have an arts program, she proceeded to create weekly art lessons for the kids and taught art as a volunteer teacher for 12 years. Three years ago, she co-founded the Campbell Union High School District Ed Foundation and chaired it in its initial years. She also led the creation of a Fairness and Belonging committee in the high school district to ensure that racism and bullying were being addressed in appropriate ways across school campuses. Smita has advocated for and helped create several programs for youth and adults to experience quality arts. Recently, Smita helped create an arts coalition, Creatives for Compassionate Communities (CCC), with 6 key Bay area artists/activists. The coalition is keenly aware of the need of the hour and aims to bring artistic expression together with personal spirituality and political activism. The artist/activists include PJ Hirabayashi, Karen Altree Piemme, Derrick Sanderlin, Dana Bainbridge, Amari Thomas, and Pear Urushima. CCC aims to be the incubator of an arts movement based in compassion, creativity, and activism.

Smita is passionate about art's innate ability to bridge gaps and bring people together. It is her sincere desire to see all San Jose residents' lives enriched with powerful and beautiful art experiences. However, looking at the current pandemic-related situation and hardships being endured by the artist community, Smita would like to assist in building a scaffolding and support system for local artists and organizations. In her role as Vice Chair, she would like to continue to serve the arts in San Jose to the best of her ability, using her extensive experience and skill set in arts advocacy and education.