

BCT Candidate Questionnaire
Susan Wengraf

6

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 was raised in New York City and spent my summers in the Berkshires, so my education growing up was based on a rich experience full of arts and cultural opportunities. It follows that as a leader in Berkeley, it is important to me to ensure that we nurture our arts groups and enable them to thrive.

Crucial to the future of a vibrant and culturally rich Berkeley is sustainable civic funding for arts groups. In addition, we need to work with the school district to support equity in arts education. I would like to see more partnering between the city and the arts organizations to increase accessibility to the arts for everyone, using public spaces, parks and libraries as venues. We need to commit to protecting our artists from being displaced, and encourage the creation of housing and work spaces for artists, not only to keep artists who have made Berkeley home for years, but also to attract a new generation of creative artists who can afford to live and work in Berkeley.

I have enthusiastically supported increased funding for the Civic Arts Commission, although I think that they are still underfunded.

I will lead effort to create housing for artists.

I will advocate to establish a sustainable revenue stream to fund the Civic Arts Commission

I will support efforts to re-purpose the Veteran's Building to include a performance venue and work spaces for artists.

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 believe that \$150K is not enough to adequately fund our Arts programs.

If Berkeley is going to be a vibrant and healthy city, we need to give our artists and arts organizations the resources to compete with Oakland and San Francisco. Both of those cities fund their arts at a higher level than Berkeley does. Berkeley, as a city, is good at many things, but I feel there is room for improvement in terms of the relationship between economic development and our arts organizations. Our arts make an enormous contribution to our community as an economic engine. They reflect our intellectual and core cultural values. First, let's acknowledge and celebrate this contribution. Second, let's commit to finding a sustainable revenue stream for the arts. Let's use some of the Air B&B revenue. Let's use some of the marijuana revenue. Let's use some of the hotel tax. And finally, let's use some of the parking revenue to support 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.*

I think that creating a task force to study the problem would be productive. I will take the lead on supporting the construction of affordable housing for artists. I think it would take a public/private partnership or an extraordinary developer to get it done. The Minnesota Project in SF is a good model. I know from my experience working on issues in West Berkeley that amending zoning regulations to allow for this type of use is an essential first step. Once the zoning regulations allow for this type of use, I would explore how the city can incentivize this kind of project.

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?*

I realize that the increase in minimum wage may have unintended consequences for our arts organizations. I am concerned about this as we move forward with mandating increases in wages and paid sick leave. Most arts organizations are on fixed budgets and will have to pass on the additional costs to the consumer. We run the risk of these organization having to price themselves out of their markets. Small arts organizations may pack up and move to other cities where costs are less. We need to be mindful and work together to make sure this doesn't happen.