

San Jose City Councilmembers push back on pay tied to performance
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San Jose parks face budget cuts amid ongoing work backlog
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An-Po Chen, Concertmaster of the Philharmonic Orchestra

2025 Bon Voyage Gala Concert & Silent Auction with the Philharmonic Orchestra

The Philharmonic Orchestra performs in a concert featuring violin soloists Saarthak Shankavaram and An-Po Chen

By William Bellou
Publisher

The San Jose Youth Symphony's Philharmonic Orchestra, under the artistic leadership of Music Director and Conductor Yair Samet, presents its 2025 Bon Voyage Gala Concert on Friday evening, June 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Mexican Heritage Plaza Theater, 1700 Alum Rock Avenue in San Jose.

This premier orchestra, made up of the most advanced students

See *BON VOYAGE*, page 9

East San Jose leaders burned out on smoke shops

By Vicente Vera
San José Spotlight

San Jose leaders say stores selling tobacco, liquor and other illicit products are over concentrated on the east side of the city — and they are looking to temporarily ban new ones.

Councilmembers Peter Ortiz, Domingo Candelas, Pamela Campos, George Casey and David Cohen introduced a proposal to pause new smoke shops from opening in East San Jose.

The City Council voted last year to add more regulations for smoke shops before moving to a call for full suspension after Santa Clara County Public Health's recent Latino Health Assessment cited the danger shops pose to impressionable youth. The assessment shows East San Jose has a tobacco retailer density of about seven per square mile — more than twice the county average of three per square mile.

After spearheading the effort to put more regulations on smoke shops last year, Ortiz said it's time to take the next step in limiting their influence on East San Jose residents.

"I've tried to introduce this policy in the past



Above left: District 5 San Jose Councilmember **Peter Ortiz** outside City Hall on May 28, 2025. Ortiz is leading a push to temporarily ban new smoke shops. Above right: District 1 Santa Clara County Supervisor **Sylvia Arenas** said the high amount of smoke shops in East San Jose is due to targeted marketing, retail clustering and bad policies. *Photos by Vicente Vera.*

— it wasn't successful," he told San José Spotlight. "They're still opening them. So now I'm calling for a moratorium until the city can guarantee fewer smoke shops in concentrated areas."

The San Jose Rules and Open Government Committee will revisit the proposed suspension of new smoke shops in two weeks after city workers analyze the potential workload. Neighboring Campbell recently approved a similar policy, which was extended last month.

"It's no coincidence that in East San Jose there are smoke shops that are located across from high schools. These numbers are not just statistics," she said Wednesday. "They are symptoms of targeted marketing, retail clustering



and bad policies with a high concentration of tobacco retailers in Latino neighborhoods."

Community leaders said imagery used by smoke shops draws in younger customers, and such shops sell underregulated items like synthetic marijuana and nitrous oxide.

Community Health Partnership CEO Dolores Alvarado said she wants to break the cycle of family members needing to convince older relatives to ditch their potentially fatal addictions.

"I have a father who is 94 years old," she said Wednesday. "The only reason that he is the remaining member of the family is that in 1984, when I had my first child, I said to him, 'If you

See *SMOKE SHOPS*, page 10

Evergreen Blood Drive to be held June 14th

The Evergreen Blood Drive, sponsored by St. Francis of Assisi Parish and the Stanford Blood Center will be held on Saturday, June 14th from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints gym located at 4977 San Felipe Rd.

The event is open to the public for all eligible donors. Each donor will get a voucher, good for two Giants Baseball tickets. There are several game dates to choose from.



You may sign up in advance to minimize waiting times.

Walk-ins are on a first-come, first-served basis.

To learn about eligibility and signing up, visit: https://sbcdonor.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/13879



Chang Transfer Scholarship awarded

Evergreen Valley College President **Vinico Lopez** (far left) is joined by members of the Robert N. Chang Foundation and one of the six students, **Ngoc Quang Le** (center), who was awarded a \$10,000 scholarship to use towards his next school, San Jose State. To date, the Chang Transfer Scholarship has been awarded more than \$1.5 million to 173 EVC and SJCC students over the last 24 years.

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Times **Editorial**

Op Ed

Tie San Jose council salaries in part to their performance

By George Casey

You don't get a raise for failing at work. Why should politicians?

No, really.

Why should we allow politicians to take the position that we can't hold them accountable for progress on basic issues such as lowering crime rates, reducing street homelessness, creating the new housing we need and cleaning up our blighted streets?

Right now, San Jose's elected officials receive essentially automatic raises set by an independent body. Independence is good. Automatic raises — much less so.

The "No Raises Without Results" plan now before the City Council says that a small percentage of any future raises for politicians and top staff will be based on quantifiable and verified results on core issues. Opponents argue that it would be difficult to do. The fact that they feel empowered to make that very argument proves the need to adopt the measure.

Leaders are elected to do difficult things, not say "that's too hard" when the going gets tough.

This reform plan has been nearly two years

in the making, in part because we have taken the time to get it right by establishing clear benchmarks and creating the data dashboards that will show progress, or the lack of it.

The data is in place. Now we need a basic level of ongoing accountability.

The first benchmarks we will use to hold ourselves accountable will be based on independently verifiable public data — tracking priorities like fewer shootings,

more housing units, lower 311 call volumes for abandoned vehicles or illegal dumping, and more jobs in underserved areas. Our pay-for-performance model will use this independent data to set reasonable annual targets and reward collaboration and problem-solving, not short-term politics.

The opponents make the false claim that tying raises to results

doesn't work in government. But that argument ignores a basic truth: When there's no connection between rewards and results, accountability erodes.

San Jose residents are paying the price for a local government that too often underperforms with no consequences for the politicians in charge.

Importantly, accountability in government has worked.

In New York, data-driven programs like CompStat contributed to dramatic reductions in crime. And, in fact, since California voters approved a law that prevented state elected officials from being paid when they

couldn't pass a budget, our state budgets have always been on time. Opponents argue that the politicians used "tricks" to pass the budget, ignoring the fact that disruptions to government services due to budget gridlock are no longer the norm.

The politicians seeking to avoid ongoing accountability say they are held accountable at the ballot box. That is sometimes true. But with this proposal we don't have to wait four years to hold leaders accountable for dirty streets, homeless encampments, high housing costs and preventable crimes.

The opponents also say they don't want to "politicize" the process of pay. But that is exactly the opposite of what the "No Raises Without Results" plan does. We are working to reduce the highly political system of pressure and rewards that cause too many politicians to respond to special interests, donors and other political incentives — rather than prioritizing the needs of residents.

Under this proposal we require elected officials to think every day about how to actually address our issues, not just about their donors, the special interests, the next headline and their social media followers. San Jose's residents aren't asking for miracles.

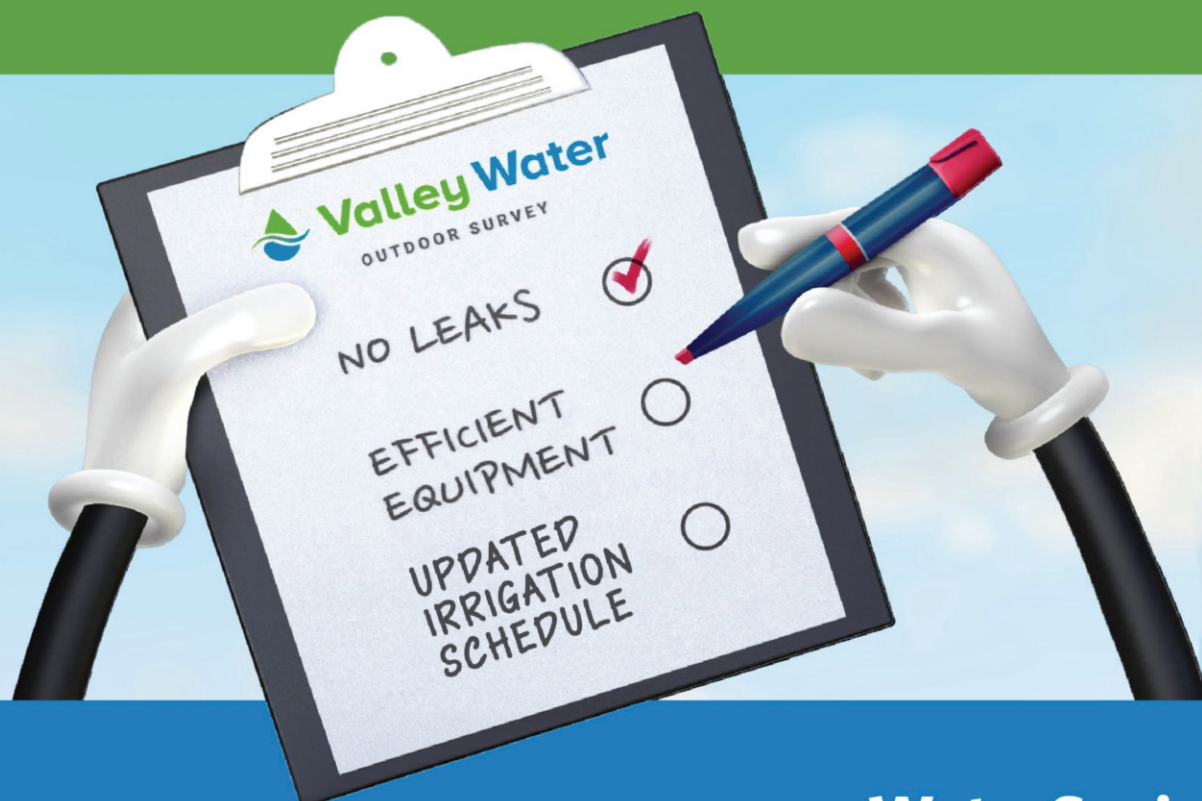
They're asking for competence and results. A modest performance incentive — just 5% — won't bankrupt anyone. But it will remind our public servants that the people who pay their salaries want better performance, not more political excuses.

Councilmember George Casey represents District 10 on the San Jose City Council.



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Times **Feature**

Bill to clean-up abandoned shopping cart litter passes senate and moves to Assembly

State Senator Dave Cortese's (D-Silicon Valley) SB 753 allowing retailers and local governments to work together to get abandoned shopping carts back where they belong and clean-up blight today was passed by a unanimous vote in the state Senate and now moves forward to the Assembly for action.

This bill will allow local governments to pick up abandoned shopping carts immediately, return them to retailers without delay,



and recover the actual costs of managing the program.

"SB 753 will modernize an outdated state law to give local governments the tools they need to address abandoned shopping carts more efficiently. Instead of impounding abandoned carts for 30 days, cities will be able to return carts directly back to retailers in order to support business owners and keep our communities clean and safe," said Senator Dave Cortese. "Abandoned shopping carts are more than just an eyesore, they create safety hazards, block sidewalks, pollute our creeks, and cost cities time and taxpayer money to clean up."

SB 753 is sponsored by the City of San Jose and San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan, with broad support from local governments statewide.

- Under this bill, cities would now be able to return abandoned carts directly to retailers instead of impounding them for 30 days.
- The three-day waiting period is eliminated, allowing cities to pick up and return carts immediately.
- Cities are no longer required to impound carts; instead, they may now return carts directly to retailers, while still retaining the authority to impound abandoned carts after three days as permitted under current law.

Current state law has proven ineffective at preventing shopping cart abandonment and incentivizing proper recovery. Existing law requires cities to store carts in an impound lot and wait for retailers to pick them up, which is inefficient and very costly for large cities.

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Times **Local News**



Kathy Kleinsteiber designed a native pollinator garden at Cahalan Park in San Jose. She said more volunteers are needed to help with park maintenance. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

San Jose parks face budget cuts amid ongoing work backlog

By Lorraine Gabbert
San José Spotlight

San Jose Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services continues to wrestle with budget cuts and backlogs, and the upcoming year isn't going to be easy.

The city is facing a projected 2025-26 budget deficit of \$35.6 million — and the parks department won't go unscathed. The budget is expected to decrease park funding by \$2.8 million next year, according to Sheena Talosig, spokesperson for the department.

"We do everything we can to stretch our resources — grants, partnerships, volunteers and contractors all help us maintain parks," she told San José Spotlight. "We're also always looking for ways to be more efficient, but the bottom line is that we just don't have enough staff to meet the need. With a \$550 million maintenance backlog, it's clear that sustainable funding for park staffing is critical to keeping our parks safe, clean and accessible."

Maintenance and preserving parks is at the department's core, Avi Yotam, deputy parks director, said at a May 12 Almaden Valley Community Association meeting. He said the \$2.5 million in budget cuts includes the loss of \$100,000 for community forestry.

Other cost savings will come from the city's closure of Yosemite Family Camp due to wildfire damage this summer, with a one-time savings of \$240,000 while being repaired, Yotam said. The City Council is also considering the privatization of Lake Cunningham Action Sports Camp, a skateboard and bike park, which could save the city \$879,000 annually.

To ensure equity in park upkeep, the department uses the Healthy Places Index to guide its decisions and in prioritizing maintenance in neighborhoods with the greatest need, Talosig said.

She added the department is looking at how park funding can be restructured, after the city cut developer fees that took funding away from parks. This summer, the department will begin community outreach to better understand what people want and need from city parks. The feedback will help shape a potential ballot measure to secure sustainable maintenance funding and a new park master plan focused on how to make the system more flexible and equitable citywide, she said.

The existing maintenance backlog has impacted community centers, park grounds, playgrounds, restrooms, picnic areas, sports facilities and trails.

City parks receive funding from construction, property transfer taxes, development impact fees, general fund allocations, gifts, grants and partnerships. Although the department receives \$40 million annually from the

construction taxes, council members — in an effort to accelerate housing construction — have reduced funding allocations.

Yotam said the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will balance immediate maintenance needs with long-term aspirations.

"Using our California Park and Recreation Society's standards for park maintenance, we assessed how many staff we ought to have as a park and rec department for the city," he said. "We found we're about 100 people short."

Kathy Kleinsteiber has volunteered with planting pollinator gardens at local parks for years. The city asked her to choose plants and design a pollinator garden at Cahalan Park, which she maintains with other neighborhood volunteers.

"It would be nice to give money to parks because they don't have enough money to maintain them," Kleinsteiber told San José Spotlight. "Most of our parks look like heck. The budget cuts are making it even worse."

Parks Manager Veronica Schulte said the park service depends on volunteers and is pursuing additional grants. In fiscal year 2002–03, they had about 227 full-time staff in park maintenance covering 1,475 acres, she said. This dropped to 183 full-time staff responsible for 1,801 acres of park land during this past fiscal year.

"Fast forward to this year, we have more acreage but less staff. We're stretched very thin over the additional parks," she said. "Having more parks means less services over time for each of the parks on a day-to-day basis, because they have more to do on their routes than they did before with less people."

California drivers will pay new 65-cent gas tax starting July 1

By William Bellou
Publisher

California drivers are facing higher gas prices beginning July 1.

The 65 cent per gallon increase is a combination of new climate regulations and a fuel tax hike.

The rate hike comes at a time when fuel affordability remains a persistent concern for many working families across the state.

A last-ditch attempt to stall the expected increase failed in the state Senate last week. Senate Bill 2, sponsored by Republican State Senator Brian Jones of San Diego, sought to reverse CARB's changes. The bill was defeated in a 10-23 floor vote.

Jones said the legislation is necessary for California families struggling under the weight of inflation and high energy costs.

Democratic lawmakers, led by Senate Majority Leader Lena Gonzalez, defended the climate rules as essential to California's long-term environmental strategy.



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San Jose councilmembers push back on pay tied to performance

By Vicente Vera
San José Spotlight

San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan wants to withhold up to 5% of his colleagues' salaries if they fail to meet citywide goals — a policy numerous councilmembers said would come at the expense of already underserved residents.

The "Pay for Performance" policy was introduced as part of Mahan's March budget message after he said City Hall needed to show more accountability in addressing issues such as homelessness and public safety. Councilmembers including Pamela Campos, Domingo Candelas, David Cohen, Rosemary Kamei and Peter Ortiz responded by raising concerns during last month's budget discussions on how the policy could have city leaders chasing popular priorities over communities with specific needs.

The proposal is set for a final City Council discussion on June 10 as part of the 2025-26 budget approval process.

"It's straight out of the toolkit of authoritarian governments where they're trying to quell dissent," Cohen told San José Spotlight. "In a representative democracy where we have 11 elected officials trying to make decisions, every vote shouldn't be unanimous. We should accept the fact that people have different ideas on how to get to the solution."

Cohen said he worries next week's budget discussion will focus mainly on another Mahan policy proposing the city arrest homeless people for refusing offers of shelter — potentially rendering the discussion on Pay for Performance as an afterthought.

"When I was raising what I thought were legitimate questions about whether this really had to come now, or whether we could delay it and have a more thorough discussion, the mayor was very dismissive of that," Cohen said.

Vice Mayor Pam Foley, who co-sponsored Pay for Performance, said it will benefit underserved residents rather than hurt them. She said the city manager will return to councilmembers in September with an analysis of the policy, and potential implementation in the next fiscal year. The most recent proposal disregards Mahan's originally-drafted policy to avoid needing San Jose voter approval.

"In some ways, it heightens the voice of the minority, because it elevates what you're saying to the group of the whole," Foley said at the May 14 Rules Committee meeting. "It's important to know I'm being held to a standard, and to be perfectly honest, this isn't going to affect me because I term out. I'm gone before this affects me at all, but it doesn't mean I don't have a role in the decision."



San Jose Mayor **Matt Mahan** wants to withhold up to 5% of San Jose elected officials' salaries if they fail to meet citywide goals. File photo.

At the meeting, Mahan said city leaders will be judged annually on focus area scorecards and dashboards using the same performance-based compensation model used for city department heads. His policy is similar to Silicon Valley's tech culture, where workers are judged based on merit.

Mahan did not return a request for comment.

If the mayor and councilmembers' collective performance falls below 100% of the adopted targets, 5% of their salaries will be proportionately reduced based on the actual achievement of the prioritized targets.

Pay is currently decided by the four-member Salary Setting Commission, which independently sets salaries for the mayor and councilmembers. The commission sets salaries that are revisited every five years, with the council and mayor receiving annual raises based on cost of living increases

— but no more than 5% a year. Councilmembers previously approved their own salaries, but that changed in 2018 when voters approved Measure U. Commissioners are appointed by the city's Civil Service Commission.

The Pay for Performance proposal would supersede the commission's authority. Instead, the commission would receive a yearly report on councilmembers' goals and performances after the report is first reviewed and approved by the council.

"As my colleague Councilmember Cohen recently wrote, 'accountability comes through elections, public hearings, audits and media scrutiny,'" Campos told San José Spotlight. "More exploration is needed to ensure that how we measure success in public service is reflective of the collaboration and leadership needed to bring long-term solutions to the communities we are elected to serve."

Councilmembers George Casey and Michael Mulcahy support the proposal. Casey said many of the performance measures already exist in both the public and private sector.

"There's a level of malaise and apathy folks have towards our political process, and the disconnect they believe exists between local politicians and actual issues that are important to them," Casey said at the meeting. "Demonstrating to them that we have skin in the game hopefully will engender some sort of revitalization or reinvigorate them and let them know that we are serious about the issues that are important to them."

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Times Local News**Bon voyage***Continued from page 1*

in the San Jose Youth Symphony, will open the concert with George Gershwin's Funny Face Overture, from his musical, Funny Face, which featured Fred Astaire on Broadway, dancing for the first time in top hat and tails.

Featuring orchestra violinists as soloists — Saarthak Shankavaram & An-Po Chen — the orchestra will perform Sarasate's virtuosic Navarra for Two Violins and Orchestra, a work inspired by Sarasate's birthplace in the Navarre region of Spain. And then the concert will close with Beethoven's most well-known and dramatic works, his Fifth Symphony!

Join us at our pre-concert Wine Reception, starting at 6:30 pm, to browse and bid on amazing items on display at our Silent Auction, an important SJYS fundraiser event, with all proceeds going to cover expenses related to the Tour. A fun event for everyone!

Saarthak Shankavaram, Associate Concertmaster of the Philharmonic Orchestra, is a junior at Prospect High School and has been playing violin since the age of 9. He has served as Concertmaster of String and Chamber Orchestras at his high school since his freshman year and has been a member of the San Jose Youth Symphony for the past four years. He has also won first prize in both the Chamber Orchestra's Concerto Competition in 2021



Saarthak Shankavaram,
Associate Concertmaster

and the Philharmonic Orchestra's Young Artist Competition in 2022.

An-Po Chen, Concertmaster of the Philharmonic Orchestra, has been with the San Jose Youth Symphony since 2022. Now a senior at Archbishop Mitty High School, An-Po is currently studying violin, conducting and chamber music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's Pre-College Academy. An avid chamber musician, his octet, which he led as 1st violinist, was named Ensemble Winner at Indiana University's 2024 Final Gala Concert. He has also performed as a soloist with the Philharmonic Orchestra as a winner of that orchestra's Young Artist Competition in 2022.

The San Jose Youth Symphony (SJYS) is one of the oldest and finest youth orchestras on the West Coast of the U.S. Founded over seven decades ago as part of the former San Jose Symphony, SJYS has a rich tradition of musical performance and education.

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<https://www.livinghopeam.org>
2650 Aborn Rd.
San Jose, CA 95135
(408) 592-7562
Pastor Shelia Sapp
"Bible Study" (Group Study Room) every Saturday at 12:00pm
OUR MISSION: Evangelizing our community and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. OUR MINISTRY: Training ministers on how to use their love for God to reach those in need of His love. OUR PASSION: Transforming lives within our community with God's love.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

6581 Camden Ave.
San Jose, CA 95120.
The Rev. Shelley Booth Denney, Rector
Phone: 408-268-0243
Web: www.eca-sj.org
At the Episcopal Church in Almaden (ECA), we are joyful followers of Jesus Christ. Through worship, study, fellow-

ship and outreach, we strive to nurture and grow a strong faith community of believers, a family of all ages, where each member feels welcomed, loved, valued and empowered to serve. Children are especially welcomed and cherished as an important part of God's family.



EVERGREEN ISLAMIC CENTER (EIC)

<http://www.eicsan-jose.org>
2486 Ruby Ave,
San Jose CA 95148.
(408) 239-6668
"As-Salaamu-Alaikum" the English meaning is "Peace be upon you".
Q) What is Islam, who are Muslims, and what is the Quran?
A) Islam is a faith and way of life. Islam began in the 7th century. People who follow Islam are known as Muslims. The Quran is the Divine book that guides Muslims to

practice Islam. "Hufazik Allah Waeayilatak" the English meaning is "May Allah (swt) protect you and your family". Please visit our website to learn more.

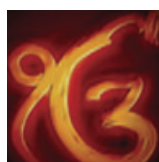


GRACE CHURCH OF EVERGREEN

www.GraceChurchEvergreen.Com
408-274-1200
See you on Facebook.
2650 Aborn Rd at Kettmann, across from the Public Library. Serving Evergreen for over 55 years.
John Goldstein Pastor. john@GraceChurchEvergreen.com. Christian worship every Sunday at 11am. Together we build better lives and a better community.
Music Institute (408) 791 7772. After School Piano, Violin, Other classical Instruments.
PreSchool, Ages 2-6 Caring for your child with God's love and affection.
Check our website for current activities.

**HOLY SPIRIT
CATHOLIC CHURCH**
Faith.Knowledge. Community - this is our

promise to our members. If you are looking for an active Christian faith community, we invite you to experience Holy Spirit Parish Community. All are welcome! We are located at 1200 Redmond Avenue, San Jose, CA 95120. Mass is celebrated at 8:30 a.m. Monday - Friday. Our weekend Mass schedule is Saturday 5 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Rite of Reconciliation is every Saturday at 4 p.m. or by appointment. Our Parish Office is open Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and Friday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Call 408-997-5100 for recorded information or 408-997-5101 to speak with someone in our parish office.



God is One
ੴ ਸਿਕ ਹੈ
Rab Ik Hai

**SAN JOSE
GURDWARA**
3636 Gurdwara Ave.
San Jose, CA 95148

The word Sikh (see-kh) means "disciple" or "student." A Sikh is a practitioner of the faith founded in the 15th century by Guru Nanak in Punjab of old British India. A Guru who is a "teacher" or "enlightener" completes the relationship of teaching and learning. Sikhism is monotheistic and stresses the equality of all men and women. Sikhs believe in three basic principles; meditating on the name of God (praying), earning a living by honest means and sharing the fruits of one's labor with others. Currently there are close to one million Sikhs living in the USA and Canada and 25 million Sikhs living around the world. Sikhism is the 5th largest religion in the world. At the Gurdwara (House of God) in San Jose we welcome all. We pray daily for peace and prosperity for everybody in the world. Come to visit and enjoy Langer (food) in our kitchen which is open 365 days of the year and serves complementary vegetarian meals. We also encourage you to enter our history room

on site and walk the beautiful grounds. Learn more about us and community events we sponsor by visiting our website; <http://www.SanJose-Gurdwara.org>

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC CHURCH

5111 San Felipe Rd., San Jose, CA 95135
408-223-1770
www.sfoasj.com
We invite you to join our community of faith located in the Evergreen area of San Jose. We are an inclusive diverse community striving to serve as Disciples of Jesus Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis, offering prayerful and joyful liturgies, evangelization, fellowship, and service opportunities to the community. We offer spiritual opportunities for all ages, including children's liturgy, dynamic E.C.H.O Jr. High, I.G.N.I.T.E. High School, & North Star Young Adult Ministries, along with small faith communities and opportunities to help the poor and marginalized of San Jose. Our Chapel, Gathering

Hall, Parish Office, Mission Center, Parish Gift Shop, and Memorial Garden are all located at 5111 San Felipe Rd. Please come join us in worship at any of the following times in our Chapel: Weekdays (M-Sa) at 8:30 AM; Saturdays at 4:00 PM (English) and 5:30 PM (Vietnamese); Sundays at 8:00 AM (English), 10:00 AM (English), 12:00 PM (English), 4:00 PM (Vietnamese), and 6:00 PM Youth Mass (English). The Villages Gated Community also features a Mass on Sundays at 8:15 AM at the Cribari Auditorium. For more information, please call or visit us at the Parish Office open M-F 9:00 AM -12:00 PM; 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM. Come join us and

share your presence with us so that together we may grow and share our gifts to help build God's Kingdom!



thepoint.church

THE POINT CHURCH
3695 Rose Terrasse Cir
San Jose, CA 95148
(408) 270-7646
English Service:
Sundays at 9:30 & 11:00 AM
Spanish Service:
11:00 AM
Cambodian Service:
11:00 AM
Cantonese Service:
11:00 AM
Mandarin Service:
11:00AM
Youth Extreme Point (7th-12th grade):
Every Saturday at 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM



**To place a worship
listing, email
times@timesmediainc.com**

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TAXES)**

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BRAKE JOB**

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**SCHEDULE TODAY: 408 - 477 - 2242
3519 SAN FELIPE ROAD
SAN JOSE, CA. 95135**