



Neighborhood Parks Council
2010 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

District 10- Tony Kelly

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

Parks are absolutely critical to San Franciscans' quality of life, in a very literal sense. In a dense city (and in a district destined to add 100,000 people over the next 30 years), parks and open spaces are necessary relievers of the stresses of urban life – they reduce stress, combat depression, and add to public health in many measurable ways. In addition, trees and green spaces are known to reduce crime in urban areas, help stormwater runoff, remove pollution from the air (District 10 has far more air pollution than the rest of the City), and reduce heat. In short, parks are necessary for our urban lives.

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

I love dogs, but don't have one, so I am most drawn to the unofficial dog parks in my neighborhood – Esprit Park, McKinley Square, and the upper playground at the Potrero Hill Rec Center. I have recently discovered Herz Playground and the boundless opportunities of McLaren Park.

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

For the longest time, I have naively thought of McLaren Park as a great natural area – only to find that a significant part of my belief is due to the fact that it is so poorly maintained. McLaren has the potential to be a wonderful destination park, without being overly programmed, and I believe the City has a real responsibility to create and maintain such a large showcase park on the south side of town. The answer, course, is funding, and in #7-8 below I will have some suggestions about additional budget resources.

4. From your observations, what are the 3 most important issues facing recreation and parks in San Francisco?

First, we have to reclaim our budget priorities, adding resources to the City budget (as described elsewhere in this questionnaire) to ensure the full operation and maintenance of City-owned open space and natural areas, and funding the acquisition of opportunity sites in the future, to fulfill the Recreation and Open Space element of the City's General Plan.

Second, the current City Hall mania of privatizing our public resources must end quickly, and we must keep our public open spaces and natural areas safe in the future. I would require public hearings whenever there is an attempt to privatize or reduce public services at the City's parks and natural areas, to test the claimed cost and quality benefits of privatization – claims that often fall apart in sunlight. And I would seek to restrict such attempts at privatization in the future, possibly through an ordinance or Charter amendment at the ballot establishing a high hurdle to changing City policy on this matter.

Third, we simply must get more serious about multiple pollution and community health issues throughout southeast San Francisco, and specific health dangers affecting immigrant communities and people of color throughout the City. Otherwise, our City's livability is at risk.

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?

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?

I will answer these two questions together.

Just like privatization of public resources threatens the long-term future of our parks and open spaces, inefficient use of our volunteer (wo)manpower threatens to drain our critical maintenance operations. When I served on the Mayor's Open Space Task Force, we learned how the Golden Gate National Recreation Area brilliantly uses volunteers to advance its mission and draw more engaged visitors to its parkland; that program can and should be a model for our City.

I love ParkScan and find it useful ... and odd when it doesn't match up to Rec and Park information or the annual Controller's Report on the City's neighborhood parks. I would seek to include ParkScan more in the Rec and Park Department's operations; the continuing disconnect between the department and its public, both as volunteers and users, gets more aggravating with each passing year.

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?

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

I will answer these two questions together, because the answer is the same: Substantial investment.

I think City Hall often seeks to build the budget, rather than build the economy, and even then their attempts are short-sighted. I generally support new revenue measures, but most of all I would seek out funding sources within the City to support our new and expanded programs and strategies without raising taxes.

One example: Billions of dollars in City reserves sit in commercial banks every day. We pay millions of dollars in fees on that money. Why don't we put those reserves to work for us? We can respond to the worldwide credit crunch by using the massive power of the City budget to create a new local credit market, via existing credit unions or possibly the creation of a municipal bank, funding local hiring for quality jobs. This could help building projects get built, while also providing opportunities for local business-owners to create the permanent jobs inside the new buildings and opportunities for additional tax income.

A second example: Billions of dollars of tax-increment financing for Bayview redevelopment have been committed to building market-rate condominiums at the Hunters Point Shipyard, a tragically flawed project that doesn't serve today's District 10 and, in fact, makes the residents of Bayview pay for their own gentrification by investing their future property taxes.

I would work to redirect Redevelopment financing away from the Shipyard project and into more projects that benefit the Bayview sooner – workforce programs like Jobs Now, smaller-scale development projects along Third Street, an accelerated HOPE SF rebuild, pollution cleanup and open space projects, and health, family and child services based at our public schools and community/recreation centers.

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?

Absolutely; that, along with a rewrite of the City's Open Space Element of the General Plan, and the establishment of a citywide development impact fee for the support of new open space (already studied and proposed by the Mayor's Office) are all important measures to adopt as soon as possible.