



NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS COUNCIL

## 2008 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

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Name: **Eric Mar for Supervisor – District 1 – the Richmond**

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District: 1 – the Richmond District

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Return to Sunya Ojure electronically at [sojure@sfnpc.org](mailto:sojure@sfnpc.org) by Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>

**1. In what ways do you feel parks contribute to the quality of life of San Francisco residents?**

Our parks and playgrounds are essential to San Francisco’s livability and unique beauty. They contribute greatly to the health of our communities by allowing families, seniors and young people to walk, bike and enjoy healthier lifestyles. Golden Gate Park and our other parks also enhance the health of our economy by attracting millions of people each year to San Francisco to share our park and recreational resources.

As a parent and teacher, I have always seen our parks as a natural classroom for kids and grown-ups alike where our curiosities are sparked, and our responsibilities as caretakers for our environment are challenged. I have been endorsed by SF Tomorrow, the Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters and the SF Democratic Party and believe I am one of the most PARK-FRIENDLY political leaders in the City. And, I would like to continue as a strong ally of the NPC and other park advocates on the SF Board of Supervisors. Full list of supporters - <http://ericmar.com/page.php?pageid=6>.

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

I use Golden Gate Park most for riding my bicycle with my 8 year old daughter Jade, especially on Sundays; attending Friday nights at the DeYoung Museum with hundreds of other families, artists, teachers and park-lovers, and visiting the museum, Japanese Tea Garden and the Academy of Sciences.

Since we live so close to many of these parks, my daughter literally grew up in Rossi Playground, the Fulton Playground in GG Park, Mountain Lake Park, at Stow Lake [with the turtles and angry geese] and on the Carousel near Sharon Arts studio and at the children’s playground.

Before she was born I played softball at Rossi and Julius Khan [closeby]; and basketball at the Argonne and Cabrillo too. I love being around the trees and plants, birds and animals. I also like picnicking in areas around the Rose Garden and near the log cabin in GG Park. And, I try to attend as many of the bandshell



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concerts and free bluegrass, alternative and rock music concerts in the park each year. [GG Park is in D1!].

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

4 years ago I would have said Rossi would have needed the most help, but because of a tremendous upsurge in neighborhood activism, the generosity of private donors, and the support of Supervisor Jake McGoldrick, we were able to create one of the most amazing parks in the City.

Today, Cabrillo Playground, I believe, needs the most help. I was a key supporter of the \$185 million Parks Bond – Prop A – which included Cabrillo and Argonne Playgrounds - and I helped build the campaign to pass the bond in Feb 08. I secured the endorsements also of all of the Board of Education members and did my best to promote the Parks Bond in our school communities.

I am now working with Judy Melenick and Friends of Cabrillo Playground to ensure that we can repair the crumbling retaining wall [not in the bond project], install new gates that are as high as the perimeter, assign a staff person to lock gates and unlock bathrooms in the morning and secure them at sunset, filter the sand in the sandbox regularly. More info - <http://www.cabrilloplayground.org/>

**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?**

- Stronger Oversight as the City hires a new Director
- Improved transparency and public accountability
- Much stronger funding

I will continue to work with NPC and other parks advocates to ensure that we have a strong national search process for a new director. As the Parks Bond moves forward, I will work with NPC and others to ensure that there is strong accountability and that the projects are implemented on time. I would work with NPC and others to ensure that we address the underfunding of the department, like the estimated shortage of gardeners and other staff positions.

**5. NPC’s ParkScan program indicates that the majority of problems reported by the public relate to misuse of parks by city residents. These conditions cost the City millions of dollars in staff time to address. Would you support NPC’s proposal for the city to fund a public education campaign aimed at reducing misuse such as littering, graffiti and vandalism in our parks?**

Yes. I would help by improving outreach to the SF Unified School District and the many Community-based afterschool programs to help get young people [and their parents] more actively involved [perhaps like Dr. Suess’s character, the Lorax] as stewards of our parks and our environment.



- 6. The Recreation and Parks Department estimates that we are 200 gardeners short to keep up our parks to a good standard. Also, many common complaints from park users have to do with deferred maintenance such as broken irrigation parts and hazardous trees, largely the result of too few maintenance personnel and far too little funding. The Controller's City Survey 2007 indicates many residents continue to be dissatisfied with park maintenance. What do you propose to improve park maintenance?**

The Parks bond will help on some of the deferred maintenance needs but it doesn't help nearly enough. I would work with NPC and others to identify other sources of funding for deferred maintenance needs and work with parks volunteers to act as supporters for the City's efforts to bring all the parks up to good standards.

- 7. RPD has just developed work plans for each park but the plans do not clearly outline the tasks that volunteers can assist with. At the same time, efforts to reduce staff overtime require volunteer work parties (which usually take place on Saturday) to involve 15 or more—effectively eliminating many possible hours of volunteer assistance. With our parks being understaffed, volunteers are a critical way to bridge the maintenance gap. Do you support adding to the current work plans the specific tasks that volunteers can assist with? Also, in an effort to reduce staff overtime, would you support the creation of a program that would certify community members to volunteer in the parks without direct staff oversight, similar to DPW's adopt a street program?**

I would work with the labor unions that represent the City staff and the NPC to try to hammer out a 'common ground' approach to the huge amount of work staff and volunteers can accomplish together. Specific tasks that volunteers can work on make sense to me. But I would work with management and staff to determine what are appropriate tasks that volunteers could help with. If safety and security could be ensured and liability for injuries reduced, then I would be open to new programs that allow volunteers to work in the parks without direct staff oversight.

- 8. ParkScan.org is a public portal that enables park users to report maintenance concerns to the Recreation and Park Department (and even include a photo!). Please ParkScan a park near you and describe the maintenance issue that needed attention in your park. If elected, would you like to receive regular reports on the conditions of parks reported in your district?**

See above discussion in Q#3 on Cabrillo Playground maintenance issues. Yes I would like to receive regular reports.

- 9. More than two dozen San Francisco playgrounds received failing grades in NPC's bi-annual Playground Report Card this year. Would you be available to participate in a workday to raise the grade of a failed playground?**  
**Note: To check which playgrounds in your district might be on the list, please check NPC's Playground Initiative Report Card at [www.parkscan.org](http://www.parkscan.org).**



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Yes. I would try to bring out my daughter's friends and their families too. We have often banded together around McCoppin Elementary School on 6<sup>th</sup> and Balboa to clean the schoolyard, tend the garden and to make a mural on the West wall. Joseph Norris was the artist that developed the mural with our community. [http://bp1.blogger.com/\\_Vi9RcgNItY0/RgxIbp7FMBI/AAAAAAAAAbA/bRloGtxE2cI/s1600-h/DSC01629.JPG](http://bp1.blogger.com/_Vi9RcgNItY0/RgxIbp7FMBI/AAAAAAAAAbA/bRloGtxE2cI/s1600-h/DSC01629.JPG)

- 10. NPC's Green Envy study identified many neighborhoods that lack playgrounds and neighborhood parks. (see enclosed map). Another survey (put the link here to Leon's study) by a national consultant indicates that San Francisco is deficient in soccer fields and opportunities for hiking on trails or community gardening. Do you have ideas to address these deficiencies?**

I participate with friends in the Argonne Community Garden near Argonne Child Development Center on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I would work with community gardens throughout the City to expand participation and identify City and School District property that could be used for more open space hiking trail and gardens. <http://argonnecommunitygarden.org/>

I would reach out to community soccer clubs, and 'soccer moms' and dads and youth to identify more equitable and accessible soccer fields for communities too.

- 11. The City provides start-up funds to establish Community Benefit Districts. Would you support additional funds in the city budget to establish Park Improvement Districts (PIDs) to supplement park maintenance and provide funds for some ongoing capital needs in our parks such as irrigation systems and repairing playgrounds?**

Yes. I would support the NPC and other parks advocates' efforts to seek additional funds to establish PID's.

- 12. Are you aware that over 700 acres of park land is dedicated to golf in San Francisco (6 public golf courses) even though it has been identified as a low priority recreation in the 2004 Recreation Assessment (see above) and that each golf course requires 250,000 gallons of water a day? The Rec and Park Department is proposing to lease out 4 of these courses for 30 years, despite the need for more than sixty new baseball, softball and soccer fields just to meet current demand in these sports. What is your position on retaining so much golf land at the expense of other recreation needs?**

I would work with NPC and others to change the potential use of golf courses to maximize access to families, youth and communities, and not for the exclusive use of golfers. I oppose the privatization and commercialization of our park and public spaces and would work with NPC and other environmental groups to protect our precious public resources.



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**13. San Francisco currently has no city-wide 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 city-wide open space requirement for all new residential development so that every neighborhood can have green space for play, exercise, and respite from urban life?**

I support community efforts to maintain and expand open space and the right of every neighborhood to have parks, green open spaces, and to be free of environmental health hazards.

I would work with NPC and others on issues like a city-wide open space requirement for all new residential development.

In conclusion, I have been a key ally of NPC in my support for Prop A – the Parks Bond – and especially the Cabrillo and Argonne Playground projects. I have been endorsed by SF Tomorrow, the Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters and the SF Democratic Party and believe I am one of the most PARK-FRIENDLY political leaders in the City. And, I would like to continue as a strong ally of the NPC and other park advocates on the SF Board of Supervisors. Full list of supporters - <http://ericmar.com/page.php?pageid=6>.

Thank you for your consideration.

Eric Mar

[www.ericmar.com](http://www.ericmar.com)