



Neighborhood Parks Council
2010 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

District 8- Scott Wiener

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

- Parks provide critical outdoor green space in the middle of a dense, concrete-focused urban environment. They allow residents to escape, even if slightly, from our high-speed urban existence.
- Parks provide valuable recreation space, including for kids and dogs.
- Parks increase the permeability of our ground so that more rainwater is kept out of the combined sewer/wastewater system. This reduces flooding during the rainy season.
- Parks provide community-building opportunities – a space for neighbors to get to know their neighbors and a location for community-based programming and volunteerism.
- Parks provide important recreational opportunities for people who cannot afford, or are otherwise unable, to leave the city on a regular basis to seek recreation.

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

Dolores Park. Dolores Park is a true gem. It is a magnificent space, with great views, exceptional weather, and diverse usage ranging from people sunning themselves to a dog area to soccer and tennis areas. It draws a diverse population, including gay and straight people, people of various ethnicities, and people of every age. It's a great neighborhood park that is also a citywide park. It's one of the best places to meet your friends, to have a picnic, and just to enjoy the day.

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

Dolores Park needs a massive facelift, and I am happy that it will receive it through the 2008 parks bond. The Glen Park Rec Center and surrounding area also needs a lot of work, as does Noe Valley Courts. I hope that both will be included in an upcoming parks bond. If they are not, the community will need to step up with active parks groups that can help Rec & Park with maintenance and upgrades. I am very supportive of volunteer parks groups as a supplement to Rec & Park staff and as a way to build community.

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 a lack of funding. Rec & Park's budget has been decimated in recent years, and we see this in the deferred maintenance that has accumulated at various parks. I will be an advocate for parks during the budget process and will support creative ways of financing them. I am not a big fan of new set-asides, but if we are able to find a dedicated stream of funding for our parks without jeopardizing the overall budget process, I will be open to supporting it.

Second is the historic, and improving, relationship between Rec & Park and volunteer park groups. For a long time, it was challenging for volunteer park groups to perform necessary work in our parks. The rules were too rigid, and volunteers frequently had to leave if a gardener did not show up, given the rule that a gardener had to supervise the volunteers. I am pleased that the department and the union have made the rules more flexible recently and thus made it easier to have volunteer efforts. We need to ensure that it is as easy as possible to volunteer in our parks and to support the work of our gardeners.

Third is the lack of open space in some areas of the city. For example, the Castro has almost no open space. The 17th Street Plaza was a great start, but it is small. I would like to find a way to make broader use of Collingwood Park, which is a treasure right in the middle of the neighborhood. I also will work closely with the community to create a new plaza in Noe Valley at the site of the farmers market.

Fourth (yes, that's more than three) is public safety. Some parks, for example Dolores Park, have had crime problems that need to be addressed. A number of parks have restrooms that are potentially unsafe and at a minimum unusable because of their condition. We need to work closely with SFPD and others to ensure that our parks are safe and accessible for everyone.

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?

Please see my response to #4. I am a strong support of volunteer park groups. I've volunteered with these groups many times, and I will be an advocate for them at the Board of Supervisors.

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 a critical tool to ensure that Rec & Park is aware of park issues, no matter how large or small, as soon as they arise. The community becomes eyes and

ears for the department. ParkScan should be promoted widely in community newspapers, on neighborhood blogs, and by posting signs at parks and throughout neighborhoods. I will support a formal effort to promote ParkScan in these and other ways.

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?

First, we should use the Pavement to Parks program to create new open space in various parts of the city. I am a strong supporter of this program and am the only District 8 candidate who has consistently supported it.

Second, we should find ways to expand the Open Space Fund so that the City can purchase new space for parks, plazas, and playgrounds.

Third, we should support efforts by park groups to privately fundraise to build and improve playgrounds. Friends of Dolores Park Playground is a great example of this kind of effort.

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?

Parks bonds are a critical part of the solution, and this bond program has been well-managed in recent years. We may want to consider increasing the size of the next bond, consistent with the 10-year capital plan and the City’s bond/property tax policies. For example, if the streets bond – which is part of the plan but which was defeated once and withdrawn once – continues to be politically unpalatable, we can consider transferring that bonding capacity to parks. To be clear, I support the streets bond, but if such a bond cannot pass, we can consider using that bonding capacity in an area that can pass, such as parks.

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.