



Neighborhood Parks Council  
**2010 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire**

**District 6- Theresa Sparks**

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

Parks and open space are an essential element of the fabric of a community, even more so in an urban environment such as San Francisco. Golden Gate Park anchors our neighborhood parks and serves as an outlet for the stress created by our daily routines and a vehicle for family, cultural, sports and other recreational activities. The Presidio and Ocean Beach are two areas that also make us unique among other metropolitan areas. Parks and open spaces in San Francisco anchor us, give our lives a sense of dimension and provide for us a needed respite from day-to-day urban life. It is imperative that everyone in the City have access to parks and open spaces, whether they be playgrounds for our children, recreational space for organized events or quiet open space for reflection and rest.

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

In District 6, Yerba Buena Gardens is my personal favorite of the few parks in this part of the City. I enjoy the fountains, the periodic entertainment and the quiet time it provided from working South of Market for nearly eight years. I would go there quite frequently during lunch and after work to unwind and enjoy the open space.

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

District 6 suffers from many serious issues concerning parks and open space, the most pressing is the lack of them. There has to be a concerted, coordinated effort to get more in the District. Of the few parks we do have, Boeddeker Park in the Tenderloin and UN Plaza in Civic Center, suffer from the same significant issues, drug use, crime and violence. As we initiate plans for new parks, we need to make sure the ones we have are safe from violence, needles and crime. I will use my experience as president of the San Francisco Police Commission and excellent relationship with the SFPD, to insure this is not an issue beginning as soon as I take office.

**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?**

Funding is the most significant issue and can be partially resolved by prioritization in the annual budget, additional parks bond measures and a greater percentage utilization of development fees for this purpose.

Ongoing maintenance is a significant problem facing our parks and open spaces that needs to be prioritized in our annual budget process.

Safety in our parks and open space is an ongoing problem that need to be prioritized by our park rangers and SFPD. I would immediately ask the SFPD to create a separate Park and Open Space command, much as it has done for MTA, and direct it to enforce safety issues in our parks. I would also evaluate the possibility of closing our parks after a certain time in the evening.

**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 they are essential elements of our network of parks and our parks system and commit, once I am in office, to work with them on a regular basis.

**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?**

ParkScan.org is just one example of an effective service offered by the City of which few people are aware. We need to better publicize these services and make them more readily available to the public.

**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?**

We have become relatively good in this City at creating developments, but not so good at making them into neighborhoods. We need to designate a greater percentage of our development fees to the creation of parks and open space on a prorata basis to the type of development that is being planned. In District 6, we have a significant deficiency of these types of public spaces, although in both the Mission Bay and Treasure Island development plans, a significant greater amount of open space is contemplated. In general the Eastern Neighborhoods Plan does a poor job of addressing these needs and should be reevaluated for more parks and open spaces.

**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?**

Deferred maintenance and capital improvements are a significant problem in all City departments. This type of expense is unfortunately a foreseeable issue when there are significant budget deficits. Correctly the structural imbalance of our City's finances is critical to being able to fund deferred maintenance and capital improvement expenses.

One of my proposals is to create a multi-year budget planning cycle which is then augmented by an annual spending plan. This process should be totally transparent and inclusive of all stakeholders. This process should include not only operating expenses, and long-term capital investments, as our current budget includes, but also non-profit costs, deferred maintenance, capital improvement projects and all other multi-year expenses so we're not de-prioritizing them every year to meet current obligations.

**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 and consider imposing an open-space requirement for all major commercial developments as well.