



Neighborhood Parks Council

## 2010 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

### District 10 – Malia Cohen

#### 1. In what ways do you feel parks contribute to San Franciscans' quality of life?

The positive ways green spaces and pocket parks contribute to the quality of residence's lives is immeasurable. San Francisco's parks contribute to the physical and psychological wellbeing of residence by offering a place of recreation and relaxation from the hustle and bustle of urban life. San Francisco's parks are extremely important to the development of neighborhoods, families and the overall impression of the city. We all must work to ensure the appearance, functionality and accessibility of all San Francisco parks.

I am a proponent of healthy lifestyles and firmly committed to ensuring the residents of San Francisco have usable and accessible green spaces in their neighborhoods both large and small.

#### 2. What park in your district do you use most and tell us what you like most about it.

I grew up within walking distance to McLaren Park. McLaren Park is the neighborhood park everyone went to when they wanted to enjoy a beautiful day with fellow community members. This park is important to my family and I. We have many cherished memories of relaxing in the park, grilling food and playing recreational games. As a child, I would walk our dog, Poncho, in the park and watch him chase birds and run around.

Today, I live across the street from Candlestick Park, the only state park located in San Francisco. I walk and run the shoreline with neighbors. I love the majestic beauty and the tranquility of the park.

#### 3. Which park in your district appears to need the most help and what do you propose to do about it?

As you know, McLaren Park is the second largest park in San Francisco. While McLaren Park is not in danger of disappearing anytime soon it is unfortunately becoming less and less accessible. Rising park fees have been making it harder and harder for families to use the park for gatherings and events. The rising fees have limited those who can take advantage of McLaren Park. If elected I would work to keep park fees low and ensure the "scholarship" fund has money to assist those who qualify for reduced fees. It is important that all have access to take full advantage parks. For the last year I have been working with *Help McLaren Park* to rebuild a children's playground. I have participated in planning and visioning meetings to shape the look and feel of the proposed playground. I have supported and advocated for McLaren to

receive grant money. I have written letters of support on behalf of *Help McLaren Park*, however my favorite activity was repainting lines on the basketball court!

As Supervisor I will continue give attention to not only McLaren Park to all the parks in the Southeast Sector and support my neighbor's efforts to develop pocket parks and stream line the bureaucratic process to creating pocket parks.

**4. From your observations, what are the 3 most important issues facing recreation and parks in San Francisco? How will you begin to address these issues if you are elected?**

1. Funds for upkeep and maintenance
2. Safety
3. Keeping parks and open space a Citywide priority

As Supervisor I will work with colleagues to increase the coordination between RPD, NPC CFF and neighborhood groups. I will work continue to work with the Police Captains to ensure our parks and open spaces are safe.

**5. What is your view of the role of volunteer community park groups? What commitment do you make to working with these groups to improve our public open spaces?**

I have been committed to supporting the work of volunteer community park groups and if elected will directly work with them. Neighborhoods must involve all people in creating safe and accessible green spaces. Volunteer community park groups not only promote environmental responsibility and healthy lifestyles, they work to unite and bring together members of the community. If elected I will use volunteer community park groups to help maintain park space

**6. ParkScan.org is a website that enables park users to report maintenance concerns to the Recreation and Park Department. If elected, how would you promote this tool?**

Technology empowers people and offers them an easy avenue through which to have their voice heard. A site like ParkScan.org is a valuable tool and a great way for residents to share their concerns, observations and comments with the Recreation and Park Department. The challenge with the site is there are few people who know about it and/or know how to use the website. Those who see something broken in a park and don't know about ParkScan will probably not report the problem. In order to ensure that San Francisco parks are properly maintained the City needs to do a better job of promoting sites like ParkScan and expand the pool of people that use it. I would suggest a temporary incentive system to reward users. As a member of the Board I will link my website page to the ParkScan site in an effort to cross promote. I am also

committed to raising the need funds to place a kiosk in McLaren Park as a resource for park users and a vehicle for neighbors to report issues.

**7. NPC’s Green Envy study identified many neighborhoods that lack playgrounds and neighborhood parks. How would you address these park and open space deficiencies?**

I do not need a study to tell me that my district lacks playgrounds and neighborhood parks in good conditions. Low-income communities often have less access to safe and clean parks something that I cannot accept now and will not accept when elected. As Supervisor I will work with local community based groups to promote parks and green spaces. It is time to think creatively about how green spaces and open spaces for safe and fun recreation can be established in neighborhoods. The support and implementation of Blue Greenway plan is one way to address open space deficiencies by linking established open spaces and creating new ones.

This past year I have been on the ground working with neighbors and friend in Dogpatch to create Progress Park, which was once a swath of forgotten land under the 280-freeway overpass. We have partnered with DPW and Caltrans to clean up the space and earn their support for a small park. I use this as an example of real work being done by neighbors who care and want to see more open space. There are already several examples of great pocket parks maintained by neighbors who care; Silver Terrace Garden Project, Quesada Gardens, Mandell Ave median greening project

**8. Deferred maintenance of things like irrigation systems continues to plague the park system. With little funding available to fix these types of problems, what would you propose to improve park maintenance?**

I am an advocate for parks and believe they need our unwavering support. In times of economic uncertainty parks offer an outlet for safe and free fun. When funds are tight, we look to “neighbor labor” or volunteer effort to assist with maintenance. Technological advances allow for us capture rainwater. In my work with Progress Park we can create a plan to build a cistern to catch runoff water.

**9. San Francisco currently has no citywide open space requirement for new development. In areas such as the Eastern Neighborhoods, which are already deficient in open space and could see a tripling in residential density in the near future, this oversight could create unlivable communities severely deficient in parks. Would you support a citywide open space requirement for all new residential development so that every neighborhood can have green space for play, exercise, and respite from urban life?**

Yes, absolutely. I am commitment to promoting green spaces that are accessible to all.