

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

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## 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!**

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

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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?

Panhandling is a threat to the vitality of Ventura's tourist industry. Vagrancy and drug laws need to be enforced, as do laws concerning sleeping on the sidewalks. The police department claims it lacks the funds to patrol, so either they divert forces from other areas of the city, of the downtown businesses need to work with social services and the community at large to patrol the downtown area. If the panhandlers are "aggressive" that is an assault and a crime. Locals should be encouraged to report the crimes, and not to tolerate them. Silence is acquiescence.

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

Yes-downtown is the heart of Ventura, and what draws the tourists to our fair city.

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-the parking can be a problem downtown. There is a lot of available space downtown, of course, I do not know its legal status or whether or not it is for sale. There is a great lot on the corner of Thompson and Figueroa. I know it is not a very popular idea, but I suggest parking meters on Main and Santa Clara for a few blocks. Many, many other cities have them and they generate a lot of municipal income.

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

Referring to drug dealing, do you include marijuana? Are you including licensed dispensaries or illegal dealing? If you are referring to hard drugs, then I strongly support enforcement. By looking the other way, the city is encouraging the use of drugs. Once a city gets a reputation for being "easy" on drug dealers, panhandlers, etc., the word gets out, and we become a mecca for those looking for a place to land. Regarding marijuana, I think the city should license and tax medical marijuana, like the "sin" taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, but the dispensaries should be located to less populated areas of the city by zoning.

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

Strongly opposed. Has the city considered its potential liability on this issue? Who is going to enforce it? My understanding is that there are restrictions on where the parking will be allowed, but once it gets started and the police are not there to enforce violations, I believe it will mushroom and get out of hand. What will it look like for our of town visitors to walk down California or Main and see homeless people camped in their cars?

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-unfortunately, the city's budget is stretched and they had to cut this service. As I am philosophically opposed to higher taxes, the only way to generate the funds would be to increase revenues, and I think this can be accomplished by lowering the sales tax, and by encouraging growth so that new tax revenues flow into the city. Some alternatives are the downtown businesses to fund "rent a cops" which are much less expensive than sworn officers, and by using civilian patrols. Also, if Prop. C passes, the city will have higher tax revenues.

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

Ventura needs to promote itself. The city is perfect for small conventions and we should encourage more sporting events, such as bicycle and foot races because they bring thousands of people to the city. The more people who visit, the more people who want to move here. Unfortunately, times are tough for residential and commercial growth, but the city should not lose residents or businesses. In order to do so, the city needs to keep itself clean and free from panhandlers and the homeless sleeping on our streets.

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?

Not fully funded, but subsidized. The events are great because they attract people, but it costs the city a lot of money and I do not believe most businesses realize much of an increase in sales. Private sponsors might be an option.

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?

Local sales taxes can be diverted to maintenance and improvement of downtown. As goes downtown, so goes the city. This is one of the reasons I support Prop. C—we need the tax revenues.

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

Not sure—does the city have a plan for its use? It is a lot of land. If the goal is to maintain it as a fairgrounds, I do not believe the city has the budget to run what is now a county project. If the goal is to purchase it, I believe it should be done by private developers.

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

No—I support Prop. C. I do not see the downside. It will result in huge revenues for the city, which we need, and it will create jobs. So what if they are low wage jobs? They are jobs. Also, it is hypocritical to limit the growth now, we already have two Targets, a Lowe’s etc. I also believe in free enterprise.

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

Fewer committees. Council members who can read and understand a contract, like me. Council members who want to see Ventura thrive, like me.

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

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