

Alejandra Salinas | At-Large City Council

1. How do you personally participate in the arts and culture in Houston?

My wife, Elizabeth, and I are big fans of the Houston arts scene. One of our favorite date night activities is taking in a show at the Alley Theatre and Stages or visiting an exhibit at the Menil or Museum of Fine Arts. In fact, our very first date was the Alley Theatre's production of *The Humans*.

As a member of Leadership Houston, I was also fortunate enough to visit Freedmen's Town Museums and Buffalo Soldiers National Museum, where I learned more about the incredibly rich history of African American trailblazers in Houston.

My Leadership Houston class recently unveiled its 2025 project, *Seats of History: A Tribute to Houston's Wards Through Art* at Johnny Goyen Park beside the University of Houston Downtown. "Painted by students from Houston's six wards with muralist EMPYRE these benches are more than places to sit. Each bench tells the story of a ward reflecting its history and spirit while connecting the past to the future in a way that sparks engagement and celebrates the rich cultural tapestry of our city."

Most recently, we also attended our first Mariachi Festival, which was a remarkable display of Latino music, talent, and pride.

2. What specific strategies would your administration undertake to ensure the growth and stability of the creative sector by making it possible for individual artists to live and work in the City?

Affordability is more and more of a challenge for all Houstonians. There are a few things the city can do:

The cost of housing (for rent and for purchase):

While housing is more affordable and accessible in Houston than many other large cities, prices continue to rise beyond the levels many Houstonians can afford.

The city needs to maintain a pro-housing environment, encouraging responsible housing development (e.g., safe housing that does not contribute to flooding and has the infrastructure to support it), and investing in infrastructure that can support

additional housing. Common sense tells us that we need to increase housing supply in order to bring prices down.

I support the city's Livable Places Initiative, which incentivizes smaller, neighborhood-scale homes such as garage apartments, courtyard style developments and other developments of eight units or less. My hope is that the initiative works to increase the supply of housing that is affordable, particularly for working-class Houstonians.

Reliable public transportation:

Until recently, we've made slow but steady progress on transit, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure. Depending on where you live, you don't always have to own and maintain a car in Houston. I support multi-modal transportation and the city's Complete Streets initiative.

In the short term, I support Council Member Ramirez' initiative under Prop A to give City Council more power over decisions about infrastructure projects which have been approved and/or are underway. In the long term, we must get this and future administrations back on track when it comes to affordable, reliable, transportation choices.

Direct funding:

I support the Houston Arts Alliance grant programs. I have proposed that the city seriously beef-up and professionalize its grant-writing activity. I suspect we are leaving millions on the table, some of which could contribute to arts funding.

3. Would you, and if yes please provide two (2) examples, give directives to city departments to include arts and culture in their work?

Yes.

I would like the city's Public Works Department to create a Vibrant Crosswalk public arts / safety program. According to the Chronicle, "Safety experts at the National Association of City Transportation Officials recommend "high-visibility" markings because they get drivers to yield to pedestrians. NACTO has even specifically celebrated rainbow crosswalks."

I'd like to explore starting a "Welcome to District____" competition where local artists design welcome signs that capture the heart and soul of each of our City Council

districts. Public works would install the winning signs.

- 4. The amount of public funding for the arts through grants is currently limited to HOT funds. Although HOT funds continue to grow as the number of hotel rooms expand, the arts and culture field is growing more quickly, thus putting pressure on the amount of funding that is available to the field. Would you consider an additional funding mechanism, and if so, please explain?**

I would always consider additional arts funding, but must caution that the city's precarious financial position makes that unlikely in the near future. I would consider a percent-for-art program on all infrastructure projects that meet appropriate criteria.