

BCT Candidate Questionnaire

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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?*

Every community needs to decide what it wants to be, and to pursue that vision with clarity and commitment, implementing supportive zoning, policies, funding and other initiatives consistently over time. My choice for Berkeley and my vision for the Downtown and the entire Shattuck/Adeline Corridor - from Rose Street to the Oakland Border - is for Berkeley to be the Bay Area's MULTICULTURAL CENTER for ARTS, INTELLECT and CREATIVITY, with an emphasis on celebration, innovation, experimentation and inclusiveness. The Arts covers the full spectrum: visual arts, performing arts, literature, culinary arts, media arts, theatre, storytelling and comedy, performance art and more. Intellect includes lecture series, roundtables, free speech forums, charrettes, fairs, conferences and other opportunities to develop and share ideas. Creativity is a wide open category and includes exploration of new ideas, media and arts, maker fairs and hack-a-thons and other yet-to-be-developed opportunities to spur creativity and connect us to each other and the world. Underlying and driving the entire concept should be Berkeley's progressive values of diversity, equity and multiculturalism.

This may sound ambitious, but Berkeley already has many of the elements necessary to make this vision a reality. We are home to thousands of arts organizations, artists, authors, chefs, thinkers, innovators and visionaries. We have an increasing number of fairs, forums and events and many cultural and arts opportunities every week of the year. I believe the next step would be to clarify, articulate, plan for and realize this vision in a more comprehensive manner, and ensure that our policies, investments, funding, marketing and all other factors are in alignment.

I am very proud to have co-authored the zoning overlay for Berkeley's Historic Civic Center that reserves our Old City Hall, Veterans Building, Post Office and other buildings in the Civic Center for civic- and public-serving uses including museums, nonprofit cultural and arts, libraries and live performance venues. (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 23E.98) This legislation was put forward when Berkeley's Historic Downtown Post Office was threatened with sale for commercial development. At the time, developers were eyeing the property for a potential high-rise apartment building or a shopping mall, and the Old City Hall building had been discussed as a possible hotel. I reached out to the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra to discuss the possibility of converting the space to a small concert hall, and also spoke with community members who were interested in creating a museum or "maker space." Ultimately, the Post Office took the property off the market, and it continues to function as a post office. It was in the context of this "emergency," when one of our most beautiful historic civic center buildings was threatened with privatized commercial development, that the importance of preserving our civic core for civic and arts uses was conceived by a group of concerned citizens. I researched and co-wrote the legislation to enshrine this idea, and it was passed unanimously, by the City Council. This is an example of policies and directives that can support the arts.

The award winning Addison Arts District is another example of how polices to support the arts in a concentrated manner, through zoning and investments, can yield a critical mass

that turns a regular street into a destination. The new University Art Museum, the Book Fair, Berkeleyside's "Uncharted" Festival of Ideas, the Shotgun Players, Chez Panisse, Berkeley Art Center and the Cheese Board to the North, our revitalized Main Library, the Black Repertory Group to the South, the new Habitot (which provides creative play-space for our youngest citizens), and many more destinations create an arts "spine" that reaches across Berkeley, encompassing the entire downtown and also reaching towards northern and southern neighborhoods. The task is to connect these in a meaningful manner. Enhancing our streetscapes and public spaces is key to creating a lively and inviting arts corridor. Berkeley's Streets and Open Spaces Improvement Plan for the downtown (SOSIP) includes many elements that will enhance the public experience of our downtown. I would like to update the plan with a focus on creating public spaces for art and performance, and consider how we can extend an arts corridor that will connect us across the City.

While the Downtown and Shattuck Avenue corridor should be an area of focus for creation of a more intentional arts district, I am also supportive of arts and culture throughout Berkeley. I support the preservation of West Berkeley for artisanal and light manufacturing uses, and believe that the existence of many creative and artistic enterprises in West Berkeley is equally important to the arts ecosystem of Berkeley. I oppose rezoning West Berkeley in ways that would displace or replace these important community assets. Similar to the downtown area, I would like to see the City better support the artisans and small businesses in West Berkeley, which is already a destination for unique, locally produced furniture, lighting, home improvement items, artisanal food and wine, crafts, textiles and more. Many architects and design professionals have offices in West Berkeley, which adds another layer of creativity to the district. In an increasingly generic and gentrified Bay Area, West Berkeley is an important oasis of creativity and originality, which must be protected and enhanced.

Walnut Creek's downtown is a good example of a community "deciding what it wants to be" and pursuing that vision over time. Walnut Creek wanted to be a shopping destination, and adapted its land use and other incentives to achieve that goal, expanding over many years to become a regional destination. While Walnut Creek's vision is far from what I would ever advocate for Berkeley, their model of transformation proves that a community can remake itself around a central theme. Berkeley should more clearly, holistically and intentionally embrace its special place as a destination for culture, arts, creativity and learning, and align all necessary resources to elevate, coordinate and fully realize that vision. If we don't decide up front who we want to be and invest in that vision, we will find ourselves looking back twenty years from now, asking "what have we become?"

- 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?*

I supported the 1% for the Arts initiative, and am glad that Berkeley recognizes the importance of funding for the arts. I also support including additional funds for the arts in the "Significant Community Benefits" packages that developers are required to provide when building tall buildings downtown. While I support the inclusion of arts spaces in buildings

themselves, it's important that the spaces being created be appropriate. Performance spaces, studios, screening rooms and other arts facilities often have very particular specifications which traditional developers are unaware of, and we must avoid having developers create spaces of limited use or interest to the arts organizations they were ostensibly built to accommodate. Certainly, we should not be eliminating arts venues, and on the Zoning Board I strongly supported the replacement of theatres being displaced by the Harold Way project.

While not a direct source of funds, I believe that by investing in a cohesive Arts vision and marketing plan for the City, and in inviting public spaces that connect, encourage and support the arts and arts district, there will be a big boost for the arts. And with the arts as a magnet for people coming to the City, our restaurants and shops should thrive, especially if we can encourage shops that provide creative, unique merchandise. San Francisco has a successful program to concentrate independent businesses in certain corridors. A term, "Formula Business," is defined as a business with fewer than 11 outlets. Each commercial corridor allows only a certain percentage of spaces to be occupied by formula businesses. Some allow no formula businesses whatsoever, while others allow a certain percent, or 100%. This helps regulate commercial rent rates, as a landlord cannot "hold out" for a high paying "Formula" tenant if all of the Formula permits have already been issued. We should look to San Francisco's example, and to other measures that are being adopted across America to encourage small businesses of character to thrive. I am aligned with the work of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and believe the models they advocate can help Berkeley grow its economy without sacrificing local creativity and character – which dovetails with support for the arts and arts districts.

Another important way that Berkeley can support the arts is by supporting alternative transit to bring people to and from arts events and programs. Evening bus service is limited in Berkeley, and parking downtown is difficult when numerous venues have programs simultaneously. Working with arts organizations, it should be possible to coordinate carpools and shuttles to bring people to the downtown, and home again safely. Until better alternatives are in place, many residents will continue to drive to access downtown arts venues, especially at night. I am pleased to have approved the new and expanded Center/Addison Garage, which should be an excellent amenity for arts organizations in Berkeley's downtown core.

Finally, as an elected representative very supportive of the arts in Berkeley, I will lend my name and energy to efforts to raise community money for arts organizations, as I have done in the past. This is another way that Berkeley's elected officials can show support for the arts, and I welcome the opportunity to be of help.

- 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 affordability and displacement crisis threaten to change the character of Berkeley forever; there can be no thriving arts scene if artists cannot afford to live here. Under current crisis conditions, my focus will be on creating affordable housing in Berkeley's core, so that working families can live close to transit and have access to jobs and other opportunities. If we don't act now it will be too late for our artists, teachers, firefighters, city workers, nurses, activists, seniors and single parent families.

As a member of the Zoning Adjustments Board, I have approved over 2,500 units of housing in Berkeley. I always push for the highest Green Building and transit standards, as much affordable housing as possible, and accommodations for residents of a diversity of life stages and abilities. There is no single, simple solution to increasing affordable housing; our approach must be multifaceted. I support all of the following measures, and more, to sustain and increase affordable housing (and housing for the homeless) in Berkeley:

- Passing the Alameda County housing bond
- Adopting the highest affordable housing mitigation fee recommended by a current Nexus Study, and updating the study and fees on a regular basis so that the City does not miss out on any feasible fees.
- Requiring at least 20% affordable housing in all large developments in Berkeley, as an alternative to payment of the Mitigation Fee. The Green Pathway permitting scheme requires 30% affordable housing in large developments, but no developer has elected to permit under this scheme
- Supporting rent control and improving eviction protections
- Helping housing not for profits purchase existing buildings/units and converting them into permanently affordable housing
- Supporting the Landlord Windfall Profits tax as proposed by the Community and City Council (Measure U1), that will result in maximum increased funds flowing into our affordable housing fund
- Considering adoption of an alternative local Density Bonus scheme, similar to legislation adopted in Emeryville, to further incentivize the production of affordable Housing
- Reviewing the Zoning Code to identify features that may tend to hinder the building of affordable projects, and working with affordable housing builders to determine how to better support/incentivize affordable housing.
- Creating a regional Commercial Linkage Fee that results in a pool of affordable housing monies available to all cities
- Approaching technology and other companies that have expanded in the past several years and inadvertently contributed to this housing crisis. I welcome the new jobs and prosperity for the region, but believe local companies that are experiencing rapid growth and soaring profits should help mitigate the unintended consequence of extreme housing shortages, displacement, and overextended transit systems.

I am open to any and all other mechanisms to achieve additional affordable housing, including co-housing, affordable housing land trusts, and more. We can maximize “traditional” means of building more affordable housing while exploring a multitude of new and creative options. The urgency of the crisis calls for us to consider all potential means to achieve the goal of more housing at all levels of affordability.

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?*

Berkeley faces many challenges that require creative problem solving. Artists and the arts community can help. Recent trends in consulting have shown that “design thinking” yields excellent results, and can open organizations to new approaches. On a global level, and locally, we are challenged to address the housing and homeless crises, global warming, equity, compassion and more. In all of these undertakings the insights, creativity and goodwill of the arts community are important voices. As Einstein famously said, “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” I welcome the opportunity to work with the arts community to help Berkeley continue to thrive.