

2011 Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

The Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) works closely with our elected and appointed officials to ensure parks and open space are a priority at City Hall. Electing a “Park Friendly” Mayor who values neighborhood parks, open spaces and recreation facilities for all San Franciscans and understands the challenges facing our park system is essential for our city. With the help of our dedicated community volunteers San Francisco’s parks are the cornerstone of every neighborhood but it is with the support of our new Mayor that our parks can continue to thrive.

Please complete each question to the best of your ability in order for NPC to assess your “Park Friendly” rating. Everyone loves parks, Our coalition strives to understand your specific ideas about supporting parks, in addition to your overall level of appreciation for them. All responses will be posted on our website for the public to view. Thank You.

Name: Dennis J. Herrera
Email: dennis@herreraformayor.com
Website: herreraformayor.com
Phone: (415) 875-9990
Primary Campaign Contact: Jill Nelson
Mailing Address: 1645 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94109

Please return electronically to Victoria Bell, Deputy Director a vbell@sfnpc.org by Wednesday, September 7, 2011 by 5pm.

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?

San Francisco’s public parks are one of our City’s greatest treasures. They provide healthy and verdant open space for sports matches and games of catch, for displays of public art and growing native plants, for children’s swings and dance classes. They are invaluable public resources and anchors in our neighborhoods that must be valued, maintained, and protected. My family and I use our City’s parks on a regular basis, to take walks, watch our son Declan play sports, and enjoy the outdoors together.

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?

The Recreation and Parks Department (“RPD”) in San Francisco has suffered under the weight of our City’s budget issues. From the closure of the recreation centers at many of our parks, to the staffing losses at RPD, to the need to sustain and increase programs for children of all ages, the solution to all of these issues is similar. We need to prioritize adequately funding our parks and more broadly, ensure that our government is operating effectively and efficiently. To implement those priorities, we need a serious plan to restore robust job growth and sustainable, vigorous economic activity in the City. As our economic picture improves, so will our fiscal outlook at City Hall as well and our ability to keep and restore critical funding to our parks. I am the only candidate who has articulated a detailed plan to create jobs in San Francisco. The particulars of my job plan are too lengthy to include here, but I am including a link to that plan here.

<http://herreraformayor.com/issues/jobs-plan/>

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?

Volunteers provide a very important service, dedicating hundreds of hours each year to our more than 200 neighborhood parks. Whether gardening, leading walks, or coaching a sports team, the City is lucky to have such a committed group of volunteers. As Mayor, I will foster and promote having an honest dialogue about the issues affecting our City, encouraging groups to come to City Hall to raise concerns and strategize about solutions. If we can create that problem-solving culture in San Francisco City Hall — from the Mayor on down — I’m convinced we can fix anything, including having a public parks system that’s a well and publicly funded, resource for all.

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?

As discussed above, San Francisco needs to generate revenues and work towards greater efficiency and effectiveness in government to ensure that our City can fund and protect its critical public resources.

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

Yes.

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?

As discussed above, resolving the operational and capital funding issues for RPD is intertwined with addressing the larger fiscal issues affecting our City. I am confident that as Mayor, implementing my jobs plan, and other revenue-generating initiatives, will eventually give San Francisco the ability to fund and grow RFD.

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?

Again, as discussed above, as Mayor I intend to get the City's financial house in order so that our parks do not continue to suffer from deferred maintenance. While my mayoral initiatives are in their nascent stages, I will work with staff at RFD to strategize about how best to maintain our parks.

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?

As Mayor I will work with the RFD and other city departments to ensure that every neighborhood in San Francisco has green, open space. As remarked in the Green Envy study:

The city will see a radical transformation of the skyline and population within twenty years. Considering this, time is of the essence to create new strategies and standards for open space acquisition to correct past disparities in the park system and to plan for future demographic shifts. Strong governmental leadership and cooperative planning between stakeholders is essential to the success and endurance of this initiative.

I agree that the changing demographics of San Francisco coupled with some of the denser development occurring in areas such as SOMA and the Eastern neighborhoods, require that government think strategically and act cooperatively. All San Francisco neighborhoods have a right to safe, green, open space and as Mayor I am committed to making that goal a reality.

9. The Blue Greenway project promises to transform our eastern shoreline and serve a 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?

As Mayor, I will work with the various government, non-profit, and community partners to make sure that the Blue Greenway planning and implementation process continues. In addition, I will work to make sure that the environmental remedial measures that are

required as part of the reconveyances of the former Naval Shipyard parcels are strictly adhered to.

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?

As Mayor, I will not only insist upon government accountability and transparency, but I will require that City departments prepare detailed budget statements. As Mayor, I need to be able to see and understand where we are spending our City dollars in order to strategize about how we might spend those funds more effectively.

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 Mayor, I intend to lead a City government that solves problems and delivers services effectively and accountably. This means getting city departments to work together more efficiently and to demand higher standards for the delivery of city services. As San Francisco's City Attorney, I've led an award-winning public agency that has earned a national reputation for professionalism and excellence. Not many City departments can say that—but mine can, under my leadership. And I've managed to accomplish that over multiple years of budget cuts. As Mayor, I'll bring the same demand for professionalism, accountability and smart management that I've demonstrated as City Attorney to all issues, including those affecting our existing and proposed public parks.