



Neighborhood Parks Council
2010 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

District 2- Mark Farrell

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

I believe City parks are plain and simply one of the most critical components to our quality of life as San Franciscans. Although we do not have enough green space, and funding is threatening for the parks that we do operate, our existing parks provide an incredible outlet and source of recreation for our City's residents – people who have committed to live in San Francisco's urban environment. From parents and children who use our playgrounds, to school children who are part of after-school latch-key programs and use the athletic facilities, to working individuals who use our parks for sports such as softball, basketball and golf, to facilities dedicated to senior citizens, and our incredible open spaces which are used by everyone – life in San Francisco would not be the same without our great parks, and I believe we need to do everything possible at City Hall to promote their importance, and their inherent ability to strengthen our local communities.

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

Especially as parents of two young children, we use our City's parks all the time. In District 2, we frequent the Palace of Fine Arts, Moscone, Julius Kahn, Mountain Lake, Alta Plaza and the newly-renovated Presidio Heights playground the most – we truly use them all. Of those, we use Moscone more than any other playground – most importantly right now because of the incredible children's playground facilities. In addition, the newly-renovated Marina Library is the main library which our family uses, and we love the fact that the stores of Chestnut Street are a very close stroller-ride away. I have to admit a personal bias towards Moscone as well, as I grew up literally spending every summer day at Moscone – having played on the park's various basketball and baseball teams (even winning a few City championships) – and eventually became a Park Director during my summers in college.

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

Compared to some of the other areas in San Francisco, our parks are in relatively good shape, but I have heard from many residents in District 2 that they would strongly advocate for renovations to Lafayette Park. This park is an incredibly large open space in the middle of Pacific Heights, but the structures are deteriorating and parents are often choosing to walk the extra distance to other parks in the area. In terms of a plan of action, I believe this is a combination of allocating financial resources from the City,

and partnering with local neighbors to create a public-private partnership that we saw as so incredibly successful at Presidio Heights.

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?

First and foremost is the need for financial resources. As we have recently seen, without necessary financial support we are literally closing down some of our parks, the grass isn't being cut, and Park Directors are being laid off. One of the main reasons I am running for Supervisor is that I am the only candidate in my race which has a private sector business and finance background. Before our Park and Recreation Department can realistically expect to once again be fully-funded, we need to fix our City budget and get our financial house in order in San Francisco, and I believe I am uniquely qualified to lead in that effort.

Second, I believe the continual shifting demographics of San Francisco residents is of great importance, as it determines which facilities are being used the most often, and projections provide a roadmap for which facilities San Francisco should seek to promote, develop and build to serve San Franciscans in the future. For instance, if the recent change to our public school assignment process has the effect of keeping more young families in San Francisco, and stemming their exodus to the local suburbs, we need to pay close attention to where those families are living and how we can continue to provide age-appropriate parks and facilities for these residents.

Lastly is the need for a sustained public-private partnership model in San Francisco to support our parks. These partnerships can leverage private sector dollars to support our public parks, and foster a much greater sense of local community around our neighborhood parks – something that I am very passionate about. As a child growing up in the Marina District, I was at Moscone Playground (then Funston) almost every summer day, and basically grew up with the other children at the park – I don't see that type of community in our local parks in District 2, and will do everything possible to promote that possibility once again.

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 think volunteer community park groups are an incredible resource, and are a key to the future of San Francisco's ability to sustain our parks. Well before even deciding to run for Supervisor, my family and I participated in local park clean-up days at Mountain Lake Park, the Palace of Fine Arts and Julius Kahn, and I saw first-hand the impact such a relatively small effort can have on our local parks, and what a difference it can make to our local communities. I commit to working with each of the groups which I know exist and are thriving in District 2, and to work with the NPC to form additional

groups at parks in District 2 which are not currently represented / organized. I truly believe in this effort.

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?

To be honest, as much as I frequent our local parks, I was not aware of this service before completing this questionnaire. In my opinion this is a matter of putting in the effort to communicate with San Francisco residents who frequently use our parks. I believe the most effective method to promote this tool will be to educate our local Recreation & Park Directors at each playground and park, and have them in turn evangelize this service to their constituents. Notices should also be posted throughout our parks, and promoted through San Francisco's social media outlets – including online parents' forums such as the Golden Gate Mother's Group.

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?

In all future urban planning we must continue to place a large priority on creating appropriate open spaces and parks, and take a hard look at existing, fully-developed communities which are lack the necessary facilities. Quite frankly, however, in this economic environment it is not realistic to think the City of San Francisco will have the funds available to purchase additional open land and develop new parks, which I believe highlights the importance of having elected officials which can fix our economic mess, and provide a brighter financial future so that we can address these necessary concerns.

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?

This continues to be a huge problem, not only with our parks, but other parts of our City's infrastructure such as our dilapidated streets and pavement. I strongly believe our annual City budget should fund the continued maintenance and upkeep of these critical infrastructure needs, and not let them fall by the wayside in such an extreme matter that the only way to fix them is to put revenue bond measures on the ballot which further burden our taxpayers. At present, I believe the best solution is to focus on our public-private partnerships, and leverage both the financial potential, but again the community-building potential these partnerships can bring to the neighborhoods.

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. However, I believe the last thing we afford to do in San Francisco is further create an environment where people do not want to do business with our City – in particular developers. In order to attract development there must also be sustainable financial returns for investors, and therefore we will have to work hard to achieve a middle ground that will serve to continue to attract investment capital into San Francisco, and provide great open spaces for our families and individual residents in our City.