

2008 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

Candidates, please complete each question to the best of your ability in order for NPC to assess your "Park Friendly" rating. All responses will be posted on our website for the public to view. Text boxes expand to accommodate longer responses. Thank You.

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District: District 11

Return to Sunya Ojure electronically at sojure@sfnpc.org by Friday, September 19th

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

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Parks are vital for bringing community together. They provide recreational opportunities from organized sports to unstructured activities. They bring nature into the City, provide for a healthy environment and bring property values up. Parks don't just contribute to the quality of life for San Francisco residents, they are vital to it. Environmentally and visually, parks enhance our neighborhoods. I love parks.

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

There are truly special parks in district 11. Cayuga park is a little gem where the gardener has a unique eye for beautiful, well-placed plants, although the playground itself needs significant upgrades. And Alice Chalmers playground is well-maintained and very family-friendly. Another great park is Brooks park at Shields and Arch streets. It has got a lovely little playground, a free tai chi class for local residents, and at the crest of its western slope there is a bench with a truly spectacular view of SW San Francisco and the Pacific Ocean. It's among the most peaceful places in The City.

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

Crocker Amazon. The new playground at Crocker is great. And I am very excited about the new soccer pitches. However the baseball and softball diamonds are still in egregious condition, and the soccer pitches are not suitable for baseball or softball because of the softness of the turf. I propose expanding the DPW's work creation program to provide the labor needed to upgrade the fields and provide jobs for neighborhood youth.

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?

The three top issues are maintenance, recreation, and scarcity. Maintenance is a combination of a staffing issue and community engagement issue. I will work with RPD to ensure that all maintenance staff have a community supported work plan in place that they follow. I will demand that the parks in District 11 get their fair share of GOOD employees. In addition, I will work with the community to do work days and find additional ways to ensure that neighbors feel a sense of ownership of the parks to reduce vandalism.

Recreation programming combined with community outreach is key in District 11 because we have both a large senior population and the largest child population. I will work with RPD, other city

departments as well as non-profits to ensure that our parks are being programmed to provide healthy alternative activities throughout the day.

There just are not enough parks in San Francisco and especially in District 11. I support converting existing unused open spaces in to parks and gardens through programs like the Parks Trust's Street Parks program. I also support programs like Plant*SF for creating small plazas and greening our sidewalks. I will also work actively with Friends of the Urban Forest and RPD to ensure that more trees are planted throughout District 11.

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?

I agree that we need to work with the community to get people feel a sense of ownership of the parks so that we reduce vandalism. I am open to all ideas that will help the community engage and take care of the parks.

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?

I agree that the parks are understaffed. However, we also need to work to ensure that the staff that is in place is enabled to do their job through work plans, and that we hold the department to performing a good job with the employees they do have. Second, we need to engage the community to help. That may mean changing RPD's volunteer policies so that when neighbors are engaged, we are not artificially constrained by the department from helping. Third we need to look into alternative means of funding additional maintenance and staffing. This can mean a number of things like new revenue generation through events and

programming, as well as fund raising through non-profits, other government organizations as well as creative development oriented fees.

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?

As I stated in Question #6 above, I think it is vital to engage the community in taking care of our parks. That means I support volunteering as well as other creative means to create a sense of ownership. I do not think the department should artificially constrain volunteers, and instead think of constructive and innovative ways to engage volunteers. So, in answer to your questions – Yes, I support including volunteers in work plans, and yes, I am open to a program 'certifying' volunteers.

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?

ParkScan.org is a valuable tool that provides local residents with a greater sense of ownership over their parks. And it can only help the Park Department's awareness of both new and nagging problems. I would be happy to receive regular reports on the parks in my district and would certainly do what I can to expedite solutions to any problems that arise. I signed up for ParkScan and submitted a number of concerns about our parks and playgrounds.



I took photos but was unable to upload them due to their large file size. Among my entries on ParkScan.org was concern over a broken swing set at Cayuga playground. At Merced Heights park I brought attention to a malfunctioning drinking fountain, a fence around the Tennis court that is bent all out of shape, and a potentially dangerous pile of shipping palates in the playground area. At Alice Chalmers playground, which otherwise was exceptionally well maintained, I pointed out a broken garbage can that had its cover swinging loosely off its hinges. At Brooks Park I was concerned by a pile of rotting gardening refuse that was left next to the playground area, and I also pointed out the bbq grill that is in complete disrepair. There are also a few others I posted. In addition I offered some "Kudos and Compliments," which is an aspect of the website that I am happy is available. Those who maintain these parks and playgrounds deserve some accolades.

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.

I would be available to participate in workdays to improve all of the parks in District 11. Park safety is a top priority for me. I think it is unacceptable to have any playgrounds that are considered unsafe or toxic for children. I will support workdays as well as alternative means of raising funds for repairs if the City will not fund it directly.

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?

As I wrote above: There just are not enough parks in San Francisco and especially in District 11. I support converting existing unused open spaces in to parks and gardens through programs like the Parks Trust's Street Parks program. I also support programs like Plant*SF for creating small plazas and greening our sidewalks. I will also work actively with Friends of the Urban Forest and RPD to ensure that more trees are planted throughout District 11. McLaren Park, which borders District 11 and offers expansive views and opportunities for hiking, is underused primarily because of the perception that it is unsafe.

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?

I am open to exploring alternative means of funding parks, including PID's as long as the concept is driven and supported by the community. District 11 also has playfields that are treated in practice as Citywide properties and not just for the benefit of the local community. In these instances, I think it is important to ensure that revenue generated from these playfields goes back into the maintenance and programming. I also think when playfields are used so broadly, that gives us the opportunity to explore alternative funding mechanisms that do not necessarily include asking just the neighbors to step up.

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?

In order to find a solution to this issue, I believe that we need to work with all stakeholders including neighborhood park users, environmentalists, golfers and our labor unions to find a compromise for dealing with how our golf courses should be used and if they should be reprogrammed. While I believe that San Francisco should indeed retain some of our public golf courses, I believe that some of our golf courses could be transformed. However, it is necessary to locate the necessary capital and ongoing maintenance money to build and maintain new soccer, baseball and softball fields that will move us closer to meeting the demand of our citizens.

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?

Yes, as I said in the first question, parks are vital to the quality of life in San Francisco. All new development should have an open space requirement. In addition, we need to work City-wide to expand the open space options. Compared to the Western portion of our City, the Eastern Neighborhoods are deficient in the amount of available open space and the City should make it a priority to find additional open space opportunities for our lower income residents. Open spaces, once lost, are rarely recaptured, and greatly enhance the quality of urban life.
