

2021 LIBA Board Candidates

(alpha order by last name)

Cynthia Brown (current board member, up for reelection) Navigate Enterprise Center

1. *Why do you want to serve?*

I would like to continue my service on the LIBA Board because I am passionate about the local business environment & believe I could bring a unique perspective. I currently am the director for a nonprofit agency that works with underserved entrepreneurs to assist them with starting and growing small businesses. Almost all are independently owned, and represent a diverse array of backgrounds and industries. On a daily basis I have firsthand access to a variety of the struggles and obstacles they face and work with them to identify solutions and resources. In addition I have been a free-lance graphic artist & marketing consultant for many years. I think the experience of being in business for myself and being a resource provider gives a unique view of the local business environment.

2. *How long have you been a member of LIBA and how have you worked to spread the Buy Local message?*

My organization has been a member of LIBA for almost 5 years. I am a current board member and have attended events and served on the LIBA West committee and the consumer engagement committee. As an organization I felt that it was important to continue our membership with LIBA as LIBA's goals are so closely aligned with our own. All of the entrepreneurs I work with are dependent on a thriving local business environment, supporting that is crucial if they are to be successful. Membership was important but I also knew that active participation was essential as well. A big part of that is ensuring that awareness is communicated to consumers and other organizations that buying from local businesses has an impact for the greater community and not just the business owner. Collaborating and being involved increases the capacity of getting that message out to much greater numbers.

3. *Are you currently a Board Member or Officer of another organization? (If yes, how long & the position.)* No

4. *Please describe any past or current board or group decision-making experience that you have?*

I was a past member of Metro United Way's Cabinet for Community Impact. This cabinet was made up of various individuals who served two year terms. Decisions and discussion were focused around funding allotments and programming. As a part of this cabinet I learned to work with many others with different points of view. Careful considerations had to be made when it came to assessing program needs and effectiveness and working with budget constraints to determine funding. The impact of those decisions not only determined who got how much funding but where those dollars would ultimately carry the most weight in terms of helping the community.

More recently worked with a group of artist in 2017 on an 18 month long grant that was intended to engage community and encourage creative place making. The activities were around workshopping with young people in local community centers, performances, and culminating in a stage production that related those experiences. Though primarily art based the group was responsible for everything from scheduling, promoting and budgeting.

I also worked with Bridge Kids International on development of a community based project. The scope of the project has allowed me to work with architects, contractors, community leaders, business owners and more. I have also served many other committees in volunteer positions and have found that while collective decision making definitely has its challenges, the results it yields are always greater than what would come from an individual.

5. *What qualities, leadership skills and contributions would you bring to the LIBA board?*

When asked if I had considered being a board member I had to think if my membership as an organization really qualified and would I be the best suited to serving on the board? I'm glad I decided yes. During the past 3 years of LIBA board service, I really believe that my experience being in small business and as a service provider gives a different perspective. It was my background in design and marketing and passion for problem solving for small business owners that lead me to my current position. I am constantly considering what conditions, resources and policies can make a better environment for local business to thrive. I am actively involved in partnering with other organizations and service providers as well being aware of what is going on in the local environment as far as initiatives and development ideas. Serving on the board has allowed me to apply what I've learned over the years and use it to further LIBA initiatives & advocate for its members.

6. *What do you think are the most critical issues for LIBA in its next few years?*

I think that LIBA has done a great job in developing its strategic plan and identifying key areas to focus on. Membership Engagement and Capacity & Infrastructure are crucial to the growth & sustainability of the organization. However I see the advocacy and consumer goals as the most critical and challenging. A lot is going on in terms of the city and other institutions focus on economic development. The city is finalizing its 20-year comprehensive plan, large West Louisville initiatives are planned, as well as projects and other developments. In addition, 2020 has seen us through a pandemic and social unrest. I think this a crucial time for LIBA to be extremely visible and attaching its message and the importance of the buy local movement, and the role it plays in the future of a more diverse and just economic development in this city.

7. *Are you able to commit the necessary time to serve on the board (6 to 8 hours/month)?*

I am able to commit the necessary time to fulfil the obligations of serving on this board.

8. *If you are approved for the slate, we will publish this application along with your bio in the LIBA newsletter. Please provide the text you would like to include for your bio and a picture if you like.*

Cynthia Brown is a business consultant and director of JFCS-Navigate Enterprise Center. She has been with JFCS 5 years and has served in several roles including marketing, program coordinator, and business development. She holds an AAS in Graphic Design and a BA in Communications as well as graduate studies in sociology. She has over 20 years' experience in marketing and advertising and running a freelance graphic design and marketing consultation business. Before coming to JFCS Cynthia worked for 12 years at AT&T Advertising Solutions, providing direct services to small businesses. Cynthia understands the struggles of being a small business owner and is committed to assisting underserved aspiring entrepreneurs to overcome challenges and equipping them with the tools and resources to start and grow sustainable businesses.

Tanika Bryant (appointed to fill final year of vacant term) **Black Business Association**

1. *Why do you want to serve?*

I think I will be able to bring some value to the team as a current advocate for black owned businesses in Louisville. Serving with LIBA will give me the opportunity to step out of the box and involve myself in a wider demographic.

2. *How long have you been a member of LIBA and how have you worked to spread the Buy Local message?*

I am just recently coming to know of LIBA withing the past four months. I am a strong community voice for buying local currently. I encourage my vast network of Social Media followers daily to buy locally.

3. *Are you currently a Board Member or Officer of another organization? (If yes, how long & the position.)*

I have been asked for several, but have not accepted any. I feel that LIBA is more of what I am looking for at this time.

4. *Please describe any past or current board or group decision-making experience that you have?*
I have not sat on any boards as of yet, however I am the Executive Director of Black Business Association, and Founder of Buy Black LLC BKA Buy Black Lou, and am making executive and group decisions daily.
5. *What qualities, leadership skills and contributions would you bring to the LIBA board?*
I'd like to bring my ideas, and experience from being a current business and community connector. I will certainly amplify the voice for minority owned businesses but also for all local businesses.
6. *What do you think are the most critical issues for LIBA in its next few years?*
Being able to help the current businesses to navigate through this pandemic and the after effects of it. Giving them the tools and resources needed to thrive
7. *Are you able to commit the necessary time to serve on the board (6 to 8 hours/month)?*
Yes, I am
8. *If you are approved for the slate, we will publish this application along with your bio in the LIBA newsletter. Please provide the text you would like to include for your bio and a picture if you like.*
My name is Tanika Bryant, I am the Executive Director of The Black Business Association Corp, and the Founder of Buy Black Lou. I am a community advocate for the patronage of black businesses and services. I have a social media following in Louisville of roughly 30,000 members. I created a black business directory with nearly 200 businesses listed and growing. My goal is to advocate and amplify the voices of the black business community in Louisville. With LIBA, my desire is to expand my advocacy and support to include a wider demographic. I am looking forward to serving you.

Barbara Nichols (current board member, up for reelection)

South Louisville Business Association

1. *Why do you want to serve?*
I have been involved in community work in South Louisville since 1976. A great part of this has included non-profit organizations and businesses. I've been part of the South Louisville Business Association since it was formed in 1991 and served as president twice, I have networked and served on many organizations that compliment and support the business community in South Louisville: L.I.B.A, the South Louisville Work Group, Southwest Dream Team, and the South Points Work Group.
2. *How long have you been a member of LIBA and how have you worked to spread the Buy Local message?*
When programming for the South Louisville Business Assoc, I scheduled the founder of LIBA as a new organization to speak at one of our meetings, then when Jennifer came on board, we scheduled her. I joined the South Louisville work group to help develop a campaign to familiarize the Louisville community with South & Southwest Louisville. The partners, SWDT, LIBA, SLBA Metro Gov't, FBA, Metro Parks and Metro Council Members to develop a plan, raise funds, provide bus tours, work with Ky State Transportation for signage throughout Southwest and help with an annual Map of the area. This work evolved into a wider more permanent scope and I was asked to be on the LIBA Board. I have served a 3 year term thus far, and am seeking another.
3. *Are you currently a Board Member or Officer of another organization? (If yes, how long & the position.)*
UofL Alumni Board (20yrs director), Actors Theatre Associates (30yrs Past President, Fundraising-Vice Pres.), Little Loomhouse (20yrs. Finance Chair), Iroquois Neighborhood Assoc.(45yrs-President) Happy Birthday Park (8 yrs- Director) and Ky Southern College Council (22yrs Treasurer).

4. *Please describe any past or current board or group decision-making experience that you have?*
I serve on the UofL Alumni Board, the Actors Theatre Board, and its Associates, the Little Loomhouse (I represent this organization in the community in a marketing capacity), the Iroquois Neighborhood Assoc. After serving on the Iroquois Amphitheater Assoc. Board, I was Executive Director.

5. *What qualities, leadership skills and contributions would you bring to the LIBA board?*
I have a background in finance, working in two accountant businesses and serving as treasurer for many of the non-profits I have served. I am familiar with tax structure and understand that non-profits need to make money (they are a business and need to be profitable to survive). I worked as an Executive Director for a non-profit that was a private-public partnership with Parks. I am currently working at Metro Council and have worked for 4 different Council Members and have a background in the grant process both for local funding, for KY Arts Council, and Fund for the Arts. These relationships provide the knowledge to make sound decisions in the operation of these governing fiduciary boards.

6. *What do you think are the most critical issues for LIBA in its next few years?*
Provide information to our members. This includes financial assistance, government requirements, upcoming legislation and trends that affects a business' bottom line. Provide tools that streamline and assist those business owners with programs, tools and resources that they may not be able to afford as an independent business.

7. *Are you able to commit the necessary time to serve on the board (6 to 8 hours/month)?*
YES

8. *If you are approved for the slate, we will publish this application along with your bio in the LIBA newsletter. Please provide the text you would like to include for your bio and a picture if you like.*
BIO Text –
With a husband of 51 years, two sons, two daughters-in-law, five grandsons, one great grandson, ranging in age from 49 - 6 years old, a 98 year-old mother-in-law and numerous rescued dogs, a neighborhood cat and various visiting chickens, I work and volunteer to relax.
I have served over twenty years on both fiduciary non-profit boards and volunteer/community boards, and organizations with a local, state and national mission. What I found was that if you choose areas that you are passionate about and work with groups that are making the community stronger, you are rewarded with the legacy of a better way-of-life for all while building lifelong relationships.

I have served one term on the LIBA board and was a Co-Chair of the Advocacy Committee. This area complements my passion for advocacy and my work for Metro Council. Having worked in many non-profit organizations throughout the years, I am familiar with how important it is to know your representatives and that they know you and your business/organization. The LIBA Advocacy Committee decided to expand its scope to be more active in educating our members how important it is to make sure government officials know about the mission of LIBA and providing opportunities to become acquainted with its members. LIBA provided this opportunity and working on this has been rewarding but revealed how extremely important our mission is as we move forward successfully after this past year.

Ashley S. Parker (current board president, up for reelection)

Parker & Klein Real Estate

1. *Why do you want to serve?*
It has been an honor and an adventure serving the board of LIBA as Vice President and currently President. I have been on the board since 2012 and was elected VP in 2013 and President in 2016. I would like to remain in this role to continue leading LIBA specifically focusing on: providing

informative and helpful events, raising funds through new members & sponsorships and our new 501C3, promoting locally-owned, independent businesses and to educate citizens on the value of purchasing locally.

2. *How long have you been a member of LIBA and how have you worked to spread the Buy Local message?*

Parker & Klein has been a member of LIBA since 2007. This was our first year in business and we were proud to qualify as members and help support other local businesses. I have helped spread the Buy Local message through sponsorships, advertisements in The Guide, promoting and volunteering at the Buy Local Fair, Brewfest, and the B to B Expo. Parker & Klein also distribute guides to our clients and post LIBA events and information on our website and Facebook page and recruit new members

3. *Are you currently a Board Member or Officer of another organization? No (If yes, how long & the position.)*

4. *Please describe any past or current board or group decision-making experience that you have?*

I have been on the Greater Louisville Association of Realtors Board for 3 years and the Board of Farmington Historic Plantation for 4 years and the Clifton Center for 4 years.

5. *What qualities, leadership skills and contributions would you bring to the LIBA board?*

I am a graduate of Leadership Louisville & Bingham Fellows where I gained a wealth of knowledge about Leadership in general, but specifically on being a better leader in the Louisville community. I would describe my leadership style as gracious, decisive and authentic.

6. *What do you think are the most critical issues for LIBA in its next few years?*

1. Enhancing and improving our members experience with LIBA 2) Increasing public awareness about the benefits of buying local and supporting independent businesses 3) Expanding our membership as well as our geographical footprint.

7. *Are you able to commit the necessary time to serve on the board (6 to 8 hours/month)?*

Yes

8. *If you are approved for the slate, we will publish this application along with your bio in the LIBA newsletter. Please provide the text you would like to include for your bio and a picture if you like.*

I have been an independent business owner since 2007 and am currently the broker/owner of Parker & Klein Real Estate. Since 2001 I have been helping clients buy and sell homes. I am a graduate of Colorado State University, hold a Broker's License and am Certified- At Home with Diversity. I am married with two children, paddle board as often as possible, hate to miss a good concert and love to travel. I am passionate about the city of Louisville, independent business, and especially keeping it all weird.

Medora Safai

Safai Coffee

1. *Why do you want to serve?*

I love entrepreneurs. Their energy, passion and excitement in getting on with each day is infectious and exhilarating. Helping people live out their dream and being a part of that journey with them would be fantastic.

2. *How long have you been a member of LIBA and how have you worked to spread the Buy Local message?*

Official members on and off for 20 years. Supporting local Louisville businesses is a regular part of my day to day conversations, especially now as a representative for all of our local vendors at Logan Street Market.

3. *Are you currently a Board Member or Officer of another organization?*
Yes, Louisville Orchestra, 1+ years.
4. *Please describe any past or current board or group decision-making experience that you have?*
Being the founder of Safai Coffee and on the board I participated in all financial and strategic decisions up through last year when we merged with another business. I have been on the LO Financial Committee since joining the Louisville Orchestra board, voting on budgets etc.
5. *What qualities, leadership skills and contributions would you bring to the LIBA board?*
I have over 20 years of operating small to medium sized businesses in Louisville and Kentucky. I have a keen understanding of the pressures and needs of business owners and am able to relate to and verbalize challenges and opportunities for growth.
6. *What do you think are the most critical issues for LIBA in its next few years?*
I'm not sure. There has been such a disruption in business as usual with the pandemic it's difficult to see whose doors are closing and who will replace them. Bridging the overwhelming support that the Louisville community has with recipients in the small business community seems to be the obvious course, but there will inevitably be a reconstruction of the local economy that will need support in a way that maybe difficult to identify right now.
7. *Are you able to commit the necessary time to serve on the board (6 to 8 hours/month)?*
Yes.
8. *If you are approved for the slate, we will publish this application along with your bio in the LIBA newsletter. Please provide the text you would like to include for your bio and a picture if you like.*
Medora Safai has co-founded Safai Coffee, a 20 year old specialty coffee roasting company; SAFAI Foundation, a 7 year old philanthropic off-shoot of the roasting company which, invests in and encourages development of sustainable economic, environmental and quality medical availability to coffee growing communities; and Safai Logan Street Market, opened October 2019, as an 20,000 square foot permeant public market with 35 independently owned businesses in an underserved official food desert directly surrounded by the Shelby Park, Germantown, Paris Point, and Smoketown communities, offering fresh local raw and prepared foods, along with a brewery and local artists work.
Medora enjoys sneaking away to hike and kayak almost as much as she enjoys keeping up with her husband Mike, their son and his very energetic pup.

Mary Ellen Wiederwohl

Former Chief, Louisville Forward

1. *Why do you want to serve?*
Louisville's small businesses are part of what makes our city so special. Small businesses are our culture, our values, and represent so much of what we hold dear about our city, our neighborhoods, and how we identify this place as "home". Small businesses have been disproportionately impacted by the mandated closures and restrictions from the pandemic. We are going to lose too many, and Louisville needs a strong independent business association to fight for the resources to both grow back and promote the city's small businesses as shopping, dining and life return in 2021.
2. *How long have you been a member of LIBA and how have you worked to spread the Buy Local message?*
I am not a small business owner and haven't been a member of LIBA, but...I have been a vociferous advocate for small business over the last 6.5 years leading the city's economic and community development efforts. I've fought to preserve and enhance the city's resources dedicated to small business support, lent my voice in advocacy, and supported with my personal wallet always!

3. *Are you currently a Board Member or Officer of another organization? (If yes, how long & the position.)*

I have served on the board of the Louisville Orchestra since 2009 and on the executive committee for the majority of that tenure. I have previously served on numerous boards and officer positions, including many as Metro Government's representative, and as a private citizen, including GLI, Leadership Louisville Center, One West, Louisville Metro Housing Authority and many more.

4. *Please describe any past or current board or group decision-making experience that you have?*

I am leaving the post of founding Chief of Louisville Forward in December 2020; in that role I have overseen all the city's economic and community development efforts. The organization has 400 employees across six agencies and annual operating revenue of \$100 million. I previously served as the Mayor's Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Strategic Initiatives. Before coming to city government, I worked in a small business! I was the Assistant Director of MML&K Government Solutions, part of the McBrayer Law Firm. I am a Past President of the Junior League of Louisville.

5. *What qualities, leadership skills and contributions would you bring to the LIBA board?*

I have a deep understanding of Louisville's small business support ecosystem, the resources, and the gaps. I've spent the last 6.5 years deeply embedded in the work to provide technical assistance and capital access to our small businesses. And, having previously been in a leadership, profit-sharing role in a small business, I understand the needs and issues confronting small businesses.

6. *What do you think are the most critical issues for LIBA in its next few years?*

Recovering from the horrible impacts of the pandemic is job 1. Small businesses have taken the brunt of the closures and restrictions with devastating consequences. LIBA must undertake a loud and strong advocate role to provide the financial and other resources necessary to support the surviving businesses and offer support to the fresh round of entrepreneurs who will emerge in 2021. We have recovery to do, and we have opportunity to catalyze new businesses.

7. *Are you able to commit the necessary time to serve on the board (6 to 8 hours/month)?*

Yes!

8. *If you are approved for the slate, we will publish this application along with your bio in the LIBA newsletter. Please provide the text you would like to include for your bio and a picture if you like.*

Mary Ellen Wiederwohl is a born advocate and influencer with more than two decades of experience in business, civic leadership, and public affairs. Her life and career have afforded multiple high-profile roles leading organizations and using her skills in communication, persuasion, empathy, patience and malleability to lead teams, coalesce disparate interests, translate complex issues and data into storytelling, bring people together, and advance agendas. She is a recognized leader and integrative, strategic thinker who connects easily with people and seeks to motivate others into action and actualization. Mary Ellen Wiederwohl is the founding leader of Louisville Forward – the city of Louisville's integrated approach to economic and community development. Louisville Forward combines business attraction, expansion, and retention activities with all of the city's real estate functions and talent development to present a unified solution for job growth and quality of place. Under her leadership from 2014-2020, Louisville Forward was named a Top Economic Development Organization six times by Site Selection Magazine, the leading trade publication for economic development. In 2020, after the pandemic struck, Mary Ellen led efforts to create a joint small business emergency loan program, allocate \$27 million for the city's relief grant program, and secure millions in additional loan dollars for small business. Prior to her role with the city, she spent almost a decade in government relations, in a small business, advocating for business and other policy interests in Frankfort.