



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE NAME: JEFF YARBRO

- 1) **CREATIVE WORKFORCE VALUE** - What impact does Nashville's creative workforce - actors, artists, dancers, musicians and the overall creative class - have on the city's identity and well-being?

Comments: Every great city requires both a commitment to the arts and a vibrant, supported creative workforce. That goes double for Nashville – or triple. Our core identity as a city is deeply rooted in creativity and even in live performances. In the 1900s, Nashville distinguished itself from the region by aspiring to be a new Athens, by building the best live music venue in the nation, and by having the Fisk Jubilee Singers perform as some of our first emissaries around the country and world. When the rest of the country made fun of us as the town of HeeHaw, we knew that Minnie Pearl, Dolly Parton, and Charley Pride were American treasures and fully built out the brand of Music City that includes everything from Jack White's record label to the Nashville Symphony to the Grammy Award winning TSU band. From anchor institutions like the Frist to smaller spaces like Elephant Gallery, from the Bluebird to the Basement, from the Nashville Ballet to Grimey's and back again, the arts are literally everywhere and make this city what it is. Beyond our sense of self, multiple sectors of our economy are entirely dependent on this being a city where songwriters, visual artists, performers, and artistic entrepreneurs come together, build community, and launch new endeavors learning from one another along the way. I would argue, consistent with urban scholar Richard Florida, that the influence of the creative work force extends far beyond the arts as well. Maintaining a diverse, vibrant artistic space a prerequisite for attracting and retaining the ambitious, knowledge-oriented workforce on which modern cities depend. Even more important, we know that creativity in the arts is quickly echoed by innovation in the economy and the well-being of the community. As JFK said, "[t]here is a connection, hard to explain logically but easy to feel between achievement in public life and progress in the arts."

- 2) **CREATIVE CULTURE CRISIS** - Do you believe Nashville is currently facing a crisis, in which its creative workforce can no longer afford to sustainably work and live here? If so, what strategies do you have for addressing the crisis?

- a. YES
- b. NO
- c. PREFER NOT TO TAKE POSITION

Comments: Moving to Nashville to break into the music business or chase your dream of being an artist should be possible not only in the lyrics of our songs, but in the Nashville where we actually live. It's not realistic for a person to work a minimum wage job while honing their craft if they have to work 86 hours per week at that job to afford a decent

apartment. As an initial matter, that's because Nashville is not building enough housing, which is driving prices up for artists and everyone else. Across all demographics and even many income levels, the city has to simply build more housing where people can actually afford to live. There are, however, particular strategies the city should use to keep being a city of working artists. We should be much more intentional in our community planning to build cultural districts. We should work in partnership with philanthropic and private sector organizations to ensure we are creating not just more affordable housing, but studios, practice, and performance spaces. The infrastructure supporting the arts should grow as the city grows. Similarly, our economic and community development efforts and investments should be focused on inclusive growth, especially in strategic, creative sectors that will expand and create new platforms and opportunities for creatives to showcase their talents. We should also be continuously looking for ways to actually include the artists who make Nashville their home in the Public Art projects and arts education programs that occur throughout our city. When our investments in the arts double as investments in local artists, the long-term impact is far more lasting.

- 3) **CREATIVE WORKFORCE HOUSING** - Would you prioritize the development of creative workforce housing (for example, through an MDHA initiative such as the Ryman Lofts)?
- a. YES
 - b. NO
 - c. PREFER NOT TO TAKE POSITION

Comments: Absolutely. I also think there are ways to prioritize creative workforce housing, as well as the construction of creative spaces, through public-private partnerships aligned with the development of creative districts across the city.

- 4) **CREATIVE SPACE** - Would you support publicly owned, unoccupied space to be transformed into creative development or presentation space for music and the arts in Nashville? What additional solutions to the lack of creative space would you explore as Mayor (such as preserving existing spaces through a land trust for historic venues and the like)?
- a. YES
 - b. NO
 - c. PREFER NOT TO TAKE POSITION

Comments: See response to # 8.

- 5) **CITY ARTS FUNDING** - This city's arts budget has not kept up with the growth of the artists and arts organizations in Nashville despite the growth of the city. Would you support funding Metro Arts at 1% of the combined Metro and MNPS budget? (Roughly \$30 Million of support annually.)
- a. YES
 - b. NO
 - c. PREFER NOT TO TAKE POSITION

Comments: We need to take action that links the growth of our arts investments with the growth of the city and its economy.

- 6) **CITY RELIEF FUNDING** - The Arts & Business Council launched an Artist Relief Fund in 2020 to compensate for the cancellation of scheduled gigs or opportunities (such as a commission,

performance, etc.), or due to layoff/furlough as a result of the March 2020 tornados and/or COVID-19 pandemic. It experienced such high demand that only half the applicants could be funded. Would you support the creation and funding of an ongoing emergency relief fund for Nashville's creative workforce (similar to the Austin Music Disaster Relief Grant)? If so, at what level would you fund it?

- a. YES
- b. NO
- c. PREFER NOT TO TAKE POSITION

Comments: In a city filled with artists, economic disruptions caused by natural disasters or health crises can be devastating. I would want to explore this issue at greater length before making a long-term funding commitment, but I believe there is real work for Metro in helping establish and facilitate the operations and capacity of such a relief fund and making appropriate investments where alternative sources are insufficient to meet critical needs.

- 7) **MUSIC EDUCATION** - Do you commit to working toward the establishment of fully funded music, visual art, and/or theater arts programs in every Metro Public School? If so, what strategies would you employ?

- a. YES
- b. NO
- c. PREFER NOT TO TAKE POSITION

Comments: See Response to #8.

- 8) What other strategies are you exploring to support the creative economy in Nashville?

Comments: One of the most powerful tools at the Mayor's disposal is the power to convene – to bring interested parties from across the city together to chart a path forward. Across disciplines, genres, and industries, we have significant wealth and assets that have been developed by those who make their living in the arts, to hospitality, tourism, and event industries that depend on a thriving class, as well as many who are simply patrons committed to supporting a creative community. Given the number of civic and business institutions whose own well-being depends on the city's overall commitment to the arts and to creativity generally, there is significant financial and intellectual capital that can be brought to bear on the creative future of Nashville – capacity which should be incorporated in the city's long-term economic development strategy. The Mayor's leadership should include bringing together stakeholders from both the public and private sectors to strategically develop an ecosystem that supports the creative community and helps address access to resources, space, capital, innovation, and opportunities. Then when Metro is making strategic funding investments in arts education, in creative spaces, in public art, and so on, those investments can be leveraged with other resources to maximize the overall impact to the community.