

South Bay Progressive Alliance

Candidate Questionnaire

For City Council 2020



Please download and complete the questionnaire and email the completed document to [info@SouthBayPA.org](mailto: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: **Huy Tran**

City Council Jurisdiction: **San José City Council, District 4**

Address: **PO Box 610693, San José, CA 95161**

Phone(s): **408-256-2817**

Email: **huytran4sanjose@gmail.com**

Website: **HuyTran4SanJose.com**

Committee Name: **Huy Tran for San José City Council D4 2020 FPPC#1415999**

Line of Work: **Worker's rights/employment attorney, Lead Partner & Co-Founder Justice At Law Group**

### 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, and Political Action Committees (except for union PACs and PACs that refuse corporate donations) and publicize that I am a corporate free candidate in my campaign literature.

YES  NO  OTHER

**I would want better clarity on what your definition of corporate is, because there are many small-business owners and individuals that advocate on various issues at public meetings and before City Council. I believe that this question's intent is asking me if I will support clean money campaigns and not be a candidate that can be bought by major corporate or outside interests - which I would affirm as a strong Yes.**

**While I am marking yes to these items, I do not believe that the simple affirmation of a pledge is enough or a good measure of judging a candidate or elected official's values.**

**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 X

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 X

General Questions:

1. Endorsements—

- a. Who are you endorsing, from national races all the way down ballot to local races?

**I have yet to make a choice for President, but I am glad to see the campaigns for Bernie Sanders & Elizabeth Warren running strong, and I am also excited to see an Asian-American candidate on stage.**

**The other choices on my ballot for March 3 are CA Assembly 25, which I have yet to make a decision on, and County Supervisor, where I have endorsed Magdalena Carasco and donated to her and Otto Lee.**

- b. Which candidates, if any, are you endorsing anyone else in your own race?

**This question does not seem to apply to my candidacy as I am not supporting any other candidates running for City Council District 4.**

- c. Who has endorsed you?

**I am honored to have been endorsed by San José Councilmembers Raul Peralez & Magdalena Carasco and CA Assemblymember Ash Kalra.**

**For a complete list of my endorsements please visit [HuyTran4SanJose.com/endorsements](http://HuyTran4SanJose.com/endorsements)**

- d. Whose endorsements are you seeking or expect to receive?

**My hope was to earn support from the Santa Clara County Democratic Party & South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council, which I have. Many groups and organizations have made their endorsements, but I would hope to earn support from Planned Parenthood and the SBPA.**

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

**I am hopeful to raise \$100,000 for the March Primary. My donors have been District 4 residents, community leaders, colleagues, friends, activists and people that care about the future of San José.**

**I am excited that my end of year filing will show more than \$50,000 raised. I certainly would not take contributions from anyone that has a track record of being against workers' rights, immigrants, equality or has promoted hate or intolerance, and the major corporations that are doing more to damage our**

economy than support. However it is unlikely that any of these groups or individuals would donate to my candidacy.

### City Council Questions:

1. Motivation: Why did you choose to run for this office?

**I am running for City Council because San José will be transformed over the next decade and we need better leadership to guide us through these changes. With the arrival of BART and the coming development around Google, every corner of this city will be impacted by the increased demand for housing, the stretching of public services, and the influx of new residents from around the world. As this transformation takes place, we as a city must ensure that we are not displacing the families who have lived in San José for decades, and that we do not push out the teachers, nurses, mechanics, and other workers who make San José run.**

**In short, the City is failing us and we need leaders that will act. The unhoused population has increased over 40% over the past two years as rents and other costs of living continue to increase. Right now, a single person making \$66,000 per year, and a family of four making \$94,000 per year, are considered low-income. A few years ago, our city decided to move towards \$15 an hour minimum wage because we recognized that \$8 an hour was too low to provide any kind of quality of life. That \$15 was important but it is no longer enough. We need to find additional ways of helping residents. Instead of addressing the needs of a population that is struggling to keep up, our council has focused on policies in favor of those with power and wealth, siding with corporate interests rather than the people in need. This cannot be allowed to continue.**

**I'm ready to take this work seriously, something the current office holder has not. I am running in favor of community and for the people, to bring ideas to action, bring real solutions with results, and restore dignity to the District 4 Council office.**

2. 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?

**My top three priorities are to increase the rate of affordable housing construction, aggressively tackle homelessness, and improve city services:**

**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.

**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.

**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.

**You can read more about my hopes for San José online at [HuyTran4SanJose.com/issues](http://HuyTran4SanJose.com/issues)**

3. 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 examples of accomplishments and setbacks.

**Since moving to San José to attend SJSU after high school, I have been active within our community. I was a student organizer on campus, and made friendships that continue to this day, nearly 20 years later. My recent commitments to our community have produced my greatest achievements in my role as San José Housing & Development Commissioner and my participation with the Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition.**

**My greatest achievement in policy has been the enactment of wage theft ordinances in Santa Clara County, Santa Clara Unified School District, and the Cities of Milpitas, Sunnyvale, and San José. This ordinance ensures that businesses who commit wage theft are held accountable until their debt is paid. Wage theft is harmful to working families because it is low-wage earners who are taken advantage of. Women in particular are impacted because they are overrepresented in low-wage positions such as restaurant service, housekeeping and cleaning, and personal care. This was accomplished through collaborative organizing with Ruth Silver Taube, my mentor from Santa Clara University, and working with groups such as 9to5, Fight for 15, and other grassroots organizations. This work is also how I earned the endorsement of San José Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco and Sunnyvale Councilmember Nancy Smith, both of whom championed wage theft ordinances in their respective cities.**

**I was appointed to the Housing and Community Development Commission in 2017. On the Commission, the two policies that I have been most involved in has been to enact the commercial linkage fee (CLF) and protecting the Ellis Act Ordinance. CLF would increase revenue to develop affordable housing by assessing fees on new commercial developments, while the Council voted to water down the Ellis Act Ordinance. While the Housing Commission has voted my way on both of these issues by strong margins, I am yet to count them as achievements because the final decision rests with the Council. I intend to complete my work on CLF and to reinstate the prior version of the Ellis Act if elected to the D4 seat.**

4. Housing: If elected what policies and programs would you put in place to address affordable housing, market-rate housing, and homelessness? Should the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act be repealed? Would you implement rent control in your city? If so, what would your rent control policy look like?

**On the Housing Commission, I fought for strong tenant protections and maintaining the requirements that developers incorporate affordable housing into their projects. During my term, the Housing Commission voted to reduce the rent increase caps to 5% from 8% with minimal pass throughs. We helped craft the Just Cause Eviction Ordinance, and fought back attempts to weaken the Mobile Home Ordinance. I led the effort to pass support for the CLF and was one of the sponsors of the motion to study how residential vacancies impact housing prices in San José. All of these efforts reflected my priorities on the Housing Commission, which was to protect the city's tenants, generate revenue to support unhoused services and homeless prevention programs, and send the message to developers that they need to incorporate affordable housing into their projects. On the City Council, I will keep these priorities, and address the specific issues mentioned below:**

**Regarding affordable housing and market-rate production, the Council majority, including our incumbent, have their priorities backwards. Homelessness has boomed 42% over the past two years. Cost-of-living has skyrocketed such that a family of four earning \$94,000 is considered low-income. Over 25% of the renters in Berryessa spend more than half of their income on rent. Despite these failures, our Council has seen fit to hand out fee waivers to developers who want to build the kind of luxury apartments and condos that exclude the vast majority of the people in our city. To address this, we need to reinstate the prior version of the Ellis Act and end the fee waivers that take away the resources we need to directly address the needs of our residents.**

**Regarding rent control (which I refer to as rent stabilization), I have already been part of enhancing the Apartment Rent Ordinance by reducing the rent hike cap to 5% from 8%, and made sure that it was not weakened by pass-throughs that would make the cap meaningless. Costa-Hawkins should be repealed so that local cities can decide for themselves what tenant protections they want to implement, but repeal of the Costa-Hawkins Act would actually have no impact in San José because our ordinance is far short of what Costa-Hawkins already allows.**

5. 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, use of force, etc.

**I believe that if we had stable housing, good jobs and better health care, the choice of crime or violence will diminish within our community. Crime has become a different experience for San Joseans, and exposes the divide we have in our neighborhoods, as some areas suffer petty crimes like stolen boxes from their doorstep, while other areas are plagued with gang violence that has connection to very dangerous elements. We face a very difficult challenge - stopping crime, providing justice, and managing day-to-day safety. The presence of CSOs has been a noticeable boost in the feeling of safety, and it is incredibly difficult for a police force of 1200 officers to provide the kind of security and enforcement that San José deserves. I think as Measure B and Measure F become further away in the rear view mirror, we will see staff rates stabilize to help us manage crime better but we need solutions now.**

**One issue that is very important to me is the recent rates of domestic violence. Working with many of our working families and immigrants, I see the need to put a full throated effort into this by City Hall. I commend the women of the City Council for standing up and taking action, and that I would stand with them to join the find to ending violence against women.**

**I think through better social and health services, increased afterschool programs/youth outreach and young adult support efforts - we will see less of our residents see crime as a viable option, and if we have the resources at SJPd, we can prevent outside elements from thinking they can commit crime or violence in our city. Technology is giving residents more tools to be safe, tools that do not rely on firearms, and I know that with a Council committed to doing something, we will address crime.**

**The safety of a community is meaningless without justice. Justice for those who are harmed, those who commit harm and for those who enforce and craft our laws. We all play a part in this and I am proud to see the advances SJPd has made and I am committed to helping keep our residents safe, our emergency personnel properly trained and good relationships between everyone so we can properly resolve any situation that arises.**

6. 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?

**Despite our challenges, we are blessed to live in San José, which is a warm community that works to make a truly inclusive place that welcomes people who identify across a multitude of spectrums on race, religion, gender, gender/sexual identity, and so on. The fight for justice and equality is not over, but I want to see San José as a truly safe community.**

**While housing is the top issue that must be addressed to serve the LGBTQ+ community among the many others that co-exist in our city, one of the biggest needs right now is for allies and people in positions of power and influence to use their pulpit and secure rights for the LGBTQ+ community across the nation. I will proudly continue to stand with the LGBTQ+ community to fight for fair and equal treatment on every issue from adoption rights to stigmatization.**

**For people of color/various demographics and ethnicities of San José there has been a lot of great achievements in diversity, but there continues to be major divides and poverty continues to be an unjust burden on these communities and families. If we are going to welcome Google to downtown and make all these major upgrades and changes to our city, it is meaningless if it comes because of displacement and the furthering inequities for non-white communities.**

7. Criminal justice: What can be done to improve our local criminal justice system? Do you support the current sanctuary policy of your city and the current county policy?

**A lot of the criminal justice system is run by the county even though the city is responsible for our police force. I think the best work I can do for the community is to make sure the Independent Police Auditor's office is empowered with the resources it needs to do their job, and to work with SJPd to provide for the best solutions to keep our officers safe and that our accountability measures work to the best of their interests and the people.**

**I support sanctuary city policies and I do not believe that local safety departments are immigration officers and that we do not make our families any safer if they are afraid to see help should they need it.**

8. 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?

**San José is a very large city in land size, but we are also a city with countless of pockets that are prime for an invest to improve, upgrade or redevelop without having to develop into our open and green**

**spaces. In-fill development and building along transit corridors are the only viable options moving forward, and I will not support actions that harm our open spaces.**

**The land use issues in District 4 vary based on locations. In Alviso, we need to invest in the infrastructure and deliver the support that was promised decades ago for Alviso to become part of San José, but approving more developments into the flood plains takes away the natural protection that we have against flooding (which we clearly need following the 2017 flood). Alviso is a gem that needs to be protected.**

**We have an opportunity in developing the North 1st Street Corridor to grow our commercial opportunities by re-zoning it for mixed use developments. The original vision for creating an “uptown” never materialized, and we need to rethink how we can use the available land that meets our needs in the present, including for affordable housing and community spaces.**

9. 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?

**San José is thriving, and we are seeing growth occur in ways that our city has needed. District 4 has been at the center of many of these changes and I am hopeful for what is ahead. There have been anecdotes about how San Jose is anti-business, but Google cannot be interested in our downtown if that were true, and corporations are booming in ways that make me challenge those anecdotes. The real problem is that because of the allure of San Jose and because we are a dynamic and beautiful community, interests are investing and costs are increasing and families are losing their homes and displacement rates soar.**

**We need strong policies that protect our families from being displaced, enhanced tenant protections and the investment in more housing to get built.**

**Right now I do not see any need for corporate subsidies and I am concerned that a one vote majority diverted nearly \$67 million from being used by the city into bigger corporate profits.**

**However, I also want to be clear that I support business development in district in two respects. First, with the opportunity that we have along the North 1st Corridor, we can look at ways to build additional housing and generate commercial activity at the same time. Mixed use developments that include affordable units will help us meet both goals in ways that are inclusive. Second, we must protect small businesses in district as well. Berryessa has long been a place where family shops and small independent businesses could set up shop to serve our community. These local businesses are part of the fabric of our community.**

10. Transit: What specific proposals do you have to alleviate traffic? What are your views and positions on public transit-oriented development?

**We need to make rail a viable and realized option in San José. BART’s delay is unacceptable, and our Light Rail system is long overdue for more than just an expansion to Evergreen. High Speed Rail and Caltrain electrification are necessary as well. This is where we need more proactive leadership to get these projects done. The small solutions with ride-sharing, e-scooters and bike lanes are great and inevitable, but are not enough and need oversight to make sure everyone is safe.**

11. Environment: What local policies would you propose to locally address climate change and the environment? Do you think your city should be a zero-carbon city?

**The current REACH codes, along with the San José Clean Energy Initiative are great actions happening locally, along with the recent protection of largest areas in north Coyote Valley. VTA is working towards zero-emission bus fleet and I would hope that we could launch a fossil-fuel free fleet of city vehicles. I think San José is being a leader on these issues, but until we make the major changes to our transportation, we won't be doing enough. I not only believe that San José should be a zero-carbon city, but we should find a way to become the first.**

**You can read more about my ideas to address climate change and protect our environment, please visit [HuyTran4SanJose.com/environment](http://HuyTran4SanJose.com/environment)**

12. Budget: If you were on Council, what decisions would you make differently from this year's budget? Do you think the city needs additional revenue, and if so, how would you generate it?

**One major change would be how I allocate the funds from the District 4 budget. There is not a strong mechanism in place for D4 residents to participate in the budget process, and we have seen the current officeholder hold these funds from use. These are funds that could be used for many of the countless projects that could help our neighborhoods, or to provide more staff to address the needs of residents.**

**The city always needs more revenue. We remain around 600 unfilled city positions, and City Hall is not doing enough to invest back in the people and support their needs, instead we get a one vote majority to turn away city resources into corporate profits. More revenue must be generated but it must be from those who are not paying their fair share, and not back on the people.**

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

**Housing and health care. Our children will struggle to learn if they are not safe, do not have stable housing and their health is at risk or not cared for. I believe that we need to take stronger action to support SJSU students that are unhoused or sleeping in their cars, because that is an experience I am sadly too familiar with. I know if we tackle the big issues, our youth will find the brighter future we want them to have.**

**I do believe that my attention is climate change resonantes with our youth, and the issue of gun violence is a real one for them too. The Our Schools and Communities First initiative will help bring a lot of funding to San José to help our youth.**

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

**I think if CA voters pass reform to Prop 13 through the Our Schools and Communities First initiative, we will have the direct resources needed to support our youth.**

**Charter schools have become a part of our education system. I believe they should 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. Our legislature**

**has made accountability and oversight of charter schools a priority and I expect more action on the issues in the coming years because they continue to be a concern and their ties to certain federal administration members is incredibly troubling.**

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 am excited to see how this year's effort to provide every voter a ballot by mail goes, and I am a strong proponent of the open primary and run-off elections that we do for many of our most important races.**

**I am supportive of the Mayoral year switch and clean campaign finance reform ballot measure that voters will vote on in November. You can read my statement about that online at <https://huytran4sanjose.com/mayoralcycle>**

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

**By being present and expressing my values. I have been active and involved in San José and our community since my first days at SJSU, and the differences that I have been a part of only occurred because people, especially our leaders, were accessible and accountable. Those are my values and I will live to them as Councilmember as I do each day in my life.**

17. What is your position on payday lenders and marijuana dispensaries in your city?

**These are not two businesses that I often find lumped together, as one has been predatory to our working families, and another is provided a legal product for adults to use for medical or recreational purposes, and is a marker of a long overdue overhaul of California's laws that have put too many youth behind bars, and many who are still there that should be released.**

18. Anything Else? Is there anything else you would like to share?

## Positions on Issues

Please answer YES or NO for each statement.

Do you support raising the minimum wage in your city? <b>YES</b>	To what amount?	<b>Cost-of-Living</b>
Do you support a restorative justice program in lieu of prosecution?		<b>YES (when applicable)</b>
Do you support ending bail bonds?		<b>YES</b>
Do you support participatory budgeting (citizen involvement in city budgeting)?		<b>YES</b>
Would you support an elected rent board?		<b>Undecided, would like more information</b>
Do you support a civilian review board of your police department?		<b>YES</b>
Will you support City divestment from fossil fuels?		<b>YES</b>

Do you support funding projects to reduce the number of cars on the road?	<b>YES</b>
Do you support Ranked Choice Voting?	<b>Undecided, I see merits but have concerns</b>
Do you support Proportional Representation?	<b>Supportive of intent, would like more information</b>
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 ( <a href="https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend">https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend</a> )	<b>YES</b>
Do you support free public education from pre-school through graduate studies?	<b>YES</b>
Do you support legalization with a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.?	<b>YES</b>
Do you support marriage equality and the right of transgendered individuals to use the restroom of their choice?	<b>YES</b>
Do you support the use of city funds to develop worker-owned cooperatives?	<b>YES</b>
Do you support an ordinance or charter amendment to create a public bank for your city?	<b>YES</b>
Do you support Medicare for all?	<b>YES</b>