

HI-RES PHOTO AVAILABLE: <https://bit.ly/tsjkirchgesler>

Team San Jose mourns the loss of Karolyn Kirchgesler, President and CEO

(San Jose, CA) – It is with profound sadness that [Team San Jose](#), along with its Board of Directors, announce the passing of **Karolyn Kirchgesler, President and CEO**. The entire Team San Jose family, which includes the San Jose McEnergy Convention Center, the collection of San Jose Theaters and Visit San Jose, extend their condolences to the Kirchgesler family and to all of her loved ones. She will be remembered for bringing recognition to the city as a premier corporate meeting and travel destination as well as her trademark leadership style rooted in integrity and professionalism.

Kirchgesler was diagnosed with cancer in October 2019 and officially stepped back from her role as CEO of Team San Jose in a [heartfelt video message](#) this April.

John LaFortune, COO of Team San Jose, has been leading the organization since the announcement.

"All of us at TSJ are feeling the loss of Karolyn personally. She was more than our CEO. She was a smart and courageous leader whose legacy will be represented in the team she assembled," says **Michael E. Fox, Jr., Chair of the Team San Jose Board of Directors**. "To me, Karolyn was a colleague and a friend, and I will miss her humor and enthusiasm and energy for all things San Jose."

"I had the great privilege of hiring Karolyn, then witnessing her build Team San Jose into a powerhouse. Her style, wit and tenacity served our City in too many ways to count. We've lost a great leader and an even better human," states **Michael Mulcahy, Team San Jose Board member and former Chair**.

"Karolyn Kirchgesler's enthusiastic spirit for life was as infectious as her courageous strength in confronting each challenge," says **Sam Liccardo, Mayor of San Jose**. "I will deeply miss Karolyn's leadership, her passion for our community, and her friendship."

Karolyn Kirchgesler served as President and CEO of Team San Jose since September 2013. Under her leadership, Team San Jose's gross operating revenues for the organization grew 165%, from \$23.8M in FY 2012/13 to \$63.1M in FY 2018/19 and the gross operating results grew by 194%, from \$4.8M to 14.1M. Through a concentrated sales strategy, San Jose was able to attract events by such iconic brands as Apple, Google, Facebook, Intuit, NVIDIA, NetSuite, Adobe, Oculus, Twitch, and Atlassian. Embracing the importance of destination management and marketing, Kirchgesler launched the Visit San Jose leisure travel destination brand in 2016 that contributed to a 77% growth of citywide hotel revenue over a 5-year period.

Kirchgesler became an important leader in the community, raising San Jose's profile as a destination not only externally but internally. She served as a board member of the Silicon Valley Organization, Joint



Karolyn Kirchgesler was President and CEO of Team San Jose from 2013 to 2020.



Venture Silicon Valley, San Jose Sports Authority, and was Vice Chair of the San Jose Police Foundation. She also partnered with the City of San Jose, San Jose Sports Authority, San Francisco 49ers, San Jose Sharks and San Jose Earthquakes to help San Jose be recognized as a true sports destination, hosting WrestleMania 31, Super Bowl 50, the 2016 MLS All-Star Game, the 2019 CFP Championship Game and the 2019 NHL All-Star Weekend. Her efforts were recognized by being honored as the 2019 Businesswoman of the Year by the SVO and a 2014 Woman of Influence by the Silicon Valley Business Journal.

Most recently, she was also inducted into the 2020 Destinations International Hall of Fame as a leader who has advanced and improved the destination industry through her leadership, innovation and creativity. Kirchgessler has dedicated her entire career to the travel and tourism industry and has been on the board of the U.S. Travel Association, Cal Travel and Destinations International.

Kirchgessler is a native of Aberdeen, South Dakota. She graduated from Moorhead State University (now Minnesota State University Moorhead) with a B.A. in Political Science. Her first tourism role was with the Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce, as they formed a Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) within the organization. In a few years, Kirchgessler took the reigns as its Executive Director and established the CVB as an organization independent of the Chamber of Commerce. She went on to serve as the Director of Sales & Marketing for the newly opened Sioux Falls Convention Center and three years later, she took the helm of the Greater New Haven Convention & Visitors Bureau as their Executive Director for seven years. She was recruited to Minnesota to serve as President & CEO of what is now Visit Saint Paul for nine years after that and during her tenure, she navigated the important merger of the Saint Paul CVB and the Convention Center Authority, ensuring sustained success for both. Her experience in navigating a Destination Marketing Organization and Convention Center hybrid led her to very successfully serve the City of San Jose as Team San Jose's President and CEO.

For more information about Team San Jose, the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, San Jose Theaters and Visit San Jose, visit www.sanjose.org.

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ABOUT TEAM SAN JOSE

Team San Jose is an innovative partnership unifying the San Jose Convention and Visitors Bureau, hotels, arts, community business leaders, labor and public venues to deliver an exceptional visitor experience and serve as the gateway to San Jose as a destination. Team San Jose is the parent company of Visit San Jose, the city's official destination marketing organization. Team San Jose also manages the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, South Hall, and arts and entertainment venues including the California Theatre, the Center for Performing Arts, Montgomery Theater, and San Jose Civic. In addition, Team San Jose created and operates a full-service catering facility that serves as the official caterer in all TSJ managed venues. Team San Jose is a non-profit, economic development organization and the primary driver in generating economic impact to San Jose's local economy through leisure and business travel. For more information, visit www.sanjose.org.

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