

D O W N T O W N V E N T U R A P A R T N E R S

2009 VENTURA CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for your interest in our city council candidate forum. The issues and topics below are of great importance to downtown's residents, property and business owners. We appreciate you supplying thoughtful answers to these questions. **Please return your completed questionnaire via e-mail by noon on September 3** to Rob Edwards. Your answers will be posted on our website for our stakeholders to review. Our candidate forum will be held on the evening of September 8th; further details and a formal invitation will follow.*

And thank you for your willingness to serve our city!

Please respond below each question. Be as specific as possible.

1. Aggressive panhandling and vagrancy have profoundly detrimental affects on downtown Ventura's economic vitality, safety and quality of life. What specific steps will you propose to ensure laws regarding these behaviors are enforced, and how would you fund it?

Downtown business owners, beach promenade visitors and tourists all complain about the same things, panhandlers, drinking and urinating in public, littering, unleashed dogs and drug usage. There are currently laws addressing these concerns. We must realize that these problems present a negative image of Ventura and cause visitors and citizens to fear for their safety. A law is not a law if it is not enforced and a concentrated effort by business owners, law enforcement and the City Attorney to address these quality of life issues must be a priority. Ideally, with the passage of Measures A and C, Ventura will receive additional funding to increase patrols in these areas and allow officers to focus on these quality of life issues. City staff will continue to pursue various grant sources that relate to these types of problems and strive to obtain them.

2. Will you support the city's continued participation in the downtown Property-based Business Improvement District? Why or why not?

As I have said since being a candidate in 1971, I believe tourism is a clean industry and the downtown area should provide visitors with a unique setting that focuses on our natural beauty and history. Residents frequently visit downtown to enjoy the various arts, restaurants and theaters. Downtown is a positive attraction. I consider it a vital part of our community that deserves assistance.

3. Are you in favor of building other parking structures in downtown? And if so, where would you suggest they be located and how would you fund?

Downtown is sorely in need of additional parking. The lack of spaces available for all day parking, and time limited parking that seriously restricts the user from spending adequate time to enjoy various shops, necessitate the addition of new parking facilities. They must be located in an area that is not detrimental to the overall theme of downtown and is close enough for users to have access to their destinations. A two story parking facility could be beneficial in the area of California between Main and Poli. Like any new project, funding for the job would have to be researched.

4. What's your position on the enforcement of laws prohibiting drug dealing in our downtown? And how would you fund enhanced enforcement?

As a former deputy sheriff with 32 years of law enforcement experience, I thoroughly support any effort to eradicate illegal drug sales and usage throughout Ventura. Ventura Police officers have made numerous arrests for heroin sales in the downtown area. For them, drug enforcement is a priority. Ventura Police work closely with other agencies throughout Ventura County and the state to obtain the information necessary to arrest the major "players" in the drug sales industry.

Again, when asked how enforcement would be enhanced, I have to refer to Measures A and C. We must have the money needed to pay for law enforcement. If grants are available, I am sure staff will make that information available for review by the council.

5. What is your position on the "sleeping in cars" pilot program?

Churches that have volunteered to host these locations are taking on significant responsibilities and I believe they are doing so out the goodness of their hearts. Visitors using the parking facilities offered, along with church officials, must understand and obey all rules and church officials must work closely with City staff to keep these locations safe and clean.

6. Would you support the funding of police foot and bike patrols in downtown and on the promenade? And if so, how would you fund them?

As a deputy that foot-patrolled communities throughout Ventura County for years, I know that this type of enforcement is effective although sometimes cost-prohibitive. Patrolling officers have the opportunity to communicate with business owners to understand their needs, develop good sources of information and enforce laws. A police presence on foot is beneficial and should be an available option for Ventura Police.

Another welcomed police presence in the downtown area is the Ventura Volunteers-In-Policing. Our dedicated volunteers devote part of their patrol time to walk in the downtown area. These "extra eyes" communicate directly to police officers and serve as great witnesses when needed and their program is valued.

Again, funding depends on our tax base and availability of grants.

7. What specific actions would you propose to encourage new residential development as well as the relocation of new businesses to downtown?

The building and sales of new homes rests on the job market and need for new employees. Without the addition of environmentally correct retail and manufacturing businesses that attract a variety of potential employees, new homes cannot be purchased. Throughout the entire city, there are empty buildings as well as locations to build. We must encourage their usage. I believe the downtown area is a unique location that synergistically attracts visitors with its small businesses and love of the arts atmosphere. Any new businesses considered for the area should reflect that philosophy.

8. Do you think large-scale events previously fully funded by the City, such as ArtWalk and the holiday street fair, should be restored? And if so, how would you fund them?

Each event requires viewing on an individual basis to determine if it was beneficial. Business owners and local resident opinions as well as any inconveniences and costs must be considered. Unless the overall event generates significant revenue, any costs for staffing should be part of the permit process. A recent newspaper article quoted a downtown business owner who claimed these events often hurt her business and the amount of shoplifting in her store increased. Other locations including the promenade could be considered.

9. With the state raiding municipal coffers, how will it impact downtown operations that are currently funded by redevelopment agency? What will you do to fund those operations once our local funding is depleted?

Efforts to improve the overall theme of the businesses downtown will stall and funding to assist new business owners will cease to exist. Things are progressing for the downtown and interruption of the services provided by the redevelopment agency will be harmful.

Funding for the redevelopment agency is based on how much the city will have to spend and availability of federal grants.

10. Would you support the City or the County purchasing the Fairgrounds from the state? And if so, how could it be done?

Yes. The potential use of the fairgrounds is unending. The state is doing its best to unload what they consider burdens and Ventura should check into the feasibility of obtaining the grounds. However, significant modifications of our freeway accesses must also play a major role in the decision.

Throughout the nation, local jurisdictions have gone into partnership with private entities to build various sports centers and theaters. The fairgrounds would be an ideal location for purchase through that type of partnership.

11. Are you in favor of limiting "big box" stores (like Wal-Mart, IKEA, etc) throughout the city, per the ballot measure?

No. Besides the benefits of an increased sales tax base, I believe Ventura residents should have the option to shop locally at the type of store they want. These stores should enhance surrounding businesses and not have a negative effect on the environment, including traffic.

12. What specific actions would you recommend to streamline the planning process?

The ombudsman program between builders and the city streamlines the planning process. The ombudsman, acting as an interpreter, works with the builder to help him/her understand what is required. The whole process is based on communication to help get the job done smoothly and effectively.

*** Completing this questionnaire is a prerequisite for an invitation to participate in our September 8th community forum.**

Downtown Ventura Partners
Rob Edwards, CEO
A 501(c)(6) Non-profit Business Improvement District
PO Box 1414
Ventura, CA 93002
info@DowntownVentura.org