

**BCT Candidate Questionnaire**  
**Kriss Worthington**  
**Mayor**

1. *What role do you see the arts playing in Berkeley's future? What specific policies or directives should the City Council champion to make this happen?*

Individual artists and arts organizations, including the Berkeley Cultural Trust, have created a profound and powerful role for Arts in Berkeley's social, political, economic and cultural life. Sadly both individual artists and arts groups have recently, and are currently being driven out of town by some greedy landlords, some corporate developers, and certain outdated policies and unimplemented policies. (Other landlords and corporations are helping artists! so please do not stereotype) Like other low income and middle class residents, artists are adversely affected by drastic rent increases and skyrocketing home ownership costs. Arts groups have supported development and then were directly or indirectly kept out of the new buildings. It is urgently important for Berkeley to address the Affordable Housing Crisis and to fund and implement adopted and new Arts policy initiatives.

City government has fluctuated from being a giant help to being a gigantic obstacle. The Civic Arts Commissioners have emerged as effective advocates for implementing key parts of our Arts and Culture Plan. Fortunately the current City Manager and Economic Development Director both understand the vision and importance of the Arts to Berkeley and are helping to promote improvements and remove impediments. City Council has sporadically supported the Arts but has not sufficiently prioritized implementation of the many excellent policies and actions of the current plan.

My vision of the role of the Arts is twofold. First I believe that **Art for Arts Sake** in and of itself is a sufficient and valid justification to support and celebrate the Arts. Second I believe that the economic health and vitality of modern urban life is inextricably entwined with Art and Culture to such a degree that Art is one of the **highest priorities for successful economic development**. Many of my policy proposals are contained in other answers below, so I will not duplicate them here.

**Reform of the Zoning Ordinance;** This is one of the most urgent needs of our city for the Arts and for other reasons too. The cumbersome Zoning Ordinance process restricts Arts and Entertainment, even in areas where there is nearly unanimous consensus that this is a desired use. The City Staff have been put in the unenviable position of interpreting and implementing an ordinance that does not reflect the values of the people of Berkeley. We have made some improvements but many more are needed.

**Create a Parking, Permit and High Rent Response Plan** for the Arts and other small businesses to mitigate impacts of adopted Minimum Wage increases. It was morally commendable for the City to increase the minimum wage. It is also morally and practically desirable to help the impacted small business and non-profit communities as well.

**Increased Focus on Arts Education.** This is a primary opportunity for enhanced partnerships with BUSD, BCC and UCB. Excellent initiatives were initiated by these partners. The City could play a more vital role.

**Diversification supporting individual artists and South and West Berkeley:**

The Downtown has attracted hundreds of millions of dollars of investment and the Arts District still needs support. The underfunded parts of the City need assurance they will be supported too. (in addition, not instead)

My office prepared a **directory or arts space available for rent**, because we received many requests for such information. It would be beneficial if that could become updated and made more widely available.

Promote and encourage **more street artists and street performers**.

Work with technology start ups to create **Art Apps** including but not limited to sound art installations.

2. *Recently, Berkeley citizens came together and worked with the City Council to win our first increase in funding to the Civic Arts Grant Program in 14 years. Knowing how important the arts are as an economic driver and community building block, what concrete ideas do you have to create a sustainable and progressive income stream to support our growing, vibrant, and diverse arts ecosystem in the years to come?*

There are **multiple potential revenue streams** that Berkeley should consider to better fund the Arts. During my time in office I have successfully defeated multiple proposals to decrease Arts funding. Also I have repeatedly introduced successful proposals to increase Arts funding. Below are just a few ideas of income stream possibilities for sustaining our growing vibrant diverse Arts ecosystem:

A. Implement current Arts and Cultural Plan proposal **to increase Public Percent for Art from 1.5% to 2%**.

B. Create a policy dedicating a specified **significant percentage of the TOT to be permanently committed to the Arts**.

C. After **amending Zoning Ordinance to remove many restrictions to Arts and Entertainment** uses, increase Private Percent for Art to **Two Percent For Art**. (two percent is already in effect in multiple cities)

D. **Reinstate Arts staff positions** eliminated during budget cuts and recession. It is stressful to staff that they are expected to do the work previously done by more than the current number of staff.

E. Explore **Grantwriter position or consultant** that could be shared with other departments, or other institutions to facilitate bringing additional funds to the City and/or Art groups in Berkeley.

F. **Increase individual philanthropic Arts support** with networking opportunities and modifications to the City's restrictive naming policy. Create a Philanthropic Circle of Giving for foundations and individuals.

G. Create **Telegraph Avenue Free Speech Walk Of Fame** with plaques and/or art installations building on the many Berkeley Firsts that created our international reputation as a Cultural Center

H. Position Berkeley for **Cultural and Heritage Tourism**. Work with BAHA on expanding tours of significant landmarks. Expand attention to African American, Latinx, and Asian Cultural achievements.

I. **Increase corporate Arts support** with networking opportunities and modifications to severely restrictive City naming policy. **Partner Tech companies with Art App opportunities**, including but not limited to a city-wide sound art installation.

J. When mutually beneficial, **encourage partnerships or mergers** between Arts organizations to share overhead expenses. Prioritize cultural competency/awareness to increase diversity in joint ventures.

K. Provide Artists and Arts organizations with **grant writing technical assistance** through classes, mentoring programs and professional development opportunities. (Possibly linked with item E above )

L. For many years I advocated adopting a policy to increase and **maintain Civic Arts Grants to equal or exceed the about \$350,000** annual Certificates Of Participation amount the City is paying for the ten million dollars cost which provided four million to the Berkeley Repertory Theater. (With the recent Civic Arts grant increase we accomplished this for the current budget but not as a permanent policy.)

M. Without raising taxes, the City could **adopt a policy maintaining that the same level of ongoing \$350,000 funding** used to pay for the Certificate Of Participations would continue to be a line item in the City budget, but would be **available to multiple Arts groups after the ten million is fully paid.**

N. Partner more with the University of California Berkeley to **maximize engagement of Faculty, Staff and student participation.** Stipends for a truly educational experience can benefit students and City.

O. Implement an **increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax** and dedicate revenue to Arts.

Despite politicians' promises, I believe that **the best predictor of what you will do is what you have done before.** This year Councilmember Wengraf and I co-sponsored the Council item to increase Arts grants. Council members Anderson and Arreguin and I sponsored one budget proposal including the \$150,000 increase. Mayor Bates also included \$150,000 in his budget proposal. Sadly Capitelli's proposed budget had only **half** the urgently needed amount.

When the City Council delayed adoption of the Private Percent For Art Ordinance I wrote the adopted proposal to prevent further loss of funds. Certain council members insisted on exempting the five tall downtown buildings, even though they could easily afford this small cost to be evaluated within the pro-forma. Councilmember Arreguin suggested noticing pending projects of this upcoming ordinance when they receive their condition of approval. I incorporated his suggestion in the item, which should net substantial arts funds soon.

- 3. Affordable housing is clearly a big issue across the whole Bay Area. Working artists increasingly struggle to find a place to live in our competitive rent market. Please explain how you would address this problem.*

On the topic of Affordable Housing I believe the same principle applies that **the best predictor of what you will do is what you have done before.** In the face of an affordable housing crisis, I introduced dozens of policy proposals. Many of those proposals were delayed or defeated by the current Mayor and Council. After months of

delay or defeat of multiple Council items, I introduced 27 policy proposals as a short term Action Plan. These were repeatedly delayed from Oct 29, 2015 until April 2016. In April Councilmember Capitelli changed a few policies from my proposed compromise, put his name on most of the list, and it was finally referred to the City Manager for staff work. That created a **six month delay**. The part of the proposal which elicited the most opposition was the proposal for **“Truly Affordable Housing” at 10%, 20% and 30% Area Median Income**. This was developed because many senior, disabled and fixed income residents said they do not have enough income to even apply for units at the more conventional 50% and 80% AMI levels characteristic of most “Affordable” Housing. **Most of my 49 proposals contained in various Council items are still meaningful and urgently needed.** A few examples:

A. I introduced over six proposals over several years of ways to **increase funding for the Housing Trust Fund** but they were each delayed or defeated in the budget vote or vote to refer.

B. **Berkeley Inn Site** (at Haste and Telegraph): Pressure owner to remove trash, noise and rat problems and build affordable housing as required by legal agreement. Otherwise consider eminent domain based on decades of complaints.

C. **Expedite planning approval for rebuilding fire-damaged Apartment Buildings.**

D. **Allow more Accessory Dwelling Units-** review within one year. (We partly won, but more needs to be done)

E. **Streamline permit process for housing projects with a majority or more affordable units.**

F. Supporting the original April 2015 **City Density Bonus** instead of watered down 2016 proposal.

G. **Delinking housing costs from parking** requirements IF freed up funds help affordable housing or transit

H. **Regulate Short Term Rentals and consider resulting funds going to affordable housing**

I. **Match National Housing Trust Fund** applications from proposals in Berkeley.

J. Actively promoting **thousands of units of STUDENT Housing** through Public Private Partnerships involving green building, Labor friendly construction and dorm comparable rents.

K. Create a policy to **address displacement and demolition** impacts on low income residents.

L. Invite applications for **cooperative and land trust housing** and consider technical assistance for small cost effective projects

M. Support **middle income housing policy** when not taking funds away from 10%, 20%, 30% and 50% AMI units. **Focus projects such as for Teachers or Artists** may attract specific funds.

N. If inclusionary units are reserved for section 8 and Shelter plus care, consider including pipeline projects.

O. **Support Berkeley Housing Authority action requests.** Despite strong resistance I got one out of 4 policies adopted, but others are still pending.

P. **Extending existing Senior Affordable Housing** to longer term contracts.

**PROGRESS REPORT:** After numerous delays over two dozen of my proposals are now being studied or implemented. We need to stop these senseless delays that are only exacerbating the Affordable Housing Crisis.

We won victories in Sacramento for City Inclusionary Housing policy, Housing Tax Credits and Teacher Housing. Now there is growing interest in specific Teacher/School Employee Housing in Berkeley.

4. *What other issues concerning the arts community would you like to address? How might the arts community collaborate with the city to address the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century?*

**The dozens of policy and program ideas contained in the answers to your first three questions are probably more than enough to keep us busy for the next four years.** I welcome your insights on the relative importance and feasibility of these dozens of suggestions and welcome consideration within the Arts and Cultural Plan update. I think we will all be united in **ensuring the Arts are prioritized within the City-wide Strategic Plan.** THANK YOU to all the artists and arts organizations that help make Berkeley visionary, beautiful and fun.