

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.

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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.

Parks have always been part of my life in San Francisco. In 1993, following the loss of my father I moved to San Francisco with two young children. It was time for a new beginning, so I headed west. I’d long admired San Francisco for its beauty, energy and unabashed diversity. Like thousands of others before and since, I fell in love with the City, and discovered first-hand that San Francisco is a place where you can be who you are and make no apologies. My children and I have spent countless hours in Golden Gate Park, at Stow Lake, and at parks and fields all over the city.

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 most important issues facing recreation and parks in San Francisco are reliable funding, maintenance and upkeep of grounds and facilities, and maintaining programming for young people. As mayor, I will address these issues in the budgeting process. At City Hall, we have seen seemingly arbitrary across the board budget cuts, a pension crisis that

was years in the making, and in many cases, a costly and antiquated approach to service delivery, permitting, and regulatory compliance. As an entrepreneur and education advocate, I've spent the last two decades managing large budgets, helping businesses and schools do more than anyone thought possible with limited resources, and building sustainable financial models able to withstand a variety of economic contingencies. We can and must do the same for San Francisco, but it will require a different approach.

As the innovation capital of the world, we must work to better utilize emerging technologies to streamline bureaucracy and improve efficiency. To avoid future budget crises, we must base our budget expectations on more realistic forecasting grounded in long-term trends—not short term yields. And we must commit to a process of bottom-up or zero-based budgeting, where each program is evaluated on its merits with results tied to specific benchmarks of accountability.

Finally, we must improve the transparency of the overall budgeting process. Where shared sacrifice is needed or tough choices demanded, the community will be far more accepting of the results when the community knows where their money is going and why.

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?

Community park groups play an important role as stewards of our parks and enforcers of government accountability and transparency. They serve as the voice of many residents who use parks and a conduit of information for elected officials. I look forward to working with Neighborhood Parks Council and other organizations to continually improve and maintain our parks and open spaces.

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?

We need to grow our way out of the constant cycle of budget deficits and cuts to programs we care about. General fund dollars for recreation and parks will be a priority in the budgets I propose as mayor. As an entrepreneur who has run businesses in the city and worked with hundreds across the region, I understand what makes our local economy tick, and the challenges of doing business in our community first hand.

City hall should not be picking winners and losers, but instead creating an environment that attracts entrepreneurs and puts San Francisco on a level playing field with competing cities and states. The current payroll and stock option tax system has proven to push job creators out of the City as they grow, creating a competitive disadvantage against other communities, and should be eliminated. We need to strengthen the Mayor's Office of Economic Development and focus on building relationships with entrepreneurs and business incubators to encourage new companies that are created in San Francisco to stay in San Francisco. The City needs to lead new companies and neighborhood merchants through the complicated process of obtaining licenses and permits, and where possible, utilize technology to simplify and streamline the process. San Francisco must also leverage its reputation as the innovation capital of the world. Having mentored entrepreneurs around the world with Endeavor, I know that there are

many companies that could locate some or all of their operations to San Francisco, and I will bring with me to the City Hall the relationships and expertise needed to make that happen. It's clear that we can do a far better job of reaching out to these companies, and effectively marketing the benefits of locating in this world-class city. Austin, Texas and Arlington, Virginia have been aggressively pursuing new start-ups and we need to catch up. We should also expand on existing initiatives like China-SF to help attract foreign businesses.

Finally, we must recognize that a high quality of life, quality parks and open space, modernized infrastructure, diverse neighborhoods and strong public schools capable of producing the workers new businesses need is an integral part of any effort to attract businesses to our community. These issues cannot be compartmentalized, and must be integrated into a comprehensive, long-term economic development strategy.

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, I support the upcoming GO park bond.

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?

Implementing bottom up budgeting and growing our economy to increase revenue will ensure capital and operating funding become more sustainable for RPD and all city departments.

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?

We need to plan ahead and fund maintenance on a regular basis instead of waiting till a moment of crisis. The fact that parks are plagued with deferred maintenance is a abject failure of leadership at city hall and highlights a lack of transparency in the budgeting process. I will fund maintenance on a yearly basis in the budgets I propose.

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?

Creating new open space in a dense city like San Francisco is a challenge, but one I am ready to meet. I support creating new plazas through the pavement to parks program and will expand the number of sidewalk parklets in our neighborhoods and on our merchant corridors. In addition, I want to expand Sunday Streets. I will look for other innovative ways to expand open space and create green space for our residents including use of vacant lots and community gardens.

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?

I support the concept of “The Blue Greenway” from China Basin to Candlestick Point. The greenway will increase public access to this underutilized waterfront. I will work to make completion of this project a reality.

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.

The Mayor must forge a cooperative relationship with department heads and city employees, rooted in transparent communication and a shared stake in putting our city on a more sustainable financial path.

I recently requested a detailed budget from every city department through a Sunshine Ordinance Request, and received no details outside of the City Controller’s budget from any department. It is clear that we need greater transparency in how city government spends its resources.

Yet every year it seems like San Francisco budgets become harder to understand – it is often difficult to find out how the money is being spent and from where it is coming. We can change that. Thanks to modern technology, there is no reason the San Francisco budget should be cumbersome and impenetrable. Our City budget should be an accessible on-line document that any citizen can understand. Everyone, not just political professionals, should have the opportunity to make their opinions heard by City Hall. All our citizens deserve to understand where their money goes and have a voice in how it is spent. I commit to putting every department line item budget online with a searchable database so residents and organizations can easily access budget facts.

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?

Our government is only as strong as the bonds of trust between our institutions and citizens. An effective government must communicate its goals and actions. A transparent and open government is a critical part of my campaign platform. I'm a progressive independent, I'm not part of