

South Bay Progressive Alliance Candidate Questionnaire For City Council 2018



Please download and complete the questionnaire and email the completed document to info@SouthBayPA.org. By submitting your responses to this questionnaire to the South Bay Progressive Alliance (SBPA), you agree that your responses are public and that we may share your responses with others.

Name: John Cordes

City Council Jurisdiction: Sunnyvale City Council Seat 3

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Line of Work: None. Retired Engineering Manager.

Candidate Pledge:

If you cannot not make the following 4 affirmative pledges, the SBPA cannot endorse you at this time.

CORPORATE-FREE. As a corporate-free candidate I commit to refuse donations from corporations, industry lobbyists, corporate representatives, political bundlers, and Political Action Committees (except for unions) and publicize that I am a corporate free candidate in my campaign literature. YES*. On my current campaign literature I only state that I am not accepting donation from office developers, but I have pledged not to accept donations from any developers. I will not accept corporations donations. I need to update my literature. I will accept donations from environmental PACs like the Sierra Club and league of Conservation Voters.

PLEDGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. I commit to publicize and hold regular listening sessions with my constituents, to stay in touch with their needs and concerns. YES

PROGRESSIVE POLICIES. I commit to author, co-author, support, promote and defend people-focused progressive policies and practices that incorporate SBPA core values to improve communities and the quality of life for my constituents. YES

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION. I commit to help level the playing field for ALL people and prioritize the development of leadership among under-represented communities. YES

General Questions:

1. Endorsements—

- a. Who are you endorsing, from national races all the way down ballot to local races?
 - a. No one so far. I lobbied for Kevin DeLeon for Ca Senator at the Democrat party executive committee meeting in Oakland. I have walked precincts for Don Rocha and attended his events.
- b. If any, are you endorsing anyone else in your own race, who are they?
 - a. My race is a two person race and I am not endorsing my opponent

Who has endorsed you? See Attached list.

- c. Whose endorsements are you seeking or expect to receive?
Sierra Club, LCV, Dean Democratic Club, San Jose Mercury news, Democratic Party

2. Campaign Funding —How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from? Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any).

Currently I have raised around 20,000. I hope to raise another 10,000. All my funds are from individuals.

City Council Questions:

1. **Motivation:** Why did you choose to run for this office?
2. After decades of advocating for progressive policy before Sunnyvale city council, I recently retired and have the time to devote to represent Sunnyvale residents and progressive policies by being a council member.
3. **Priorities:** What do you believe are the major issues facing residents of your district? What are some specific tasks (e.g. specific legislation, policies, etc.) you intend to accomplish while in office?

Create a more enjoyable sustainable and equitable future for Sunnyvale by working to

1. Reduce the Jobs/Housing imbalance by slowing office development and accelerating housing, especially affordable housing.
2. Reduce congestion to improve everyone's quality of life and the excessive greenhouse gases snarled traffic and long commutes inflict.
3. Creating a sustainable future to mitigate Climate Change.
4. **Qualifications:** Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for being a City Councilmember, and include any community volunteering or activism. If you're an incumbent, how would you assess your own job performance? Please give some specific example of accomplishments and setbacks

- Chair Sunnyvale Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission. Commissioner since 2014.
- Member Sunnyvale Climate Action Plan 2.0 update Committee
- Member Livable Sunnyvale - A Sunnyvale based advocacy group promoting sustainability, affordable housing and transportation solutions in Sunnyvale.
- Co-Leader -Sunnyvale Safe Routes to School Coalition
- Current Treasurer of the SNAIL neighborhood association.
- 2013-15 Chair of the SNAIL neighborhood association. vice chair 2012.
- Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter Executive Committee member (elected)
- Sierra Club, Guadalupe Regional Group Executive Committee member (elected)
- Sunnyvale Cool Leadership team member since 2011, a local environmental advocacy organization.
- Finance Chair and Church Council member Good Samaritan United Methodist Church.
- 2015 Leadership Sunnyvale graduate.
- 2017 Executive committee member of Sunnyvale Democratic Club
- Numerous leadership roles with the Sierra Club including executive committee, political committee co-chair, outings leader
- 'Energize Sunnyvale' team member. Helped Sunnyvale compete to win the Georgetown \$5 million energy challenge.
- 10+year Leader and volunteer with the Sierra Club ICO program. We take disadvantaged youth on outdoor adventures including sea kayaking, mtn biking, camping, white water rafting and my speciality snow trips.
- Member SMPHA (mobile home park residents advocacy group)
- Retired Engineering manager with decades of experience crafting solutions to complex problems in large organizations.

5. **Housing:** If elected what policies and programs would you put in place to address affordable housing, market-rate housing, and homelessness? If Proposition 10 passes and repeals the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act, would you implement rent control in your city? If so, what would your rent control policy look like?

- The most important factor affecting affordable housing is zoning more space for it and increasing the density allowed. Sunnyvale is actively re-zoning areas of the city for more housing, mostly in obsolete business parks like One AMD place and Moffet Park. It is also investigating allowing denser housing in the transit corridors and other locations like the Lawrence Station Area Plan. I support these efforts to increase the quantity and affordability of housing options in Sunnyvale. I have advocated for increase housing and increased affordable housing in every area specific plan passed in the last 5 years, the general plan update, and those currently still under development.
- I support making it easier for homeowners to add small living units in their backyards by changing our zoning requirements. We also need to review our permitting fee structure so it is less costly to add these types of units.
- We need to change our developer incentives so they build more smaller units instead of only large one. For example, in my neighborhood, a developer redeveloped an R3 zoned lot. He is required by the R3 zoning to build between 14 and 11 housing units. He built 14 4 bedroom townhomes. We need to change the incentives so he would be more willing to build more smaller units instead of only large 4 bedrooms units.
- Increase the 'below market rate' requirements and incentives. Communities work best when there is diversity across it. We need to increase our 'below market rate' requirements from 12.5% to 15% and give developers incentives to go even higher. We should also make it more expensive for them to pay 'in-lieu' fees instead of including BMR units in their projects.
- Sunnyvale needs to do more to help eliminate homelessness in Sunnyvale. Sunnyvale should partner with other local jurisdictions in the 'Destination Home' project to eliminate homelessness. This is both the morally responsible and cost-effective use of public resources.

- Sunnyvale currently does not have any ordinances to protect apartments or mobile home owners from unlimited rent increases except for those few residents who are lucky enough to be enrolled in our Below Market Rate Program or another subsidized rental program. Sunnyvale should develop and implement a policy that helps keep current residents in their homes and still encourages the development of more housing.
- I support rent stabilization for our mobile home park residents.
- I would sponsor a study issue to implement increasing rent stabilization to more apartments if Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act is repealed. I would support developing a rent stabilization policy that would seek to maximize the number of rent stabilized apartments without slowing new construction.
- Sunnyvale is working toward a Inclusionary housing ordinance. I support implementing one.

6. **Public safety:** How would you prioritize and address the most important public safety issues facing the residents of your district? Consider community trust, racial tensions, police conduct, police militarization, etc.

Public trust and relationship are good as far as I know in Sunnyvale. I need to learn more. I would promote programs to increase public trust and public safety safety employee diversity. I do not support the militarization of public safety. I support Sunnyvale integrated police/EMS/ Firefighter staffing system because I think it help improve public safety. Sunnyvale is a sanctuary city and I support those policies.

I have supported Sunnyvale's development of a Vision Zero plan to reduce traffic related death and serious injuries.

7. **Diversity:** What policies and practices would you implement for inclusiveness and diversity in city government, particularly for women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community?

Sunnyvale should increase its marketing and outreach to underrepresented communities to participate in apply for boards and commission. Ditto for all outreach efforts which seeks public input.

8. **Criminal justice:** What can be done locally to improve our local criminal justice system?

I support the elimination of cash bail and replacing it with a risk management system to decide who needs to be held pre-trial. We need to increase rehabilitation efforts, EG provide more job skill training in our jails and other programs proven to reduce recidivism rates. We need to decrease the motivation for crime by increasing the strength of our social safety systems and increase job training and apprenticeship opportunities

9. **Land use:** How would you balance development vs. preserving and/or enhancing open spaces? What are the most important land use issues facing your district?

I support infill development and urban growth boundaries for many reason. Social Justice, diversity, greenhouse gas emission reduction and protecting regional open space. I support Sunnyvale's policy of maintaining at least 5 acres park/open space per thousand residents. I support it requiring park impact fees from both commercial and residential developers. The most important land use issue is Sunnyvale is improving the Jobs/Housing balance. I have spoken at numerous times in favor of policies to increase housing, especially affordable housing and slow job growth.

10. **Business:** How do you view business growth in your jurisdiction? What, if anything, would you do to ensure residents are not displaced? Under what circumstances would you support corporate subsidies, tax breaks, and credits, to attract business to your city? I think office development has been and currently happening too rapidly in Sunnyvale. Sunnyvale is not displacing residents with commercial development. Instead we are adding housing via Industrial-to-residential zoning. We have had residents displaced by conversions of mobile home and trailer parks. I support tougher conversion requirements with more generous benefits for these projects.
11. **Transit:** What specific proposals do you have to alleviate traffic? What are your views and positions on public transit-oriented development?
- Increase the traffic impact fees for new commercial developments to generate more funds for shuttles and other traffic mitigation efforts.
 - Support a more substantial business license or other fee on large employers to fund transit improvements. The new jobs they create are making the commutes worse and they should help to pay to reduce the congestion.
 - Provide more and better transportation alternatives for everyone including more bicycle lanes, better sidewalks and more shuttle services.
 - Change land-use planning to enable more housing closer to work. We need more mixed use housing in our transit corridors so residents can walk or bicycle for more of their errands and to commute.
 - Require future commercial developments to incentivize more commuters to use alternative transportation to get to work.
 - Enable more children to be able to get to school safely without being driven by expanding the Safe-Routes-To-School program.
12. **Environment:** What local policies would you propose to address climate change and the environment? Do you think your city should be a zero-carbon city?
- Transportation is the #1 cause of GHG (greenhouse gas) in Sunnyvale so everything we can do to reduce traffic will help create a more Sustainable Sunnyvale.
 - Sunnyvale already provides 100% carbon free electricity via Silicon Valley Clean Energy Authority. I will promote that Sunnyvale work with SVCEA to adopt a 100% renewable energy goal by 2030.
 - Sunnyvale imports 50% of its water from the delta. This is not sustainable or desirable long-term. I will push for Sunnyvale to reduce its dependence on imported water by more conservation, increased use of recycled water and capturing more stormwater to recharge our aquifers.
 - Currently, Sunnyvale plans to implement the California state building standards to require net-zero energy commercial development by 2030. The technology for net-zero buildings exists now and is in place in buildings throughout the Bay Area. The current development projects will have a long-term, lasting impact, so we should be serious about reducing Sunnyvale's carbon footprint by requiring net-zero development much sooner than 2030. The California state goal year for net-zero energy housing is 2020, and the city should be advancing energy-saving technology in home building faster too.
 - Sunnyvale need to ensure new developments have the needed infrastructure to support the transition to 100% electric transportation by 2040.
 - Yes I would support Sunnyvale setting an aggressive target to become a zero carbon city.

12. **Budget:** If you were on Council drafting the upcoming year's budget, what decisions would you make differently from those Council made last year? How much additional revenue should the city aim to take in, and how would you generate it?

- Sunnyvale's budget is \$490,000,000 this fiscal year so it is very challenging to detail proposed spending and income generating changes.
- I support studying an increase in our business license tax . It is already headcount based.
- Sunnyvale currently has a ballot measure to increase the hotel tax from 10->12% which I support.
- Sunnyvale has a study issue running this year to look at various changes which could increase revenues and I will probably be supportive of many of them when the report is finished.
- On the spending side. I think Sunnyvale should spend more on bicycle and walking infrastructure and public safety net (donations to Sunnyvale Community services) and public campaign financing.
- I am one of the two volunteer co-leaders of Sunnyvale's safe-routes-to-schools program. I would like to see Sunnyvale spend more fund supporting it .

13. **Youth:** What are your priorities and policies for youth in your city, and how would you implement and finance them?

- I am one of the two volunteer co-leaders of Sunnyvale's safe-routes-to-schools program. I would like to see Sunnyvale spend more fund supporting it. Sunnyvale should invest more in youth programs in its library and recreation programs. See the answer to question 12 about financing.

14. **Education:** How could your city improve education opportunities for its young people? What is your position on charter schools?

- Sunnyvale should invest more in education related programs in its library programs.
- Complete the Lakewood school branch library/education center quickly
- I oppose for-profit charter schools or the hiring of for-profit management companies by non-profit charter schools. I think charter school teachers should be allowed to unionize.

15. **Elections:** Would you support electoral and campaign finance reform? If so, what kind? How would you propose to improve civic participation in your city?

- Yes I support publicly finance campaigns. There are about 60,000 voters in sunnyvale so given each candidate who meets qualification requirements \$30,000 would greatly reduce the competitive advantage of special interest funded candidate.

16. **Access:** How do you propose to make yourself accessible and accountable to the residents of your city?

- I will provide my email and phone # to residents on the city website.

17. What is your position on payday lenders and marijuana dispensaries in your city?
- I support requiring strict effective* (including fees) interest rate on payday lenders.
 - I would support legislative changes which would make it easier for banks and credit unions to compete with them.
 - I support both medical and recreational marijuana dispensaries in Sunnyvale in certain locations with strict use agreements. I support changing our current ordinance which forbid delivery services in Sunnyvale.

18. **Anything Else?** Is there anything else you would like to share? This questionnaire is too long and detailed.

Positions on Issues

Please answer YES or NO for each statement.

Do you support a living wage?	YES
Do you support a restorative justice program in lieu of prosecution?	YES
Do you support ending bail bonds?	YES
Do you support participatory budgeting (citizen involvement in city budgeting)?	YES
Would you support an elected rent board?	YES
Do you support a civilian review board of your police department?	YES
Will you support City divestment from fossil fuels?	YES
Do you support funding projects to reduce the number of cars on the road?	YES
Do you support Ranked Choice Voting?	YES
Do you support Proportional Representation?	YES
Do you support “amending the Constitution to make clear that corporations and other artificial entities do not have Constitutional rights and that money is not speech and campaign spending should be limited through regulation”? Pledge from MTA (https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend)	YES
Do you support free public education from pre-school through graduate studies?	YES
Do you support legalization with a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.?	YES
Do you support the right of transgendered individuals to use the restroom of their choice?	YES
Do you support the use of city funds to develop worker-owned co-operatives?	YES
Do you support a policy to place city funds in a Public Bank?	YES
Do you support single-payer healthcare?	YES