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## News Release

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### Knight Foundation Backs 1<sup>st</sup>ACT Silicon Valley Leaders With a \$3.5 Million Grant for Cultural, Physical Enhancements

SAN JOSE, Calif. – 1<sup>st</sup>ACT Silicon Valley, a broad-based leadership collaborative focused on sharpening the region’s essential creative edge, will ratchet up efforts to transform San Jose into a dynamic city center with the support of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The \$3.5 million challenge grant announced Sunday night (Sept. 16) to a gathering of Silicon Valley leaders will help the group tackle a far-reaching set of initiatives capitalizing on the region’s high-tech success by creating physical improvements and increasing investments in arts and culture.

“We are dedicated to San Jose’s long-term well being,” said Alberto Ibargüen, president of the Miami-based national foundation. “Vital communities have strong civic ties, and 1<sup>st</sup>ACT’s entrepreneurial leaders have recognized the importance of developing a new sense of place through the powerful lens of creativity. They’re taking the risk, but the reward is clearly worth the effort.”

Bruce Chizen, CEO of Adobe Systems Inc., chairs the 1<sup>st</sup>ACT Silicon Valley board. Connie Martinez, executive director of the Children’s Discovery Museum, will serve as 1<sup>st</sup>ACT’s managing director ([www.1stact.org](http://www.1stact.org)).

“Knight Foundation’s support of the 1<sup>st</sup>ACT initiatives represents a significant development for the aesthetic and cultural transformation of San Jose and the region,” said Chizen. “My hope is other leaders in our community will join in helping make Silicon Valley a more vibrant place, capable of attracting the creative talent so essential to our economy.

Formed in 2004, 1<sup>st</sup>ACT (arts, creativity and technology) focuses on fundamental challenges: how to strengthen the community ties of one of the nation’s most diverse regional populations while sharpening the competitive edge of an innovation economy already employing the world’s highest concentration of tech knowledge.

An array of statistics support San Jose’s claim as capital of Silicon Valley: It’s the safest and 10<sup>th</sup> largest U.S. city, and it has the nation’s highest median household income. Its residents speak more than 56 languages, but those numbers haven’t always translated into cultural vibrancy and community pride.

“There’s no question Silicon Valley’s got the brains,” said Knight’s San Jose Program Director Dave Mills. “This effort is all about the heart and soul of a great community. In a flat world, where economic growth stems from the intelligence, knowledge and creativity of its work force, it’s imperative to cultivate a creative climate for work and life. If San Jose under-invests, it risks losing its distinguishing traits – and the work force needed to sustain them.”

“The Knight Foundation’s support of 1<sup>st</sup>ACT is a big boost for our city and the region,” said Mayor Chuck Reed. “While San Jose is known today as the capital of Silicon Valley, we must continue to attract creative and talented people to keep Silicon Valley the world center of innovation. This challenge grant will catalyze the public-private partnerships necessary to successfully connect arts, creativity, and technology to build a vibrant community.”

For the next three years, Knight funding will draw together diverse Silicon Valley leadership and support four 1<sup>st</sup>ACT initiatives designed to create a new sense of place and community in San Jose:

\* Creative Place is intended to influence the City of San Jose to remove a variety of barriers and bring together developers, planners, small businesses and others to more effectively collaborate and improve downtown's appearance.

\* An investment in arts infrastructure and improved marketing campaigns will drive increased awareness of the city's existing cultural creativity.

\* 10 founding members will form a core fund-raising network to invigorate and increase investment in the arts, culture and creativity. Knight's grant is a challenge and is expected to draw other funders.

\* A new Multicultural Arts Leadership Institute (MALI) will prepare 15 multicultural arts leaders each year, beginning in 2008, to strengthen their organizations and connect their communities.

Said Mills: "We support the arts in many forms, and we believe local arts organizations willing and able to join this effort will benefit from this potentially transformational change in cultural life."

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes excellence in journalism worldwide and invests in the vitality of San Jose and 25 other U.S. communities. The foundation focuses on projects with the potential to create transformational change. For more, visit [www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org).

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