

# San Jose Mercury News

## Gilroy mayoral race: “experience” faces off against “new style” of leadership in race to helm Gilroy

Political newcomer Greg Bozzo takes on incumbent mayor Marie Blankley to lead Gilroy



Gilroy mayoral candidate Greg Bozzo (left) and incumbent candidate Marie Blankley (right). (Courtesy Photos)



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With Election Day less than a month away, Gilroy residents face a choice between a tried leader and a political newcomer to lead their city as it grapples with the stark shortage of firefighters and police officers amid shrinking sales tax revenue.

Incumbent Mayor Marie Blankley — who is touting her accomplishments and experience as mayor and her financial know-how as a certified public accountant — is vying against Greg Bozzo, who has limited political experience, but believes that he can shake up the system to attract more economic development and bring more voices to Gilroy government.

As mayor, they must tackle a slew of issues facing the city, from [balancing quality of life issues](#) with abatement and aid for the largest homeless population per capita in the county and bolstering economic development.

Blankley, 60, has served as mayor since 2020 and previously as city councilmember for two years. The Gilroy native leans on her 36-years experience as a CPA to argue that she would be a good financial steward of the city. She also points to a list of accomplishments like [attracting a new Sharks ice-skating center](#), adding more public transit — like [the fourth Caltrain trip to Gilroy](#), as well as strides in commercial development and street repair.

Blankley argues that with the first two years of her term dominated by COVID recovery, a full term would allow her to bring in more businesses, improve more infrastructure, continue pushing for more public transit from Caltrain and the Valley Transportation Authority and make steps towards a community center in the heart of Gilroy.

“I am in the middle of getting so much done for Gilroy,” said Blankley. “I want to see that through. I want to have a full mayoral term to do it.”

Blankley’s endorsements include the Gilroy Police Officers Association, the Santa Clara County Association of Realtors and the Gilroy Business Political Action Committee.

However, Greg Bozzo, 57, believes that the current leadership in Gilroy has been unable to unlock the city’s “full potential.” The native Gilroy resident founded and runs GB Landscaping Services and says that the city has been held back by leadership’s unwillingness to collaborate and communicate with the community at large and by poor morale among city staff.

“I believe that the collective personal and professional experiences of the people of Gilroy are more than enough to fix our issues,” said Bozzo. “It’s just going to take a different type of person to harness all of that collective experience to help fix our problems.”

Most of his solutions for the city center on a theme of collaboration between the city and community members: With better collaboration, he believes the city could bring in private businesses and acquire aid from non-profits on homelessness. He is also a former president of the Garlic Festival Association and a staunch proponent of [the push to bring back Gilroy’s famed festival](#). The city, however, does not have an official

role in running the event, though Bozzo argues that better collaboration with the Association would help bring the event back.

Bozzo is endorsed by the Gilroy Firefighters Association and the Nor Cal Carpenters Union.

If elected, he hopes to “review and renew” the goals of Gilroy, assess how well the current city manager is doing his job, and reinstate citizen-led committees focused on different issues facing Gilroy.

Even so, some have questioned Bozzo’s qualifications because he has not previously served in any elected capacity in Gilroy. Bozzo dismisses these concerns outright. “I’m running not because Gilroy lacks experience — Gilroy lacks leadership,” said Bozzo, who argued that his leadership style was “desperately needed.”

Blankley, for her part, rejects the notion that she has been unwilling to listen to her constituents and the community. “I don’t think there’s any merit to that whatsoever,” she said. “All I’ve ever done is tried to make it so that it’s completely fair for everybody who wants to be heard.”

Despite their disagreement on the state of city leadership, both candidates agree on the need for affordable housing for Gilroy, more economic development, and addressing homelessness.

Blankley hopes to advocate for more funding for deeply affordable housing and push back against regional rules that make affordable housing out of reach for Gilroyans, who have a lower median income than their counterparts throughout the county. Bozzo hopes to explore rezoning areas near retail hubs to create mixed, higher density housing – which he hopes could simultaneously bolster flagging retail.

When it comes to homelessness, Blankley says that she would hope that those who are in need can be connected to services, but voices concerns over others in the homeless population involved in drug use and drug dealing and public safety issues that may arise from that. She also wants to explore conservatorships as a way to get those struggling with mental health issues connected to services. Bozzo hopes to bolster collaboration with nonprofits and create a central hub where city services, nonprofits, and law enforcement can provide services for homeless residents.

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