



## ARTS & CULTURE QUESTIONNAIRE 2021 DALLAS CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Thank you for being a candidate and for your willingness to serve! And thank you in advance for answering the DACAC Arts & Culture Questionnaire for candidates for Dallas City Council in the upcoming 2021 election. You can fill this out online at [this LINK](#). The responses can go below and the form saved as a pdf and emailed to [dacac@artsdallas.org](mailto:dacac@artsdallas.org).

1. **NAME:** Leland Burk

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2. **COUNCIL DISTRICT:** 13

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3. **YOU AND THE ARTS**

**Give us a sense about your relationship with the arts  
(Some ideas to consider)**

- *What art form or cultural organization do you particularly enjoy?*
- *Are your family members involved in the arts?*
- *Share favorite cultural experience in the last two years?*
- *What virtual arts programs have you and your family enjoyed during the pandemic?*

Our family regularly attends both visual and performing arts programs in the DFW area. My partner, Thomas Feulmer, is an artist and has worked in museum education (for the past 16 years for Cindy and Howard Rachofsky at The Rachofsky House/The Warehouse) since receiving his MFA 20 years ago. Modern and contemporary art, in particular, are a BIG part of our lives. We support the arts at all levels - locally, nationally, and internationally – and most of our travel is based around either a museum exhibition or performance (theater or dance). We also like to buy work from local galleries like Conduit Gallery, Barry Whistler Gallery, and Erin Cluley Gallery, as well as galleries outside DFW. My father and late mother love(d) and supported the symphony, and every year on New Year's Eve my father hosts our entire family and a group of friends for dinner and the concert at the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. It has become a wonderful annual event and a beautiful way to end the year.

Lately, I've been talking with Jeremy Strick, Director of the Nasher Sculpture Center, about how to use local spaces and properties (owned either by me or other property owners) for the Nasher Public initiative. The Nasher always does such incredible projects, and I love the Nasher Public's aim to bring art to underserved communities in innovative ways. There is a lot of room to grow the relationship between the business community and the arts community beyond just fundraising. Many

entrepreneurs/business people I know have a creative side in that they like to envision a project, strategize how to make it happen, and then work both short-term and long-term to see it to fruition. There is an opportunity to get them invested in creative problem solving and the creative process, and to challenge everyone involved to think outside the box of their normal skill set.

One example of this idea is a project I helped Thomas (and his co-curator Christina Rees) with in 2010 – an exhibition titled *Modern Ruin*. In a newly-built, unused WaMu bank building, they organized a three-day exhibition right before the building was to be torn down. I owned the building and brought my knowledge of permitting, insurance, security, and the general logistics/concerns of using this commercial space for a big public event, while Thomas and Christina brought the art expertise and invited local artists (among them, Tom Orr, Frances Bagley, Kevin Todora, and Margaret Meehan) to respond to the space. We were all excited to see such a successful show that received local and national press.

Right before the pandemic, we traveled to Colombia (Bogotá and Medellín) where we visited museums and smaller art galleries. It was incredible to see the work of so many Colombian artists we did not know and who are barely known in the US. One exhibition at MAMBO (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá), *Variaciones infinitas*, featured incredible geometric work from their permanent collection by Latin American artists working from the 1960s onward. It was fascinating to learn about this abstract work made by South American artists.

During COVID, I have attended a few virtual talks, though like many people, I cannot wait to see artwork and performances in person again soon.

#### 4. **ADVOCACY**

The support of our elected City leaders is important to ensuring arts and culture remain a priority at City Hall and part of the civic dialogue.

**QUESTION: How have you advocated for the arts community and/or how will you do that going forward?**

I currently serve on the Board of Trustees of the Dallas Museum of Art and Board of Directors of the Dallas Opera (ex officio) and was appointed by Councilwoman Jennifer Staubach Gates to serve as a Commissioner on the Arts & Culture Advisory Commission from 2014-2021. I look forward to continuing my advocacy for the arts in Dallas by being a champion for arts funding in the Dallas City budget.

#### 5. **SUPPORT & RECOVERY**

Prior to COVID, the Dallas creative economy was on track to have an economic impact surpassing \$1B a year, a vital business sector. The pandemic derailed that momentum. Arts facilities were the first to close and will be among the last to reopen at full capacity. The city's nonprofit arts and cultural community has lost more than \$95M and over 1,000 jobs and cultural tourism has virtually stopped. City support has been critical to keeping these institutions alive. Even in a tough budget year, this need remains.

**QUESTION: Will you work to see that City support continues and how will you ensure arts and culture play a key role in the Dallas economic recovery?**

After being appointed by Councilwoman Jennifer Staubach Gates, I served as a Commissioner on the Arts & Culture Advisory Commission (2014-2021), overseeing the careful disbursement of bond dollars to support arts and culture throughout Dallas. I have advocated for thoughtful and pragmatic stewardship of City Bond funds and our tax dollars, while helping to protect and nurture art and culture throughout our City. If elected, I will bring my expertise in business and finance to find solutions to the upcoming, post-COVID financial challenges that will enable us to support the Dallas arts community and to ensure that these institutions prosper.

## **6. EQUITY AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

The top pillar of the Dallas Cultural Plan is Equity, with a goal of ensuring arts and culture are accessible in communities that have been historically underserved. And we know when arts are purposefully embedded in the community, they can fight urban blight and create vibrant neighborhoods.

**QUESTION: How will you keep the focus on equitable access to the arts; and specifically where and how would you like to see art used to address challenges in your City Council District.**

*(Some applications to consider)*

- *Murals*
- *Underpass transformation*
- *More opportunities for ALAANA artists in underserved communities*
- *Popup cultural centers*
- *Neighborhood performances*
- *Economic incentives for developers to create affordable galleries, workshop spaces and artists housing*

As a member of the Arts & Culture Advisory Commission, I voted along with my fellow commissioners to support the 2018 Dallas Cultural Plan. I will continue my vigorous support of cultural equity in the arts by insisting that we require our arts organizations – big and small – work towards the City’s goal of board diversification to include minority members. We must also continue to emphasize the importance of reaching out to minority communities for inclusion and participation in cultural programs. As I mentioned in my answer to Question #3, I think there are many opportunities for the City, members of the arts community, and developers to work together to create unique opportunities that benefit the cultural community of Dallas.

## **7. PARTICIPATION**

The Dallas arts and cultural community is diverse and growing and contains a range of genres, ethnicities, locations and more. Every group, especially those serving your district, is honored when elected officials attend a program, visit our organizations, or even stop by a monthly DACAC meeting to say hello.

**QUESTION: Will you commit to attending local programs (performances, exhibitions, classes) or meeting with a Dallas arts organization on a regular basis? What would that look like?**

As a lifelong citizen of Dallas, I know the value of supporting local programs and various Dallas arts organizations. In addition to my service on the boards of the DMA and the Dallas Opera, I look forward to meeting with various arts leaders throughout the City to

lend my knowledge and perspective and to discuss how I might be able to provide service to their organizations, making sure they know I am available if needed.

While DACAC does not endorse candidates, these responses do guide consideration for support by individuals such as arts patrons and advocates, artists, board members, and more. Your responses will be publicly shared on our website to review. [www.DallasNeedsTheArts.com](http://www.DallasNeedsTheArts.com).