

# 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](mailto: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 parks are one of the most valuable assets – and services – our city government provides the people of our city. They give San Franciscans a place to relax, enjoy our amazing city and make new friends.

I often enjoy San Francisco parks with my wife, and our two daughters, Isabella and Madeleine. Parks are a big part of my family’s recreation time. We spend most of time at various playgrounds around San Francisco. Each playground is a neighborhood community center, where people come together and share their day. As a proud supporter of the 2008 Parks Bond, I am most proud seeing many of the new improvements go up around town. I can’t to see the Sunset Rec Center be completed, which is our local park. Additionally, we have become big fans and supporters of Sunday Streets, where we get to ride our bikes through all neighborhoods in SF.

**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?**

Parks funding is critical. We will need to close our budget gap by raising additional revenue, managing our expenses and becoming more efficient. Otherwise, we will be faced with drastic park closures, which would be catastrophic for our communities.

Revenue should be raised through additional revenue measures and public private partnerships. By stimulating small business development through a more fully funding Office of Small Business. This Office should assist businesses navigate the bureaucracy to help them get their businesses open faster and cheaper. By becoming more efficient we can stretch our limited resources even further to serve more people and maintain park hours.

I believe that creating a greener, more environmentally friendly city is important to all San Franciscans, this is one of the issues San Franciscans often speak about on ResetSanFrancisco.org. We are ranked as the “Greenest City” in the United States by a recent Siemens report. San Francisco has made significant environmental strides, but we can and should do more. Our parks play a big role in our environmental ranking, and we need to work to protect them and ensure that our expanding park system is meeting San Francisco needs.

Our parks should be large enough to accommodate both natural area preservation and the needs of people and families who want to spend time in the parks.

As San Franciscans, we all contribute to the protection and maintenance of our city parks – and our park regulations should reflect this inclusive, communal effort. Our city parks are for everyone.

**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?**

When we work together, we can accomplish extraordinary things. I strongly believe in the leveraging the passionate power of the San Francisco community, which is one reason why I started ResetSanFrancisco.org. Volunteer community groups are an essential part of our park system, and they play an increasingly valuable role in light of budget cuts. I strongly support neighbors and community members taking an active role in the maintenance of our parks.

**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?**

When I took over the Assessor-Recorder’s office in 2005, it was one of the worst departments in the city. By increasing office efficiency and productivity, ending favoritism and putting my management experience to work, we helped clear a five-

year backlog and collected over \$300 million in new revenue – money that can now be used for our city’s general fund.

At Reset San Francisco, we work to take a lead in making all of San Francisco city government more efficient by using technology, data and the many Gov 2.0 innovations available to us today. By using data and tools that are already available to us, we can save money and time in all city departments to then help fund many important city services.

Also, I continue the fight to close the corporate loophole in Proposition 13. Through my organization called Close the Loophole, we’re building a grassroots coalition across the state in support of a split-roll property tax. By closing the state’s property tax loophole, California can raise an additional \$7.5 billion in revenue, which means millions of dollars for San Francisco’s vital services and programs.

This is an example of the leadership skills and the administrative ability that San Franciscans need and deserve from their next Mayor.

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 Assessor-Recorder, I have brought in \$300 million of additional revenue over the last six years. I brought in over \$12 million of unreported Transfer Tax revenue into our General Fund. I would work to bring in additional revenues to our parks through new revenue measures and public private partnerships.

I will work with our department to balance our department in the short and long run by making sure we have not over-committed our spending and at the same time deliver services to our communities.

I have a proven track record as an environmental activist. Whether it’s launching [GoSolarSF](#) – and fighting to protect it from drastic budget cuts – or using online tools to build community-based support for important environmental issues through [www.ResetSanFrancisco.org](#), I know that the next Mayor of San Francisco needs to have a strong commitment to creating sustainable solutions to both our local and global environmental challenges.

San Francisco can – and should – be a model Green City. We’re already on our way there, but we can do better. And the only way we can do better is by working together and finding creative and innovative solutions to increase citywide sustainability and to protect our most valuable natural resources.

As Mayor, I will work to ensure RPD receives essential funding, while also understanding the budget deficit our city faces.

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?**

San Francisco's beautiful parks are one of the most valuable assets – and services – our city government provides the people of our city. And, although I strongly believe that the Recreation and Parks Department should raise as much of their budget as they can through concessions, fees and the leasing of facilities, it would be imprudent to expect the department to be completely self-sustained. That is why I support financing the Recreation and Parks Department through the General Fund in order to ensure our parks remain maintained and open for all to enjoy.

In addition, this is why, as I mentioned in question 4, I am fighting to close the corporate loophole in Prop 13 and also working to incorporate Gov 2.0 solutions into everyday aspects of city government to make government more efficient -- and therefore cut costs, save time and make more money available to fund city services like parks and their associated maintenance expenses.

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?**

The city just purchased space for a new park on 17th and Folsom for \$2.4 million - and that's great. Even in this tough economic time, we can't forget the civic return of investment the city can provide to increase our quality of life. I believe that creating a greener, more environmentally friendly city is important to all San Franciscans. Our city was recently ranked the "Greenest City" in the United States by a recent Siemens report. We've made significant environmental strides, but we can and should do more.

Parks and green space are essential elements of city life. I know how often I enjoy them with my family. And I also believe we need to work together to crowdsource ideas from the community, in order to protect our limited natural resources and make San Francisco a better city as a whole.

On ResetSanFrancisco.org, we've often discussed the great uses of urban space, like parklets and urban gardening. In the Mission neighborhood, residents are coming together to discuss how to spend millions of dollars to improve Dolores Park. The more we can engage the community in a dialogue about how to improve the neighborhood, the better – and that's what I'll strive to do as mayor.

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?**

Ensuring all San Francisco neighborhoods have access to parks and green space is a priority. And I support the goal of the Blue Greenway project, however, I am mindful of the concerns associated with the plan.

I would coordinate with other agencies to make sure that the environmental concerns associated with the Blue Greenway project were met and addressed. In addition, I will continue to work to Reset San Francisco by making the aforementioned Gov 2.0 and Prop 13 changes to balance the budget and make more money available to fund these projects.

**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 Assessor-Recorder, I have balanced six department budgets while bringing in \$300 million of additional revenue for our City. I know I can do the same for the Parks Department.

As in Question 4, I will continue to find ways to make government more efficient to balance the budget whether it is cutting waste in government offices -- as I did in the Assessor-Recorder's office -- or integrating Gov 2.0 tools to help San Francisco run faster and more efficiently with the data and tools already available.

I have seen firsthand the impact a detailed transparent budget can have. I strongly support city department's working to establish transparent budgets.

10. **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?**

I would work with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, the

commission, stakeholder advocacy groups and park users directly in a collaborative effort to make sure we are providing comprehensive recreational opportunities in the most responsive manner.

I would also engage San Franciscans in a participatory budgeting process, so they could make their voices heard on this issue. With an allotted budget, neighbors and community members could discuss with city staff and, most importantly, each other in a collaborative dialogue, where we're listening and engaging.

With the Reset San Francisco community, we have shown at our Hot Button Muni Reform Town Hall event that bringing San Francisco issue experts and the community together to discuss problems and work toward solutions is an effective way to share information and let San Franciscans be heard right now -- before election day -- to make solutions happen.