

## Neighborhood Parks Council 2011 Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

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1. Tell us about your personal parks use or experience. In what ways do you feel San Francisco's parks contribute to your quality of life?

As Supervisor I worked with Recreation and Parks to make sure that my District's parks got their share of capital improvements, were kept clean, and well maintained. I've been a member of Frontrunners – an LGBT running club that races every Saturday in Golden Gate Park. When I became a parent, parks became my backyard, a place to meet other families, and the only way I could exhaust my energizer bunny. I now spend happy hours at in parks, playgrounds and recreation centers around the City with my almost 5 year old, Sidney. Our faves: Bernal, Duboce and Walter Haas playgrounds and sometimes Julius Kahn.

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

Recreation and Parks continues to struggle with difficult budget decisions. There has been significant attention on the Department's shift to a revenue focus, meanwhile our parks continue to struggle with barebones maintenance, and understaffing. I believe 3 most important issues facing the parks system are:

1. Need for dedicated funding
2. Understaffing and staff morale affecting basic park maintenance
3. Successful completion of capital improvements

After leading Neighborhood Services – San Francisco's complaint department – for five years, and serving as a hands-on District Supervisor, I have the experience, drive and vision to be Mayor. I've never accomplished anything in city government without a city employee on one side and someone who lives, works or does business here on the other. We've made magic because of the greatness of people who work for our City. My passion is leading an unprecedented era for our civil service. I want to establish a covenant with city workers. Specifically I want to have a relationship where, as Mayor, I'm embracing life coaching and other tools to help parks workers learn about opportunities, such as first-time homebuyers, below-market ownership programs, great schools and enrichment programs for kids and career education that can lead to promotion and advancement within civil service.

As Mayor, I will establish a sustainable economic plan to manage funding for all our City services, including parks. I supported recent legislation that will create additional reserves in the

City by saving prior year surpluses and setting aside one-time windfalls for a rainy day. These actions will allow the City to use reserves to make up future financial deficits, rather than require reductions to vital park services in future budgets.

I will support future park bond efforts, and will take a leadership role to make sure that the funds are distributed fairly and spent wisely. It's time for a Mayor to have an honest conversation with voters about dedicated park funding to make our parks more in line with the success that branch libraries experience. We must marshal consensus for some dedicated financing.

I am proud of the community-driven processes we led in District 8 to rebuild Walter Haas, Duboce Park and Upper Noe. We can't afford to wait until ball fields are destroyed by floods to replace a broken drainage system.

3. 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 can't imagine a San Francisco parks system without energetic volunteers advocating for improvements, fundraising to make them reality, and challenging our system to be a first class parks system for our city.

Ask Laura Norman, a Noe Valley mom who called my office back in 2004 looking for some help to make Noe Courts a safe place for her young kids. We worked together and that park is now a fantastic toddler zone, with planned improvements for users of all ages.

See how engaged and committed neighbors overcame sharp divides to create Duboce Park – the first mixed use off-leash area of its kind. I am proud of my role in that project, but it was the neighbors who volunteered their time and talent that deserve praise for creating that kind of success.

The recent SPUR report, "Seeking Green", recognizes the vital importance of volunteers in maintaining our parks—through advocacy, cultivating donors, and becoming donors themselves. When volunteers participate financially as well, their connection to their parks means that they will be powerful champions for making sure that money is well-spent.

4. There is a substantial budget gap for the City's ongoing parks and recreation programs, estimated at over \$30 million a year. What will your administration do to reduce or eliminate this serious annual shortfall? And how will you mitigate the impact on the General Fund?

According to the excellent SPUR report released this summer, the Department needs an additional \$30 to \$35 million each year in order to retain safety patrols, maintain the health of trees and plants, and keep facilities open and programs operating.

I am realistic that as Mayor I will make difficult choices. I don't feel like there is anything left to cut. I will be a growth oriented Mayor who focuses on continuing to grow the tax base. As

Supervisor I have tried to be a creative problem-solver, an advocate for helping our vulnerable populations, and a pragmatist who recognizes that a more aggressive tax-and-spend approach will drive business away and undermine our economy.

Four years ago on the Budget Committee I added back money for three custodians. I could see from my time in the parks, and conversations with employees that the staffing was threadbare. This action drew attention to the lack of staffing and helped us begin a serious conversation about expectations for a quality park system with unreasonable funding commitment.

As Mayor, I will establish a sustainable economic plan to manage funding for all our City services, including establishing reserves, carefully managing growth of services, and seeking and expanding state and federal grants. I supported recent legislation that will create additional reserves in the City by saving prior year surpluses and setting aside one-time windfalls for a rainy day. These actions will allow the City to use reserves to make up future financial deficits, rather than require reductions to vital healthcare, social services, and public safety services in future budgets.

As our City's economy grows over the next four years due to increased jobs and expansion of economic development in the Mid-Market, Mission Bay, and Bayview-Hunters' Point areas, we must strategically balance the cost of City services by managing the size and cost of our workforce, and respond to the current and future needs of our neighborhoods.

5. RPD requires nearly \$2 billion in capital funding to repair and renovate our parks. Will you commit to supporting the upcoming GO park bond?

Yes. It's time for a Mayor to have an honest conversation with voters about dedicated park funding to make our parks more in line with the success that branch libraries experience. We must marshal consensus for some dedicated financing.

6. How will you work to ensure both capital and operating funding becomes more sustainable for RPD while ensuring parks are accessible, safe, and enjoyable for all?

Recreation and Parks continues to struggle with difficult budget decisions which have promoted a shift to the current revenue focus. I do not believe this is a wise long-term direction for our City and for a healthy park system. I opposed the Conservatory fee, and advised Blue Bottle to pull out of Dolores Park.

The SPUR report has a number of excellent recommendations that I am interested in pursuing with the support of NPC. The recommendations for philanthropy are particularly astute and sensitive to unique San Francisco values. The more people that become involved as long-term financial donors, the more interest there will be in long-term maintenance and stability of quality for parks. Philanthropic donors could be crucial and long-term partners in our continuing effort to make our parks accessible in every neighborhood. Using parks for public performances also brings out more San Franciscans and increases awareness of our incredible facilities and art groups in the city.

7. 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?

During my over 18 years of City service as Supervisor and Director of Neighborhood Services, I've taken on the basics, fixing potholes and working towards better streets. As Mayor, I will pay attention to the basics to fix the big picture. By listening to neighbors' and merchants' concerns and working together, we can provide effective services for our parks. We can embrace opportunities and expand initiatives to make ourselves into the greenest, most environmentally-conscious City in the world. Any larger policy goals must be supported with a strong commitment to basic maintenance of our parks.

I agree that it is time for a dedicated funding source for our parks system. I agree with The SPUR recommendation to double the city's Open Space Fund and will be a strong partner in attracting the time of philanthropic investment we need to support and sustain our parks. I think private funds can be used most effectively to maintain capital improvements over time—to make sure that our publicly funded parks are kept up and remain in active and safe use for years to come.

Throughout my career I have successfully built coalitions to get things done. I have taken the time to get to know my colleagues in City government- particularly those whose jobs impact the daily lives of San Franciscans- and by engaging them we've been able to find solutions to problems that have plagued neighborhoods for years. Some examples of this are the renovation of Duboce Park, incorporating the first mixed use off-leash dog play area in the City; crafting a solution to rebuild Trinity Plaza that improved the lives of tenants and helped revitalize the Mid-Market area; and championing the Muni Central Control Facility that was just approved by the Board of Supervisors.

The SPUR report gives many promising ideas for closing the current budget gap, and these measures, if adopted, will give a better perspective of what remains to be done. I look forward to the members' input on this issue.

8. NPC's Green Envy study, a landmark white paper first published in 2003 and updated in 2007, advocates for equitable open space for all residents in all neighborhoods of San Francisco. What, specifically, would your administration do in the next four years to ensure that every neighborhood can have green space for play, exercise, and respite from urban life?

I have been a vocal advocate for smart development that is transit oriented, and incorporates childcare and open space. The redevelopment of Treasure Island, Hunter's Point and ParkMerced provide the opportunity to integrate park space within planned communities.

In District 8 I worked to maximize the open space available to my constituents in a very dense district through the creation of pedestrian plazas, parklets, and green medians. I also pushed SFUSD to keep playgrounds open in the evenings and on weekends to expand access to safe play for all neighborhoods.

I speak often about the my desire to elevate public housing. We understand that giving a homeless person a key to an SRO won't change their life, but we expect that an apartment at Alice Griffith will? I will be an Outcome Mayor, focused on incorporating Life Campuses into public housing, and I believe there are significant opportunities to expand and improve the open space and recreation opportunities within our public housing—particularly in the Big Four.

9. The Blue Greenway project promises to transform our eastern shoreline and serve number of communities desperately in need of open space and access to the water. But the southeastern waterfront has many pollution issues, developing it is expensive, and there is a significant funding gap in the Blue Greenway plans. What will you do, in the next four years, to advance the Blue Greenway and bring it closer to reality?

My priority is bringing the communities of the Southeast together. I will be in the neighborhood several times each week, not just at ribbon cuttings or press conferences. I am not afraid of people or criticism and if we can change the direction of the Bayview then anything is possible.

As an Outcome Mayor, I want to address the big picture by fixing the basics. During my 18-years of City service as Supervisor and Director of Neighborhood Services, I've made City government work for people. Great cities need leadership, smart ideas and attention to basics. There is understandable skepticism about the City's ability to deliver. Residents have seen projects, such as Third Street Light Rail be ballyhooed as a catalyst for employment, economic growth and positive change. Then there has been disappointment that most African American residents employed were waving flags during construction.

I am a voice for a Black Agenda that recognizes that our African American community is in crisis. As Mayor, I have the ability to set an agenda that takes our City from worst to first in creating a thriving, successful Black community in terms of health, educational attainment, staying outside of the justice system, entrepreneurship and culture, among other indicators.

Everyone cares about improving the quality of life in Bayview and seeing the City achieve success with projects such as the Shipyard and the rebuild of the Sewage Treatment plant, among others. There is a community benefits process connected to the Sewage Treatment plant and I will make sure it addresses parks and green space.

We also need to chart this course with close connection and collaboration with newer communities, such as the Latino Community and the Asian Pacific-Islander community. Community health requires that we bring the full neighborhood together.

10. Numerous neighborhoods in the City are exploring ways to better support their local parks, including voluntarily taxing themselves for new and increased services (Park Improvement Districts, etc.). It is nearly impossible to develop these districts without clearly understanding what the Recreation and Parks Department currently spends on each facility. The Department does not maintain this type of budgeting, and it is therefore difficult to understand what the needs of each park are. What will you do in your administration to support improved clarity of the Recreation and Parks Department's fiscal management given its extremely diverse facilities?

I am committed to transparent budgeting, and an outcomes focused approach and will work with the RPD Director, NPC, the Commission and others to find a way to identify a cost per facility. I think the Controller's office Audit division could be of assistance, and there are several leaders I'd engage from the social services arena who have created models for this type of budgeting.

11. Community outreach and a transparent public process is a critical component to our civic work in San Francisco, such as when we look at leasing facilities, adding amenities, and even creating a new public park. How will you support the public dialog about parks across every City agency that manages land?

As Director of Neighborhood Services and Supervisor of District 8, I've frequently convened meetings at Upper Noe, Dolores Park, Mission Playground, Duboce Park, Eureka Valley Rec Center and Glen Park. Bringing neighbors and stakeholders together in park environments is one of the most important tools in my work as a public official, and it will be my orientation as Mayor.

Throughout my career I have successfully built coalitions to get things done. I have taken the time to get to know my colleagues in City government- particularly those whose jobs impact the daily lives of San Franciscans- and by engaging them we've been able to find solutions to problems that have plagued neighborhoods for years.

I believe the people of District 8 are amongst the most active and engaged park advocates. I am proud that we were able to overcome long-standing divisions between parents and dog-owners in Duboce Park to create the first mixed use off-leash dog play area in the City. I will use this model of collaborative planning to invite public dialogue and participation in our parks system.