

San Jose Viet Museum remains closed amid lawsuit
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San Jose group targets small Eastside businesses to uplift neighborhood
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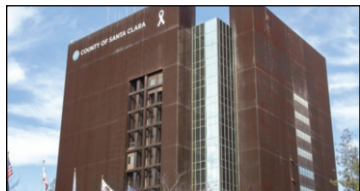


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The Santa Clara County Government Center is located at 70 W. Hedding St. in San Jose. File photo.

Santa Clara County tax measure wins lawsuit, stays on ballot

By Brandon Pho
San José Spotlight

Santa Clara County's 11th hour sales tax measure is moving forward — but the fate of its public hospitals might come down to several words.

A judge has ordered county officials to strike President Donald Trump's name from the ballot language as a reason for approving a five-eighths cent sales tax hike for the county hospital system. Superior Court Judge Carol Overton's Friday ruling also requires other edits to language that taxpayer advocates challenged as misleading and biased.

For instance, county leaders agreed to revise a line originally framing the tax as "protecting" against unprecedented Trump administration funding cuts. It

See LAWSUIT, page 7

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Youth from Evergreen Valley perform at Historic Sikh Gurdwaras in India

By Jyoti Kaur Rana
Special to the Times

This summer, a group of young students from Guru Nanak Khalsa School at Sikh Gurdwara San Jose and the Sikh Heritage Symphony traveled to India to share the timeless sounds of Sikh heritage music.

The youth, ages 9 to 22, performed Keertan (the devotional singing of Sikh scriptures) under the guidance of their teacher, Leena



Delhi: Bangla Sahib Gurdwara



Delhi: Sis Ganj Gurdwara

Singh, a long-time San Jose resident dedicated to Sikh musicology.

Their journey took them to some of the sacred historic Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) in Delhi and Punjab, including Bangla Sahib, Sis Ganj Sahib, Fatehgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Damdama Sahib, and finally the Golden Temple (Sri Darbar Sahib) in Amritsar.

What set these young performers apart was their devotion to presenting Gurmat Sangeet (Sacred Sikh Music) in its original, authentic form. They sang in Raags- the classical musical modes prescribed in the Sikh scriptures, and played Tanti Saaz, the traditional Sikh string instruments. Their ensemble featured

the Rabab, the very first instrument of Gurmat Sangeet, along with the Taus, Saranda, Dilruba, Swar Mandal, and the Sitar, an ancient and widely cherished instrument of Indian classical music.

The sound of the instruments played revealed their timeless importance, while the congregation, absorbed in the divine Shabad, radiated joy. Sangat members, deeply moved, requested encore after encore, filling the halls with emotion and gratitude. The effort was the result of years of discipline, long practice hours, and the tireless support of parents.

Performers included Jaspreet Singh and Raisa
See INDIA, page 4

Can Silicon Valley express lanes end traffic congestion?

By B. Sakura Cannestra
San José Spotlight

Silicon Valley's transportation agency wants to increase revenues from its highway express lanes, but advocates say they could save more money by strengthening public transit.

VTA serves as Santa Clara County's public transit operator and congestion management agency, overseeing the county's highways as well as its buses and light rail. As the agency grapples with its multiyear budget deficit, officials are looking to diversify its revenue

streams. The board of directors approved an expenditure plan for one segment of express lanes in April, which set aside about \$1 million annually for transit operating costs starting in 2028.

Casey Emoto, VTA chief engineering officer, said the agency has been incrementally installing express lanes on highways across Santa Clara County since 2012, when the agency opened the Highway 237/Interstate 880 express lane interchange.

For most of the highways, the agency is converting existing carpool lanes into express lanes. However, Emoto said they're considering expanding part of Highway 101 to add a second express lane from Dunne Avenue to the San Mateo County border.

"I think there's a lot of benefit to doing it," Emoto told San José Spotlight. "It helps get the money to transit faster than otherwise."

Funding for the project has been spo-



Silicon Valley commuters clog the highway as people travel between work and home. VTA is converting existing carpool lanes into express lanes in an effort to reduce traffic congestion. File photo.

radic, so the lanes are being installed in phases. The next phase includes the interchange between Highways 101 and 85, which Emoto said should be

fully functional in the next two years.

The agency is working on a strategic plan for the project,
See TRAFFIC, page 6

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Times Local News



Amritsar: SGPC

India

Continued from page 1

Kaur on Rabab, Amrit Kaur on Taus, Arni Manglani on Saranda, Kirpa Singh and Suhavi Kaur on Sitar, and Keerat Singh on Dillruba.

At several venues, faculty and leaders of Sikh academies commented that the performances themselves were “a lesson for students of Gurmat Sangeet in India,” setting an example of how devotion and authenticity can bring history alive.

The ensemble was honored and blessed at the Golden Temple by the Chief Head Granthi (head priest), recognized by the SGPC and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, and also received blessings from the

Jathedars (leaders) at Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib and Akal Takhat Sahib, two of Sikhism’s highest religious seats. These tributes carried profound significance, as such recognition is seldom accorded to visiting ensembles.

The tour was widely covered by newspapers and television stations in Delhi and Punjab, with headlines celebrating how children of the diaspora are bringing Sikh sacred music back to its birthplace.

The Sangat (congregation) everywhere responded with deep emotion. Many expressed amazement that young people raised in the West could sing so fluently in Raags while mastering complex instruments.

One elder described it as “not just music, but a spiritual blessing returned to us.”

Reflecting on the journey, Singh shared:

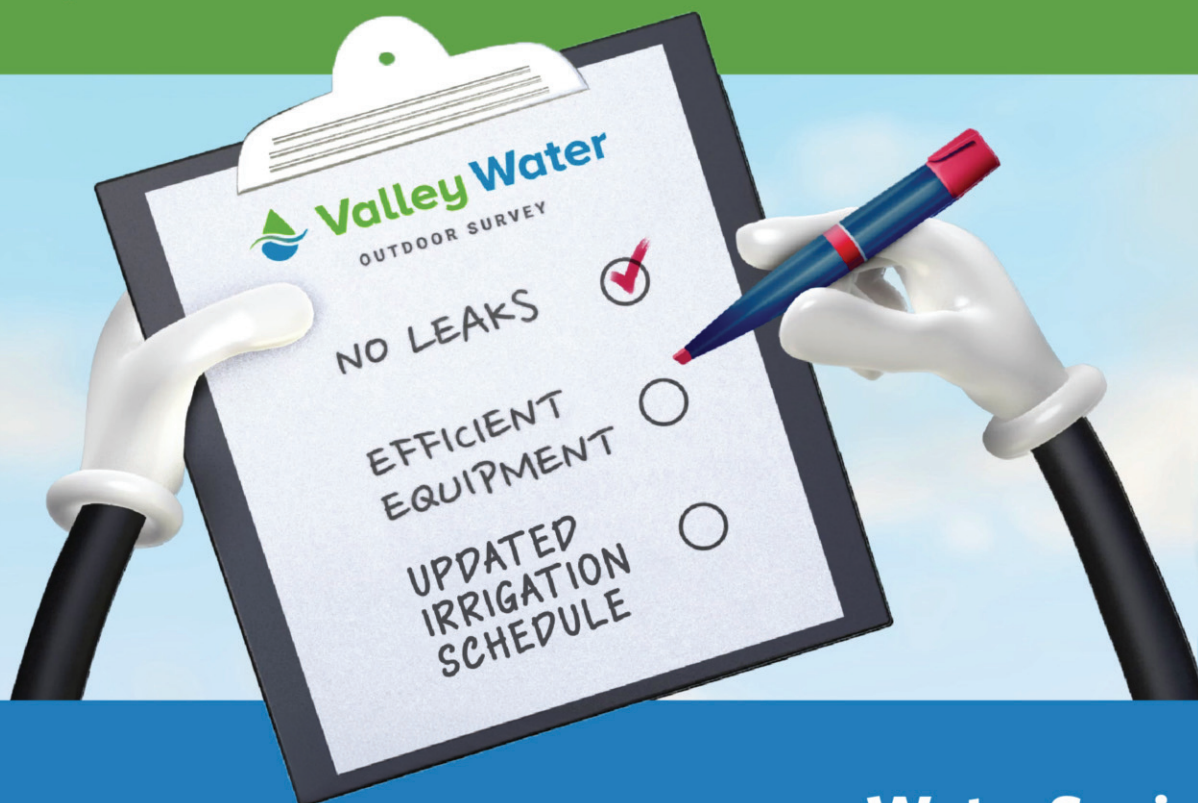
“To sit with my students in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and sing in prescribed Raags with Tanti Saaz at these historic Gurdwaras was beyond my dreams. This experience showed how today’s youth, even those born and raised in the West, can reconnect with their roots and revive Sikh heritage. I am truly grateful to the San Jose Gurdwara management committee for nurturing a dedicated school that helps these traditions thrive.”

For Evergreen Valley and the city of San Jose, the tour is a source of pride, showcasing the talent and dedication of local youth while highlighting how the Evergreen community continues to nurture cultural and spiritual traditions across generations.



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Times Local News

Traffic

Continued from page 1

which was reviewed by the Citizens Advisory Committee and will be presented at a VTA board meeting in October.

While interest in the express lanes has increased due to the revenue potential, they're mainly a congestion management tool. A VTA spokesperson said express lanes decrease travel time by up to 20 minutes during peak congestion.

"You're able to move more people to places they want to get to, and this is people driving solo, carpool, van transit (and) motorcycles," Emoto told San José Spotlight.

Those time savings may be coming at the cost of extra congestion for other commuters. Shams Tanvir, an assistant professor of civil engineering and construction engineering management at Long Beach State University and Mineta Transportation Institute researcher, said express lanes work in theory by discouraging drivers from traveling during peak hours. In practice, most driving commuters can't choose when to drive, and those who can't pay the toll are stuck in even worse traffic.

Another possible benefit of express lanes is the toll is normally discounted or removed for carpooling drivers. However, Tanvir said

the express lane by itself doesn't usually encourage people to carpool, and drivers would need another incentive to make the express lanes more practical.

"It works by discouraging people to drive by increasing the (toll), and who is going to be affected by that? People who are impacted by their wallet," Tanvir told San José Spotlight.

Harry Neil, who sits on the citizens advisory committee, said he doesn't buy into express lanes as the right way to improve congestion or a good revenue stream, especially if VTA expands Highway 101. Research shows expanding highways doesn't reduce traffic, and Neil said greenhouse gas emissions from more traffic go against VTA's climate goals.

He said the funding contribution to public transit isn't worth the negative climate impacts, especially since funds generated have to be used on the corridor where they're generated, per state law. To truly have the county's highway system pay for local transit, he suggested VTA could look into tolling on all highways where there is a reasonable transit alternative.

"If we are serious about our impact on the climate, if we are serious about mode-share shifting people out of single occupancy vehicles and onto transit, then we should be putting in all-lane toll lanes where high quality transit exists," Neil said.

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Times **Local News****Season opener**

Opera San José will open its 2025-26 season with Mozart's lighthearted and comedic "Cosi Fan Tutte," Sept. 14-28, 2025 at the California Theatre. Seen here in OSJ's 2017 production (from L to R) are **Colin Ramsey, Cassandra Zoe Velasco, Amanda Kingston, and David Blalock**. The new production allows the audience to choose the ending at every performance. In this dazzling new take, director Alek Shrader keeps all the wit, romance, and razor-sharp humor of Mozart's beloved comedy—but hands the fate of its lovers over to the crowd.

Lawsuit

Continued from page 1

will now say the tax would "address" those cuts. The ballot language's mention of Trump will be replaced with "the President."

County leaders are lauding the ruling and argue the new ballot language will look "substantively identical" to the one approved by the Board of Supervisors.

"Let me put it this way — everyone knows who the President of the United States is and who the president is who signed the law that has cut almost a trillion dollars from Medicaid," County Executive James Williams told San José Spotlight. "The fact that it says the president instead of President Trump — I don't think anyone will be confused about what's going on and why we're in the situation we're in."

Yet over the last three days both sides have been splitting hairs over phrasing — in some cases over single words — balancing the need to explain the tax measure's purpose with concerns about prejudicing voters.

"It sort of boggles the mind," Overton said in court Wednesday. "I know there are very educated and diligent people in this county ... but in our profession we wordsmith all the time. Is that the way most of the public sees things?"

Chris Robell, a San Mateo County resident who has sued to stop various tax and bond measures across the Bay Area, is a co-plaintiff in the lawsuit alongside Santa Clara County residents. He said the revisions are a step in the right direction, but the language is still biased.

"The ballot question is argumentative and full of reasons to vote 'Yes.' What they're putting on the question is too similar to what is on their argument in favor," Robell told San José Spotlight. "I believe this thing should state very simply, 'Shall the taxpayers of Santa Clara County adopt a .625% sales tax increase measure for general fund purposes?'"

Robell said he wouldn't have as much of an issue with the measure, known as Measure A, if it was a special tax.

"It's a general tax. Is health care really the nature of the measure?" Robell said.

"They can and probably will spend the money on other things, such as unfunded pension liabilities and raises."

County elections officials will implement

the ordered changes and proceed with ballot printing, translation and proofreading.

"Since we have not yet gone to print on ballots, voter guides or related materials, there is no need to reprint as long as any court ordered changes are timely," Michael Borja, spokesperson for the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters, told San José Spotlight.

The county is looking at \$1.5 billion in health care and social safety net program losses over the next few years after Congress passed H.R. 1, otherwise known as Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill." Meanwhile, the costs of the county's public hospital system — California's second largest — continue to grow. County leaders have said this is not a loss they can budget through, and higher taxes alone won't solve the issue.

But a lawsuit from leaders of the Silicon Valley Taxpayers Association and Libertarian Party said the county unlawfully placed the measure on the ballot. They argue the federal cuts don't constitute an emergency allowing for a sales tax vote on a non-general election year.

Overton's ruling disagreed — though all sides in court acknowledged a lack of legislative clarity in California on the definition of an "emergency."

Opponents say the measure reads as if the tax revenue is restricted to the county health care system. In reality, the proposed tax is a general tax which requires a lower approval threshold — a simple majority — and is easier to pass. It also gives the county more spending discretion. A special tax, which would restrict the spending of revenue, requires a higher approval threshold or a two-thirds supermajority.

Michael Elliott, executive director of non-profit Valley Health Foundation, which was set up to fundraise and lobby for the county health care system, is chairing the campaign committee in support of the county ballot measure. He said the ruling doesn't change Measure A's objective.

"Trump supporters and defenders of the so-called 'Big Beautiful Bill' fought to remove Trump's name from the ballot question because they know Santa Clara County voters reject the Trump agenda and strongly support public health," Elliott said in a statement in reaction to the ruling. "We will not let the Big Beautiful Bill — or those who defend it — stand in the way of public health and the care our community relies on."

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IN MEMORY

Dennis Lee Davenport

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Dennis Lee Davenport was born in Casper, Wyoming, to Jack and Bernyce Davenport, both originally from Nebraska. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Southern then Northern California, where Dennis would spend the rest of his life.

He attended Los Altos High School, where he excelled as a goalie on the water polo team, before enrolling at the University of Oregon to study architecture. Returning home, he earned his associate's degree at Foothill College and later completed a degree in Social Sciences at San Jose State University, followed by a degree in Education.

Though Dennis briefly tried his hand at teaching, he soon discovered his true passion lay in building and restoring homes. He partnered with his best friend for 46 years, Clark McDonald, and began "flipping" houses long before reality television made it popular.

When he wasn't improving homes, Dennis was often on the water. From a young age, he and his dad built his first boat, a 14-foot ski boat with a 36hp outboard motor



which they took to the San Francisco Bay, and the Delta.

Dennis was also known for his quick wit, encyclopedic knowledge of history, music, and his love of a good story or joke. He spent 12 years hiking with a group of friends known as Willie's Wanders and was as comfortable on a dance floor as he was at the helm of a boat.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Anne Lyman Davenport; his sons, Christopher James Davenport (Christine Davenport); Matthew Lyman Davenport (Darcy Davenport); his cherished grandchildren, Morgan, Sydney, Hailey, and Lucas; his sister, Susan of Mt. Shasta; and his brother, Mike of Florida.

Dennis will be remembered for his craftsmanship, adventurous spirit, humor, and the deep love he had for his family and friends.

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Movie Night Friday, September 19 at Meadowfair Park

By Domingo Candelas

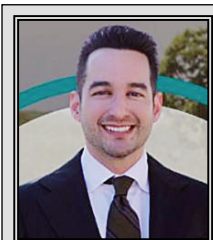
As our Music in the Square Summer Series comes to a close, I want to thank everyone who attended our final performance on Friday, August 29.

To fully close out the summer, a movie night is scheduled for Friday, September 19, at Meadowfair Park, in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department. More details to come, so stay tuned!

Lastly, we're putting the spotlight on small businesses in our newsletter!

Check out the "Small Business Spotlight" section to see which District 8 business we're featuring this time. Do you know a local gem you'd like to see highlighted?

It is my pleasure and privilege to serve as your City Councilmember.



Council Report

Domingo Candelas,
District 8 Councilmember

San Jose Viet Museum remains closed amid lawsuit

By Brandon Pho

San José Spotlight

San Jose's Viet Museum has been closed for months due to a political power struggle. Now its leaders are suing each other in an attempt to settle the matter for good.

The Immigrant Resettlement and Cultural Center — the nonprofit managing the old farmhouse in History Park that stores precious artifacts, photographs and art from local Vietnam War refugees — filed a lawsuit Aug. 14 against five people it claims are no longer legitimate board members.

"We spent months making painstaking efforts to show understanding and to honor the public standing of these five individuals. But it seems that nothing short of the total control or complete destruction of the Viet Museum would ever satisfy them," Quinn Tran, president and executive director of the Immigrant Resettlement and Cultural Center, said in a statement.

The dispute ties back to the retirement of Loc Vu, a Vietnam War veteran who



Visitors approach the Viet Museum in History Park during the 2024 Tet Festival in San Jose. Photo by Brandon Pho.

founded the museum, which opened a rift between him and the five board members as to who would succeed him as executive director. Vu accused board members of meeting secretly and violating the nonprofit's bylaws, while they accused Vu of nepotism and making suspicious bank withdrawals from the organization.

As a result, Vu deemed them illegitimate board members and called for a new board election in January — just months after

some members were elected in August 2024, according to the lawsuit.

History San Jose, the city's nonprofit steward of History Park, closed the museum in December until officials could get clarity on the dispute.

"We still do not have any clarity on which group is the official (Immigrant Resettlement and Cultural Center)," History San Jose President Bill Shroh said.



New executive director excited for this year's Christmas in the Park

By William Bellou

Publisher

Christmas in the Park's new executive director is excited and optimistic about his favorite most beloved event held annually in San Jose.

Ted Lopez is the new nonprofit's executive director after former director Debbie Degutis announced her resignation.

Lopez, a fourth-generation San Josean, says one of his family's annual holiday traditions is to take a photo under the massive tree at Plaza de Cesar Chavez, and he is looking forward to another photo there making sure it remains there for future generations. "We need to save Christmas. That's the way I look at it," Lopez said.

Lopez has some innovative ideas to promote the annual event and take on the many challenges confronting the organization. He's using his experience working in sales

for several sports teams including the San Francisco Giants and the Jacksonville Jaguars where he was vice president of ticketing.

"I'm coming in with a new approach," said Lopez.

Lopez said he is bringing back Christmas in the Park's reindeer mascot, Blinky, and promoting the launch of a new online merchandise store at christmasinthepark.myshopify.com.

"Every time someone buys a Blinky-branded dog bandanna or a Christmas in the Park hoodie dress, the nonprofit makes a little money, and the meter measuring holiday spirit goes up a notch," Lopez explained.

Lopez' main challenge this year is to attract more Silicon Valley companies as sponsors and open up sponsorships of positions at Christmas in the Park where students or interns can get hands-on experience in programming and robotics, improving the animatronic displays while training for careers.

More than 800,000 people walk through Plaza de Cesar Chavez Christmas In the Park displays each year, or visit the illuminated drive-thru, which is becoming a very popular venue.

Christmas in the park opens this year on November 28 — the opening date also for Blinky's Drive-Thru.



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Cars in the Park

The largest annual antique and classic auto show in the West

"A Living History Day" at History San Jose Sept. 13

The largest annual antique and classic auto show in the West will take place Saturday, September 13 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The 25th annual Cars in the Park presented by the Santa Clara Valley Model T Ford Club and History San José will take place on Saturday, September 13, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This event fills History Park (Kelley Park, 693 Phelan Ave, San José, CA) with 200 period-correct through 1949 vehicles, fire equipment, bicycles, and motorcycles of all makes.

Requirements for entering an antique or classic vehicle

There is no registration nor fee required to enter a vehicle. Just bring your antique vehicle to the gate at History Park. All vehicles permitted on the grounds of History Park, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. existed between the late 1800s through 1949 and are period-correct. No vehicle that doesn't meet



these requirements will be allowed on the grounds of History Park during the show.

The featured vehicles this year are Race Cars and Speedsters through 1931.

Also located on the grounds will be the Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association. There will be antique crafts demonstrated and antique collectibles displayed. The Silicon Gulch Dixieland Band will provide music. Listen to The Tonic Trio

Singers singing songs from the '20s and '30s. See toy trains operated, take a trolley ride and see blacksmith demonstrations. Take a photo with an antique auto at the Associated Oil Company Service Station. Activities are provided for kids. Food will be available from food trucks. Ice cream is available at O'Brien's Ice Cream Parlor.

Dennis Mattish, author of six books on the history of auto racing in Northern and Central California will be on hand to give a presentation in the theater on racing in the Bay Area.

Mike Hennessy, owner of Hennessy Automotive and host of The Car Guy Channel will be the announcer for the popular Model T Put-together event.

Please note there is NO alcohol and NO BBQs allowed inside the Park. Dogs on leashes are allowed. These are Park rules and must be followed.

Event activity schedule

- 12:00 Music by the Silicon Gulch Dixieland Band
- 1:00 Presentation: Bay Area Auto Racing
- 2:00 The Tonic Trio Singers
- 2:30 Model T Put-Together
- 3:30 Drawing for Door Prizes

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San Jose group targets small Eastside businesses to uplift neighborhood

By Joyce Chu
San José Spotlight

As East San Jose's Mayfair neighborhood struggles with poverty, gentrification and divestment, one group is creating a plan to uplift people economically.

Last year, workers with nonprofit Amigos de Guadalupe knocked on doors in Mayfair to learn about what residents need most. Residents said they want a way to make more income and have more affordable housing, according to Jose Murillo, director of place-based initiatives. The group put together a 10-year plan called the Neighborhood Prosperity Project to tackle poverty in underinvested areas, starting with Mayfair and branching out to other neighborhoods.

As part of that project, Amigos launched its business mentorship program Hecho en Mayfair in April.

The program, which translates to Made in Mayfair, aims to help small business owners grow their revenue by adjusting product pricing and securing more high-dollar contracts. They started with a cohort of 12 business owners who have already increased their revenue by a combined \$160,000 within four months, Murillo said.

"That's money that could be flowing through the neighborhood, reinvested over and over again," he told San José Spotlight.

Murillo said Amigos de Guadalupe acts as a mediator between the small business owners and the nonprofits and corporations to help secure contracts. Contracts can range from providing food at company events to plumbing services and cleaning. By getting organizations to pledge more investment in Mayfair small business owners, they can put money back into the local economy.

"In fact, if Mayfair residents had the proper resources and our folks were to earn the same as the average family in Santa Clara County, there would be an additional \$100 million every single year flowing through Mayfair," Murillo said.

"Imagine what that would mean for a community." Yolita, a business owner in the cohort who runs a catering business, said her life has changed since starting the program. She asked to only be identified by first name for privacy reasons. Prior to joining the program, she was often behind on paying her rent and bills.



Yolita has increased her revenue by \$100,000 since she joined the small business mentoring program, Hecho en Mayfair, through nonprofit Amigos de Guadalupe earlier this year. Photo by Joyce Chu.

Murillo and Neighborhood Business Development Manager Liana Salikhova helped Yolita properly price her services, including the time she spent buying groceries, preparing and delivering food. Yolita said she was shocked to see how much more she could be charging. Taking the leap to increase her pricing was scary at first, she said.

Amigos de Guadalupe gave Yolita a contract to provide food for one of its homeless shelter programs. In the past four months, she said her revenue has increased by \$100,000, allowing her to invest more in her business and secure more contracts.

Yolita brought on her mother to help so she doesn't have to work outside with her food cart during a time when U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is targeting

undocumented immigrants. She wants to make enough money so her mother can retire, and said the program has helped her accomplish her decades-long dream to spend more time with family and build a successful business.

"I have no words to express my gratitude," Yolita told San José Spotlight through a translator.

Victor Vasquez, co-executive director of SOMOS Mayfair and a partner with Amigos de Guadalupe in building community resiliency in the neighborhood, said a next step could be to link business owners with credit unions and provide business development through the Latino Business Foundation. He also wants to get neighbors more involved through community engagement and by forming their own cooperatives. SOMOS Mayfair has been on the forefront of incubating cooperative businesses over the past decade.

"The problem that we're tackling is economic injustice that we face," Vasquez told San José Spotlight. "In order for us to do that, we have to create a movement to address that economic injustice through advocacy but also build our own institutions that help our communities have prosperity."

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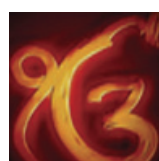


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