

BCT Candidate Questionnaire
Mike Lee
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?*

I believe the arts are a crucial cornerstone in defining Berkeley's future. It defines who we are as a community expressing important ideas or feelings.

Specific policies or directives must be developed with direct input from the artist community. It is my distinct impression that there is a void when it comes to providing a forum to share your ideas and concerns. My biggest question is what do you see as priorities. I'm not an artist and definitely not an expert in this area. As such the first policy I would have to look at is a method of clear communication between the artist community and the City. In short to form a strategic partnership

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 a number of things that need to happen. We have to form a working group who has as its only job is to uncover other funding sources. This can not happen in the present because quite frankly there is not the political will to do so.

Secondly we need to form a strategic plan with short, medium and long range funding goals.

Quite frankly the City does not have the funding it should have to support the arts because to do so means you have to develop creative ways to acquire the necessary funding.

Over the years I've raised funds for all sorts of things and my starting point is a rock solid commitment to the project. This commitment is extended to the area we are speaking of. If this means that in order to raise the necessary funds I have let people throw paint filled balloons at me as a fundraiser then here I am. got a paint gun? Come on sucker for \$5 you get to shoot me. Ah yes get me going on raising funds and I will come up with some pretty creative things. Worlds largest facepainting event, etc.

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 number one thing I've been consistently saying is "It's A Privilege To Build In Berkeley." This a radical change in perspective then what is now being held. This

change of perspective means simply that if you wish to build in Berkeley then you are going to pay a premium price. There will be no more discounts or rebates. Before even considering building you must have 80% approval from the immediate community before proceeding.

Unfortunately as of this writing we have not considered the needs of our art community. Mainly because I have no clue at all what those needs are. I am willing to listen and help draft a solution but I do need your help because again I'm not the expert y'all are. As such I need to hear what your ideas and concerns are.

What astounds me is the lack of live work space. What is available is renting for an average of \$4,000 a month! There are numerous empty storefronts and building which can be converted to this type of use. In partnership with the artist community we are going to identify suitable properties and convert them. I want to see in the immediate future the creation of an artist colony.

This is a big project but I sincerely believe together we can accomplish it.

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?*

VISIBILITY! I want everybody to know that we support the arts and aggressively showcase the work created. When people think of innovative, creative world class art the last place they think of is Berkeley. I want them to think of us first and will work tirelessly to accomplish that.

I don't want you to collaborate with the City. I want you as a partner. A strategic partnership that is going to benefit us all and truly make Berkeley the art capital of the world. I want aspiring artists to move here and feel they have the support to express their creativity. I want patrons of the arts to readily embrace artists mainly due to the fact they live and work here. That is my hope and desire. It is a New Vision For A New Future