

**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**

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?

For the criminals and vicious law breakers – throw them in jail; but for the mentally ill and the addicts; for those who are truly in need - get them the help they require so we can get them off our streets and keep them off. That said, criminalizing an activity does not eliminate the problem; it only shifts much of the costs associated with it to the city's criminal justice system. Research shows that in many cities, 25% of the city jail population is homeless. That's a lot of money to throw at a non-solution.

Strict enforcement simply deals with a symptom rather than directly addressing the real problem; what can we do to get these people off our Downtown streets? Some feel that raising funds by raising taxes such as proposed by Measure A is one way; but I do not want to raise our taxes; not in this economic climate.

Another answer is to fully fund our local human service agencies. We need to get more creative with how we fund our human services providers. Every dollar invested in our human services providers is money sensibly spent. Research shows that it is cheaper to house people than to have them living on the streets. The average burden, per homeless person, runs between \$30,000 - \$40,000 dollars for frontline emergency services such as police/fire response, emergency room visits, jail time, etc. The majority of panhandlers and vagrants come from the river bottom. We need to establish a line of defense with increased police presence, along with mobile soup kitchens, converting condemned buildings into shelters and/or low income housing, retraining along with monitoring them for illness, mental and physical; all would decrease the amount of people on the streets and keep them off.

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

Absolutely! The transformation of our Downtown is synonymous with the kind of vision I have of the future of Ventura. The Property based Business Improvement District is meeting the needs of local businesses. Its effort has revitalized Ventura's downtown, rebuilding and maintaining business growth and development within the Business Improvement District. It continues to successfully bring Ventura's citizens "back to downtown" and impress our visitors and tourists, and I'm excited about the promise of what's yet to come.

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?

Yes. I feel that there are plenty of lots available that we should look into taking existing parking spaces and remark them to accommodate more cars; as well as, we should take some of the larger existing lots and build up a few levels to double and triple current conditions. I would look at the type of system in Santa Barbara where the first ½ hour is free, but charge a modest cost per additional hour. I don't think people would be upset paying a small fee for clean, safe, convenient parking. Provide new long term parking facilities at remote locations adjacent to transit lines or shuttle service. I would like to see a Main Street trolley running continually between Cemetery Park and the Art Museum to help reduce the Downtown parking glut during weekends and holidays.

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

As I stated in the first question, I urge strict law enforcement of existing laws and feel it imperative to make the Downtown corridor, and its surrounding neighborhoods, as safe as possible. I believe there should be a zero tolerance policy towards dealing drugs Downtown. The message should be loud and clear to all drug dealers to stay out of Downtown.

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

This is a case of a well intended program that I feel could, if not aggressively monitored, go horribly wrong. Keeping these areas safe and clean and crime free is the real challenge. I applaud the community's support, without it I don't think the program would work otherwise.

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?

Yes. Besides having the ability to quickly responding to complaints, they could interact with the businesses, the community and visitors and establish new lines of communication. Downtown businesses would have a "go to person" to solve problems: parking complaints, traffic hazards, a suspicious person or a crime in progress. With a core group of officers regularly assigned to the area on foot patrol, or on bicycles, officers would be able to anticipate potential problems and take action to prevent these problems from occurring. I would look into existing budget cuts and/or state grants for supplemental funding.

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

Retain the older, historically valuable buildings in the / and around the downtown area. Encourage adaptive re-use of our older buildings by promoting rehabilitation and reuse of existing structures that contribute to the overall design character of Ventura's downtown (such as was done at Watermark). Encourage infill development that is compatible with existing uses and improves the pedestrian environment and the streetscape.

Create plazas and other urban spaces to enhance the pedestrian environment and increase the number of people who will use downtown. Improve the opportunity for downtown cultural activities. Offer development incentives (tax benefits, density bonuses) to encourage appropriate downtown development. Encourage older, industrial-oriented business to relocate to other parts of town.

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?

Yes. As mentioned above, I feel that such activities are paramount to growing Downtown's profile, both locally and as a tourist destination. We should encourage live performances, noon-time concerts and evening activities that interact with the local businesses. We should provide opportunities for Ventura's craftspeople and artists, and improve and expand the existing arts and entertainment facilities to create a vital downtown community. Private sponsorship such as large corporate sponsors could be encouraged. As well, downtown merchants could sponsor their own part.

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?

I would defer to some of the solutions as discussed in the article printed in the Ventura County Star on July 22, *Cities brace for tax grab*: tapping reserve funds, and perhaps joining a legal battle into holding onto property and gas tax money by fighting for it in court. It's a fight I look forward getting in to.

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

With the continued plan to develop Ventura's downtown area, bringing the Seaside Park Fairgrounds into the fold is a logical and exciting proposal. I know that City Councilman, James Monahan sits on the fair's Board of Trustees, and he seems pretty adamant that it's not going to happen. I look forward to working with Mr. Monahan and getting his insight into how we might be able to work out a compromise. If we can't transfer its ownership to the city, perhaps we could work closer together with its current owners by utilizing its facilities and location to benefit us all.

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

No. But I say "no" with certain apprehension. I feel like it's by a "case by case" issue with location, traffic, local businesses, and zoning issues all being contingent of where and what we're talking about. I do feel that the less Ventura needs to drive to the Big Box stores in Oxnard, the better it is for all of us.

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

Updating the current process is the first step I would take. Re-evaluating guidelines and regulations, as well as limiting existing voting timelines would be a start. Streamlining the planning process and limiting the time of the plan approval process would also definitely help. If elected, I look forward to working with my Council members to reworking the entire process. Thank you.