

# Golden Cultural Alliance

## 2023 Golden Candidate Survey

The Golden Cultural Alliance (GCA) is a nonprofit cooperative organization comprising over 20 arts, cultural, and civic entities in Golden. Our mission is to develop and promote awareness of Golden's rich cultural and historic assets, support member organizations by sharing resources and expertise, and provide a platform for innovative ideas through cooperative marketing, projects, events, and public outreach.

Our organization designed the questionnaire below for all candidates running for public office in Golden to gain insights into their stance on arts and culture. Candidates were initially contacted on September 8, 2023, with a response deadline of October 5, 2023, at 5 p.m. In the event of non-response by the deadline, candidates were granted an extension until midnight on the same day. Out of eleven candidates, eight provided responses, while three did not.

The survey questions posed to the candidates were:

1. What initiatives or policies do you plan to support or implement to promote the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the City of Golden?
2. How will arts and culture play a role in your plans for community planning, investment, and an overall economic development agenda?
3. Colorado has a strong culture of public funding to support arts and culture. What role should the City of Golden play in funding arts and culture?
4. Engaging diverse communities is essential for a thriving arts and culture environment, and Golden's arts and culture nonprofits often lead the way in discussions of these issues. How will you ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported? Is this issue a priority for you?
5. Long-term planning is crucial for the sustained growth of arts and culture. What is your vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years?
6. Finally, can you share a personal anecdote or experience that illustrates the transformative power of arts and culture in your life?

The questionnaire results follow, organized by last name and grouped by the office being sought. Candidates who did not participate are denoted with "did not participate" next to their name. Candidate responses are presented in unedited form - spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors were preserved. We added only minor formatting adjustments for improved readability.

Thank you for exploring this document. Golden's thriving arts and culture scene is cherished year-round by residents and visitors alike. We enhance our community's well-being, work tirelessly to preserve our unique identity, fuel valuable economic growth, and foster civic engagement. These creative endeavors serve as a source of inspiration, connectivity, and innovation. We believe it is essential for candidates to have a solid grasp of how our organizations contribute to our community.

For further information regarding Golden elections, registration, and voting locations, please visit [www.cityofgolden.net/live/elections/](http://www.cityofgolden.net/live/elections/). Above all, please remember to exercise your right to VOTE!

Hassan Najjar  
President, Golden Cultural Alliance  
Executive Director, Foothills Art Center

## **Waquim Filsaime – Mayoral Candidate**

**What initiatives or policies do you plan to support or implement to promote the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the City of Golden?**

*Initiatives that I plan to support regarding the growth and accessibility of the arts and culture within the city of Golden falls under my Business Enrichment sector in my campaign agenda – The Golden Ambition Initiative.*

*The Filsaime Administration would work with many school boards around the state to invite education facilities and their students for field trips to our museums annually. This action would increase the elevation and notoriety of our city. With this enhanced partnership, our exhibits and museums can increase donations from visitors and parents. This could accelerate our throw on the world stage even more.*

**How will arts and culture play a role in your plans for community planning, investment, and an overall economic development agenda?**

*Arts and culture will play a paramount role for my plans involving community planning, investment and overall economic development. This category cascades under my Business Enrichment sector in my campaign agenda – The Golden Ambition Initiative.*

*During my tenure I plan on collaborating with my administration alongside RTD to implement a trolley that arrives from the W-line train station to downtown Golden. This movement will dramatically assist with parking, congestion and drive supplementary traffic to our honorable museums and businesses.*

**Colorado has a strong culture of public funding to support arts and culture. What role should the City of Golden play in funding arts and culture?**

*The role the Filsaime Administration should play is acting as a third-party Advisory Board. We would schedule quarterly momentum meetings offering assistance on federal and state backed grants, compassion training, & aligning solutions with opportunity to current organization challenges.*

**Engaging diverse communities is essential for a thriving arts and culture environment, and Golden's arts and culture nonprofits often lead the way in discussions of these issues. How will you ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported? Is this issue a priority for you?**

*The Filsaime Administration will ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported by building various competitions among the artists. We will provide the opportunity for citizens to vote for their most favorable collection, and the winner will be presented at the first annual Golden Awards hosted by the Mayor. Journalists and media outlets from all over the globe will have the opportunity to attend and document the ceremony.*

**Long-term planning is crucial for the sustained growth of arts and culture. What is your vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years?**

*The Filsaime Administration vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years would go alongside the Compass Inclusion sector in my campaign agenda – The Golden Ambition Initiative.*

*We plan to expand the city limits within the City of Golden and incorporate our precious unincorporated territory. We will move west and sway additional communities to influence residents underneath the Golden realm. With a surplus of territory and increased traffic, Golden's historic museum centers will have the opportunity to expand into a larger facility that can accommodate more significant designs. This expansion will also increase the City of Golden GDP and ease bottlenecks in downtown Golden.*

**Finally, can you share a personal anecdote or experience that illustrates the transformative power of arts and culture in your life?**

*In November of 2011, I was honorably invited inside the White House in Washington D.C. This experience illustrated a comprehensive panorama of the arts and culture in my life. I had the opportunity to view honorable sculptures of civil rights leaders and those moments inspired me even further to achieve my dream of becoming a prestigious world leader with a statue of my own in the nearby future.*

*You can learn more about the Golden Ambition Initiative by visiting [AGoldenNewEra.com](http://AGoldenNewEra.com)*

## **Country Joe MacDonald – Mayoral Candidate**

*Hi, I am running for Mayor and I am grateful for you reaching out to me and want to apologize for not getting it on time to respond-I am very much into the arts and want to advance them as much as possible and the most memorable thing that happened to me was where I showed up as an extra on a movie set and got to talk in a movie;It was very memorable to this day!!!!!! Thank you!!!*

## **Heather Schneider – Mayoral Candidate**

**What initiatives or policies do you plan to support or implement to promote the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the City of Golden?**

*The City of Golden recently funded an Arts and Culture Strategic Master Plan that was presented to the community on August 29 and adopted in September 2023. Based on the City's investment in this Plan as well as the input provided by over 500 Golden residents, this is a fantastic roadmap that should be used starting point when looking at initiatives and policies that support promoting the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the community of Golden. However, I think that any specific initiatives or policies that are developed should be driven by the arts and culture organizations, alongside our residents and businesses, to make sure it best aligns with the goals of the community.*

**How will arts and culture play a role in your plans for community planning, investment, and an overall economic development agenda?**

*There is no doubt that arts and culture serve as an important economic driver that should be considered a high priority in our community's planning, investments and overall economic development agenda.*

**Colorado has a strong culture of public funding to support arts and culture. What role should the City of Golden play in funding arts and culture?**

*Because arts and culture serve as an important part of our community's well-being as well as a big economic driver, the City should consider investments in arts and culture.*

**Engaging diverse communities is essential for a thriving arts and culture environment, and Golden's arts and culture nonprofits often lead the way in discussions of these issues. How will you ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported? Is this issue a priority for you?**

*This is absolutely a priority for me since engaging diverse communities has a positive impact to our community in so many ways! I would support this at the City Council level but also rely on the member organizations of the Golden Cultural Alliance to help foster ideas and implement ways that underrepresented groups and contributions are included and supported.*

**Long-term planning is crucial for the sustained growth of arts and culture. What is your vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years?**

*The City has already made a significant investment in funding its 5-year Arts & Culture Master Plan. My vision is, collectively with GCA and other key arts and culture stakeholders, to look at the recommendations and implementation plan provided in this Master Plan to make sure it aligns with the City's strategic plan and investments.*

**Finally, can you share a personal anecdote or experience that illustrates the transformative power of arts and culture in your life?**

*Having been born and raised in Golden, I have fond memories of visiting the Pioneer Museum (now the Golden History Museum), countless hours spent in the Golden Library and helping my neighbor, Esther Papenfus, make crochet snowflakes to sell at the Foothills Art Center's Holiday Art Market in the 1980s. These collective experiences were one of many parts of my childhood in Golden that has had a positive impact on my life. Fast forward to my current role as the Executive Director at the Golden Civic Foundation, through my trusted and credible relationships with all of the nonprofits that make up the GCA, I have seen first hand the value that these organizations bring to our community.*

## **Charlie Sturdavant – Mayoral Candidate**

*I have always been a supporter and an active participant in the arts culture of Golden. My family has supported the Colorado Railroad Museum, Dinosaur Ridge (my wife and I are both geologists). We have been active participants in the Foothills Art Center, Janine was on the board of directors for many years. She has a studio in the old art center building, and I will join her with my jewelry bench, when the project is completed. We have been participants in the Clear Creek History Park. We are long-time participants in Miners Alley Playhouse. We donate to Golden Today and have donated mineral specimens to the CSM Museum.*

*I think the Art in Public places program should continue. It is one of those parts of Golden that make it special. I have heard many favorable responses from visitors about the bronze art forms throughout Golden.*

*In a study by Keen Independent Research, it was found that 77% of Goldenites think the city should support the arts better than they have in the past, and I agree. They also recommended a liaison with the city regarding arts and culture. The city should develop an Arts advisory Board to City Council.*

*The new projects by Foothills Art Center and Miners Alley Playhouse are the types of projects which will add to the culture of Golden for many years into the future.*

*When I was in college at Oregon Sate University, I was fully occupied with my studies as well as running on the rack team. I had little time for much else, but I always had a need for a creative outlet, mainly working with my hands. I discovered a fun little place under the stairs of the student Union building called the craft shop. I first joined it to utilize the dark room, but soon discovered the lapidary shop, then through the years I became talented enough that I taught class for other students. I even learned to throw a few pottery items. This was what saved my sanity through 6 years of acedemia.*

## **Laura Weinberg – Mayoral Candidate**

**What initiatives or policies do you plan to support or implement to promote the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the City of Golden?**

*I know how important the arts are to enrich lives, bring people of different backgrounds together, and create community connections. That is why elevating Golden's culture has been a priority of mine since 2019 when I was on City Council before my first term as Mayor. I met with many Golden Cultural Alliance members to learn how the city can support organizations and how public funding could be used. In the past four years, I brought city councilors together to discuss and agree on a lodging tax question. Our successful lodging tax vote in 2021 provides for significant funding opportunities for community organizations to grow and attract new audiences.*

*In January 2022, I brought forward a Strategic Plan proposal to create an Arts & Culture Master Plan. I researched other cities and then worked with Councilor Haseman and Steve Glueck to meet with three Colorado cities to dive deeper. The city conducted a planning process in 2023 and Council adopted the final Arts and Culture Master Plan on September 26. I am excited to have this framework for future work and investment.*

*Going forward, I support assigning a city staff liaison with the GCA, individuals, and organizations. I will prioritize realigning our volunteer boards to ensure that we have community members addressing the higher-level strategies for Golden's culture, reviewing guidelines for city grants for arts and culture, and continuing the important work of developing and managing our public art collection. With these resources in place, the City can coordinate the process to become a certified Colorado Creative District. Additionally, I am interested in the possibility of a 1% for the arts policy as has been successfully adopted in many cities and at the state level.*

**How will arts and culture play a role in your plans for community planning, investment, and an overall economic development agenda?**

*The work that we have done has laid a great foundation for creating a sustainable creative community. Future efforts need to identify long-term capital projects that will benefit the city, consider affordable housing programs for artists to live and work in, and look at arts and culture entrepreneurship programs and workforce development.*

*Golden has long supported entrepreneurs and should include support for creative individuals in our community. Workforce development opportunities for our cultural organizations could include support for internship programs or work/study programs for students. We should also pursue the opportunity to become a Colorado Creative District which would bring greater awareness and recognition to Golden's culture as well as opportunities to reach new audiences through targeted marketing with the Colorado Tourism Office.*

*Finally, events are often tied to Golden's culture. I support a new cultural event that would be coordinated across GCA members, held in the shoulder season when local businesses need customers, and accessible to all community members who want to enjoy a uniquely Golden experience.*

**Colorado has a strong culture of public funding to support arts and culture. What role should the City of Golden play in funding arts and culture?**

*The City must continue to support a robust arts and culture community while providing an equitable playing field for funding. Emerging new artists and programs must be given consideration along with well-established organizations.*



*Our new lodging tax provides the City with additional funds for grants. Clear guidelines for eligibility, a transparent process, and a common understanding of how funds are supporting Golden's culture are key. I know that a dedicated staff liaison along with committed volunteers on the cultural board will take our community even further with the new funding available.*

**Engaging diverse communities is essential for a thriving arts and culture environment, and Golden's arts and culture nonprofits often lead the way in discussions of these issues. How will you ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported? Is this issue a priority for you?**

*Yes, this is a priority. I am encouraged by the work of other cities and the opportunity to learn how they support nonprofits to engage communities.*

*I supported the Native American Ethnographic Study and am interested in additional opportunities to bring in groups for conversation as well as perhaps performances or classes. The city has completed its Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan, and the community task force is working to implement the recommendations to cultivate a culture of inclusion and belonging in the city. To me this means people of different backgrounds, experiences, and abilities can "see" themselves represented in Golden in all facets of life including our arts and culture.*

**Long-term planning is crucial for the sustained growth of arts and culture. What is your vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years?**

*My ultimate vision is that Golden is known as much for its culture as it is for outdoor recreation. Investment in public spaces for events, performances, public art, and more is critically important to achieving that vision. We need to also invest in the people and organizations bringing classes and other educational opportunities to the community. Finally, I know that increasing the coordination of efforts in communication, planning, and programming through dedicated resources and defined processes will go a long way to take existing strong organizations to the next level of success.*

**Finally, can you share a personal anecdote or experience that illustrates the transformative power of arts and culture in your life?**

*I am a supporter of the arts through my memberships and subscriptions, participation in programs and events, and work helping organizations improve. There are examples I could give from that lens, but I want to give an example from the lens of a performer and mother.*

*I was a dancer from early childhood through college. The opening of Virtuosity Dance Studio in Golden brought the opportunity to not only take classes again, but to also perform on stage for the first time in years. It took courage putting myself out there as an older dancer, and it has been incredibly rewarding. I have made new friends and connections in my community. I have found joy again in providing entertainment and smiles to an audience. I have a newfound appreciation for all that it takes to produce a show. I have also created memorable experiences with my daughters as a fellow performer and not just "Mom". I still dance when I have time and last performed in May. It was my daughter's last show before graduation. The love and encouragement she experienced from our dance family will stick with both of us for a lifetime.*

## **Matt Duncan – District 1 Councilor Candidate**

**What initiatives or policies do you plan to support or implement to promote the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the City of Golden?**

*I believe the first step is listening to the community at large and, specifically, hearing from those most invested in the arts and culture in our city. Once the completed City of Golden Arts and Culture Strategic Master Plan is finalized, we use the ideas generated from the information collected to form a plan as a city. I do support the ideas from the draft that include promoting the educational experience of art, seeking partnership opportunities, and continuing to find creative ways to engage our citizens in the promotion of arts and culture. Our goal as a City Council should be taking the ideas and input of the community and shaping our city around that feedback.*

**How will arts and culture play a role in your plans for community planning, investment, and an overall economic development agenda?**

*We need to be looking at the best use of City investments and I believe arts and culture is a place we should make some of that investment for our community enjoyment. Public events that can include Golden based restaurants with food/drink for purchase will bring both the community together and support our local businesses. I'd be looking for feedback from businesses as well who have participated in food for purchase at public events on what would be best practice.*

**Colorado has a strong culture of public funding to support arts and culture. What role should the City of Golden play in funding arts and culture?**

*I believe the city should focus funding provided for arts and culture to events that are a direct benefit to the citizens of Golden. The city should help the promotion of arts and culture events occurring in the city sponsored by various groups. As mentioned in the draft strategic plan, we should be talking with other cities, especially those of similar size, to understand what has worked well and again talking with our Golden community on their interests.*

**Engaging diverse communities is essential for a thriving arts and culture environment, and Golden's arts and culture nonprofits often lead the way in discussions of these issues. How will you ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported? Is this issue a priority for you?**

*I would be looking to the art and culture organizations to bring forward issues that they see on how the city could improve. I'd personally be open to meeting with organizations to hear where they believe groups are underrepresented and what steps should be taken to enact positive change.*

**Long-term planning is crucial for the sustained growth of arts and culture. What is your vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years?**

*It would be great to see more neighbors downtown enjoying music and arts open to the public. Having attended the pre-movie concerts for Movie & Music in the Park, I think bringing in more musical talent either from local musicians or from the greater Denver area to Golden via the public concert setting is a great way to continue to promote arts and culture in the community. This could be expanded into other areas to include family friendly comedians, short films, and even truncated/modified musicals or plays to promote the various artistic forms.*

**Finally, can you share a personal anecdote or experience that illustrates the transformative power of arts and culture in your life?**

*High school was my last experience as a thespian. In truth I was skeptical about participating and my mom told me I could either join the spring musical or lose my car, so the answer was pretty clear. It was my senior year and I auditioned for a role in the chorus. It was South Pacific, and the chorus consisted mainly of military/Navy personnel. I had always enjoyed singing and this brought harmony to a new level, joining with about 20 total people in the chorus. I made some great friends in the process and met people I would have otherwise not crossed paths with had it not been for the musical. It was a high school memory that will continue to stand out for me and encouraged my love for the arts. My wife and I continue to attend musicals, plays, concerts, ballets, and other events. Over the years, my favorite continues to be The Christmas Carol as the redemptive story of Scrooge always brings joy during the Christmas season.*

## **Lisa Vitry – District 1 Councilor Candidate**

**What initiatives or policies do you plan to support or implement to promote the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the City of Golden?**

- a. *I support the City Council's decision on 9/26 to approve the adoption of resolution 3003. A resolution of the City Council, of the City of Golden adopting the 2023 Arts and Culture Strategic Master Plan as a document guiding the ongoing work of defining and supporting arts and culture.*
- b. *I support the City's recommendation to create an Arts and Culture Advisory Board*
- c. *I support the City's recommendation for the City Manager to designate an Arts and Culture Liaison proving this is not an additional staff member, but is an additional duty assigned to a current staff member.*

**How will arts and culture play a role in your plans for community planning, investment, and an overall economic development agenda?**

- a. *The new master plan is an excellent guiding document and an Advisory Board who can effectively engage the public and foster a partnership with the Public Art Commission will be a comprehensive community approach.*
- b. *My plan is to look to the Arts and Culture Advisory Board and their partnerships for strong, cost-effective, inclusive plans and proposals for arts and culture in community planning, investment, and an overall economic agenda.*

**Colorado has a strong culture of public funding to support arts and culture. What role should the City of Golden play in funding arts and culture?**

- a. *Currently, in 2023, Thriving Communities grants were obtained for Arts and Culture for a total of \$139,500. This funding went to 5 organizations.*
- b. *I support the City's Thriving Communities team continuing to apply for the grants, and work with the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee.*

**Engaging diverse communities is essential for a thriving arts and culture environment, and Golden's arts and culture nonprofits often lead the way in discussions of these issues. How will you ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported? Is this issue a priority for you?**

- a. *With the creating of the Arts and Culture Advisory Board, Golden has a timely and unique opportunity to ensure artists and culture contributions of underrepresented groups are included and supported.*
- b. *The Arts and Culture Advisory Board's operation and focus of support statement should include language that ensures underrepresented groups are included and supported.*

**Long-term planning is crucial for the sustained growth of arts and culture. What is your vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years?**

- a. *I look to the new Foothills Art Center to be the community hub for Golden's Arts and Culture. It is an exciting, sustainable approach to centralize community engagement and creates unique and positive experiences and exposures to our Arts and Culture community for years to come.*

**Finally, can you share a personal anecdote or experience that illustrates the transformative power of arts and culture in your life?**

- a. *My dog, Mocha, and I are a registered Animal Therapy Team. We volunteered at Kullerstrand Elementary school for 2 years, providing weekly emotional support to students and staff. In November 2022, on the day after Jefferson County School Board voted to close Kullerstrand permanently in May 2023, we spent the day in the classrooms. Mocha and I walked into a very teary kindergarten class. We sat with the students, and I read Mocha's book, Mocha's Wonderous Adventures, to them. The students were then tasked with drawing a picture about Mocha's adventures. As Mocha and I walked around to each student, I was amazed to see the power of the human animal bond transcend into art and into diverse cultures. As each student explained their art to me, some in English and some in Spanish, their tears disappeared and were replaced with smiles. It was a truly transformational experience for me, and I will be encouraging the staff at the other elementary schools we volunteer at to incorporate art into Mocha's therapy visits.*

## **Jacob Luria – District 1 Councilor Candidate**

Did not participate

## **Mary Weaver – District 1 Councilor Candidate**

Did not participate

## **Patty Evans – District 2 Councilor Candidate**

**What initiatives or policies do you plan to support or implement to promote the growth and accessibility of arts and culture within the City of Golden?**

*Golden has invested in the growth of arts and culture through the support of Miners Alley Playhouse and Foothills Art Center in what I hope will be anchors of a new arts district in the downtown area. While those are the most visible growing organizations, Golden has many other arts and cultural destinations that bring us inspiring music, special events, connections to our history, and so much more. I want to ensure that all these valuable community assets are spotlighted and supported so we have a rich array of opportunities for people to engage in the arts.*

**How will arts and culture play a role in your plans for community planning, investment, and an overall economic development agenda?**

*Arts and culture are an economic driver for Golden businesses. Visitors and residents alike come to our cultural attractions and also generate revenue for other local businesses and restaurants. I would partner with the arts and culture community to ensure we're feeding the growing appetite for what they offer and acknowledging their contributions to our city.*

**Colorado has a strong culture of public funding to support arts and culture. What role should the City of Golden play in funding arts and culture?**

*Grants through the Thriving Communities program funded by the lodging tax will continue to support the arts in Golden, and the implementation of the Arts and Culture Master Plan will also provide organizational and logistical support to the thriving organizations in our community. I heartily support both these grants and organizational support.*

**Engaging diverse communities is essential for a thriving arts and culture environment, and Golden's arts and culture nonprofits often lead the way in discussions of these issues. How will you ensure that underrepresented groups and their artistic and cultural contributions are included and supported? Is this issue a priority for you?**

*The arts and culture community is a leader in recognizing diverse talent and I am supportive of those ongoing efforts. I also love the emphasis the Golden History Museum has been placing on our Native American history and the increased understanding that can foster. I believe that highlighting diverse performers and artists will draw on a diverse audience and enrich our community.*

**Long-term planning is crucial for the sustained growth of arts and culture. What is your vision for Golden's arts and cultural landscape in the next 5 to 10 years?**

*I appreciate all of the effort that went into the newly approved Arts and Culture Master Plan. I am supportive of a lot of these initiatives and recommendations, particularly the focus on arts education, highlighting Golden's commitment to arts and culture. and streamlining how things are organized so we can better share information and resources.*



**Finally, can you share a personal anecdote or experience that illustrates the transformative power of arts and culture in your life?**

*I've regularly sought out art and cultural experiences throughout my life. While I've been to countless shows and performances, the most transformative experience involved a dear friend from grade school. He has had a successful singing career and watching him and his band headline a show at Red Rocks a few years ago was truly inspiring – for me, others in the audience, and the dozens of young singers they invited to take the stage with them.. Natural talent, a lot of hard work, and a little bit of luck turned my childhood friend into an inspiration for thousands.*

## **Ben Moline – District 2 Councilor Candidate**

Did not participate