

D8 Rafael Mandelman

November 2022 Election

What park in your district do you use the most, and what do you love about it?

District 8 is fortunate in having a number of pretty amazing parks and open spaces in or adjacent to the District – Glen Canyon, Dolores Park, Duboce Park, Buena Vista, Corona Heights Park, Twin Peaks, to name just a few – that bring joy to countless San Franciscans and visitors. District 8 also has several newer smaller parks that have engaged the community and received the support of the Parks Alliance, including the Glen Park Greenway and the Noe Town Square.

I have lived close to Dolores Park for nearly twenty years, and although I love all the parks in my District, it is probably the one I use the most. There is of course a lot to love about Dolores Park, not least of which is the diversity of people who use it.

Are there any parks in your district that you feel need help? If so, which one do you feel needs the most help and what do you propose?

Buena Vista Park is a beautiful park, but has a number of areas in need of some love and attention. Some funds for that purpose were included in the 2020 Parks and Recovery Bond, and I am hopeful that we will be able to identify additional funds for park improvements.

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing SF parks in the next 4 years? How do you intend to address this?

I think the greatest risk for parks, and for all City programs, is economic uncertainty coming out of the pandemic. Recently I requested that the City Controller and Treasurer investigate and report back to the Board of Supervisors on the current and projected economic climate in the City, changes in downtown office use and implications for the City's business tax revenues and budget. Our City budget is heavily reliant on business taxes, which could be significantly impacted if downtown does not recover soon.

What were some of the successes and failures of COVID- era public space programs in your district? Be specific.

Pandemic era experimentation with innovative uses of public space had several successes in my District. The Sanchez Slow Street has been very popular, and the opening of a significant number of parklets have made our neighborhood commercial areas more lively and offered many struggling small businesses an essential lifeline through the uncertainty of the pandemic. I was an early and strong supporter of the Shared Spaces program and

participated in countless meetings with City staff to address issues with the program and craft legislation to make it permanent. I supported and have included funds in several budget cycles to support car-free spaces and weekend street activations in the Castro (18th Street between Collingwood and Hartford in 2020–21, Noe between Market and Beaver and Valencia Street).

How do you plan to move forward with COVID-era changes made to parks and public spaces in your district?

I have been a strong supporter of the Sanchez Slow Street and am glad that it will be continuing post-pandemic. I also have supported and continue to support street activations and the Shared Spaces program as described above.

What involvement do you have with volunteer community groups in your district?

One of the great privileges of my job is getting to work with so many amazing individuals and organizations working every day in ways large and small to make our City and our neighborhoods more livable, more equitable, and more wonderful.

My office works with (by no means an exhaustive list, and in no particular order): the Parks Alliance, Friends of the Urban Forest, the Cole Valley Neighborhood Association, the Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association, the Eureka Valley Neighborhood Association, the Dolores Heights Improvement Club, the Noe Valley Association, the Castro Merchants Association, the Noe Valley Merchants Association, Upper Noe Neighbors, the Upper Noe Merchants Association, the Glen Park Association, the Glen Park Merchants Association, the Diamond Heights Neighborhood Association, Refuse Refuse, Neighborhood Emergency Response, RescueSF, the Castro Community Benefit District, the Castro LGBTQ+ Cultural District, Friends of Slow Sanchez, Friends of Glen Canyon Park, SF Parent Coalition, Castro Community on Patrol, among many others.

We've heard from our partners that they believe the city permitting process is the greatest hurdle to serving public spaces. If you believe any changes need to be made, what would your proposals be?

In general I am sympathetic to this opinion. I was impressed that the SF Parks Alliance had generated a helpful spreadsheet for individuals attempting to figure out how to engage with the various actors responsible for permitting the activation of public spaces, and I think that the city should do a better job standardizing our permitting processes and applications for public spaces maintained by our City government.

Too often it seems to me that the different parts of San Francisco government don't function as if they are part of a unified whole, and I think that complicates permitting in a number of

areas. I don't know that there is one overarching solution to this problem, but I do believe the City is overdue for a charter reform conversation, and I think an important part of that conversation would be figuring out if the departments with permitting responsibilities could be better coordinated, or even consolidated.

According to the SF Recreation and Parks Department, they currently have about \$1.5 billion in deferred maintenance. How do you plan to tackle this?

I have supported every Parks Bond, and I will continue to support bonds and other revenue measures to get our parks the resources they need. I also support the efforts of the Recreation and Parks Department to secure additional philanthropic dollars to support the Department's work. Given the significant and ongoing gap between the public funding available to support our parks and the need, I also support the Department's efforts to identify and build relationships with private philanthropy to augment the public funding available through the City's budget.

Is there anything you'd like to add or expand on?

Polling of San Francisco residents consistently show broad public satisfaction with our parks (especially compared to other city programs and services). While there is always room for improvement, I think our Recreation and Parks, the San Francisco Parks Alliance, and other partners deserve a lot of credit and appreciation for the stewardship of one of the country's great municipal park systems!