

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?

I am in favor of more proactive foot patrols, private security options, and stakeholder engagement strategies to stop illegal activities. Ventura shoulders a disproportionate share of the costs associated with panhandling and vagrancy, and it is essential to mitigate the negative economic effects. I want a regional/county solution which either compensates Ventura for its costs or distributes the burden equally within the region.

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

The city must continue to be involved in the PBID, especially since it owns a considerable amount of property in the district. Downtown's economic success is vital to the overall health of the city and depends on tourism -- one of the few industries we have left which can not be outsourced.

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?

Additional parking structures are already planned for downtown, I believe, in "pocket" areas west of California Street. We need to examine construction and funding options when robust and consistent demand occurs for more parking spaces. This will likely not occur until we are fully into another economic growth cycle. I would be in favor of charging for parking in the existing main structure.

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

As with Question 1, I am in favor of more proactive patrols, private security options, and stakeholder engagement strategies to stop illegal activities that negatively impact our community. A monitored camera system similar to what the Pacific View Mall uses may be a useful option. Also, it's extremely important for the city and DVO/DVP to maintain a good faith relationship with the VPD when deciding best how to allocate everyone's limited financial resources.

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

This is a tough issue because many people will continue to struggle with housing arrangements. That said, I do not support this program for a number of reasons. Campground options are already available. The program will attract more homeless from other areas of the county. It discourages the homeless from relying on family and friends, and from seeking safe and viable housing accommodations or jobs in another area in a timely manner. Quality of life and home values in surrounding neighborhoods will be negatively impacted. Churches traditionally place the temporarily homeless with "sponsor" families, with no need for taxpayer money, which is how it should continue.

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?

Again, the same answer applies as with Question 1 and 4. Lacking police officers or sufficient funding from PBID, citizen patrols and/or cameras may be an effective measure.

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

Higher-end housing should be considered, which will bring in patrons and consumers with more discretionary income. Amenities need to be beefed up, including access to trailheads. We have many undeveloped and underdeveloped recreational resources. Advertising efforts need to be ramped up, including

ambitious signage and visibility from the 101 freeway. Crime and vagrancy in downtown areas need to be very proactively mitigated.

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?

These events should be restored by the city only if there is a proven "profit" (net gains -- in sales/TOT tax, etc. -- attributable to the event minus costs and overhead. Otherwise, public/private partnerships should be explored with DVO/DVP, VCB, Chamber of Commerce, private event promoters, and civic and arts groups. Events like these have become an important part of Ventura's unique appeal, and should remain a priority.

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?

This will likely delay DVO's goal of becoming self-sustaining. The PBID will fill some of the gap due to diminished RDA funding. More permanent sources of funding should be identified, if possible. Continued volunteerism and civic pride downtown will be crucial in the years ahead. Downtown has great momentum going that we can't afford to lose.

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

This is one of the most prime parcels of real estate in our city and is extremely underutilized. I would support its purchase by the city if the numbers make sense.

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

Measure C does not limit all "big box" stores, only those larger than 90,000 square feet with more than 3 percent of the sales floor devoted to non-taxable goods (e.g., groceries). The measure protects our neighborhood grocery stores for the near future. I welcome stores such as IKEA and Costco as long as they are in appropriate areas such as near the Auto Center.

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

This has long been an area of contention in our community. I'm confident Mr. Lambert and his staff will implement huge improvements going forward, and the entire community should look forward to positive results.

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

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