

BCT Candidate Questionnaire
Jesse Arreguin
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?*

We are so fortunate to live in such an incredible city, full of a dynamic arts and culture scene. Berkeley is renowned for the arts, and the arts are an important economic engine for our city, contributing to millions in tax revenue and supporting our small businesses. Our city has invested in our arts programs through our Arts Grants, capital grants like the funding I helped secure for the UC Theater and Kala, and our public art program.

I believe the arts are an essential part of Berkeley's identity and its economic vitality. We must leverage new private investment to support the arts and increase resources to support arts and arts organizations. With rising rents, it is important that Berkeley not only provide increased funding but provide public spaces for arts organizations to perform and exhibit their work. This can be done through our significant community benefits policy (which I helped author) and through grants to organizations.

The new 1% for the Arts policy will help integrate public art in new projects, and new city capital projects such as the Center Street Garage and Downtown BART Plaza will include public art components. We must also continue our arts and music education program in our schools which is why I strongly support Measure E1. I look forward to working with the arts community and Civic Arts Commission to update our Arts Plan so that Berkeley can continue to be a regional destination for arts and culture.

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?*

As the Councilmember for the Downtown area and Arts District, I know the importance of the arts in Berkeley's economic ecosystem. The Arts District serves as a cultural epicenter that brings hundreds of thousands of people from throughout the world to Berkeley, providing revenue for our local businesses. I am proud to have worked closely to reopen the UC Theatre, which has invigorated new energy and created a large performance space that had for too long been lacking in Berkeley.

In 2015, I supported efforts to create the One Percent for Public Art policy, which was implemented this summer. This program requires new developments to either provide publicly accessible on-site art valued at 1% of construction costs or provide an in-lieu payment to the Cultural Trust Fund valued at 0.8% of construction costs. As a member of the Downtown Area Plan Advisory Committee, I have pushed for making sure new developments provide fair and adequate community benefits. Unfortunately, the

five high-rises that are allowed under the Downtown Area Plan are exempt from the One Percent for Public Art. But I will make sure that the community packages that are created for these projects contribute their fair share towards the arts.

- 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.*

The affordable housing crisis is the biggest issue this city. A recent poll showed that Berkeley residents agree that this must be addressed. As more and more people are being squeezed out, it has become clear that if we are to preserve our arts and culture, we must provide the resources needed for artists to live in this city. I have worked on housing issues for over 14 years, after being elected to the Rent Stabilization Board in 2004, and becoming the Chair. During my time on Council, I have consistently voted to increase the amount of funding for affordable housing projects, unlike my opponent that has on multiple occasions voted against innovative and common sense solutions to increasing funds to our Housing Trust Fund.

I strongly support building housing that is designed for artists. There are locations at or near the Arts District where we can make this a reality. We also need to increase the amount of inclusionary housing so we can make sure that artists of all incomes are able to find a place near where they work. And it's not just the artists that are being priced out, it is the organizations themselves that may not be able to pay for rent in their location. I want to provide incentives to prevent rents in commercial buildings from skyrocketing, to make sure that artists have a place to perform.

- 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?*

Every year when the City Council reviews the budget, we end up having artists pitted against each other and other groups to claim a slice of the budget. Having organizations come to Council to beg for money is unacceptable. With more revenue expected for arts related projects through the One Percent for Public Art, I hope we can prevent such conflicts from happening. For years, I have pushed for more transparency and easier access for residents communicate with Council. Just like with the arts, we should strive to make sure that our government is open and accessible to everyone.