Sierra Club & League of Conservation Voters (LCV)
City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Information:

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General Questions:

1. We consider your past record as the best indicator of your future action for the environment. What have you done to protect natural resources and the environment?

   I am proud to be an advocate for creating a more sustainable natural and built environment for our city, region, and world. Quite simply, if we don’t act now to combat the threat of human-made climate change, no other policies or initiatives will matter because our entire civilization will collapse.

   For the past three-plus years, I have been an active blogger at the local, state, and national level, advocating for rooftop solar and other upstart renewable energy industries in their ongoing battle with entrenched monopoly utilities from California to Maine. My many articles can be found on websites such as Clean Technica, San José Inside, and the California Majority Report. I would be happy to provide links on request.

   I also strive to do my part to protect our environment through personal choices, such as investing in a hybrid car, diverting as much household waste as possible to our recycling bin, conserving water by taking shorter showers and putting a moratorium on watering our lawn, and rethinking or reusing any boxes, bags, or other materials that might otherwise be used once and thrown away.

   Despite limited financial capacity as a nonprofit director, I am proud to be a current member of the Committee for Green Foothills, a supporter of Save Our Trails of Santa Clara County, and an annual donor to the San José Parks Foundation. I was a proud supporter of 2014’s Measure AA to provide additional funding for the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District to improve access to regional parks and trails, and I was happy to endorse Measure Q, which provided similar resources to the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority.
2. What do you regard as the major environmental and conservation issues facing your city and the Bay Area as a whole?

Land use and development -- The Envision San José 2040 General Plan was passed by the council in 2011 following 4-plus years of community engagement and input. This plan is currently going through a regular four-year review, with a task force of residents and community leaders empaneled to recommend adjustments and engage with city staff in a discussion of current planning efforts and challenges at the city and regional level. It is imperative that provisions against development in Coyote Valley and other city lands outside our urban boundary are upheld. I am encouraged by staff recommendations that would create incentives for developing more affordable housing to meet the crisis faced by low- and extremely low-income residents while prioritizing infill and densification along transit lines in order to create a more walkable, sustainable, and vibrant community.

Parks and trails -- The City must work with regional partners to expand and connect our network of protected lands for public parks and trails as well as protect revenue streams that provide greater access to open space for our residents and improve the environmental education our parks provide. This will require proactive and inclusive stakeholder engagement and consensus-building across a broad range of perspectives, for which I am uniquely suited given my history and relationships with civic and environmental leaders across our region and in all levels of government. I would also advocate for equitable distribution of parks funds throughout the city, particularly in areas of high need and traditionally underserved communities where residents lack access to open space and healthy living alternatives.

Energy efficiency and sustainability -- In October 2007, the City Council adopted San José’s landmark Green Vision, a 15-year plan for economic growth, environmental sustainability, and an enhanced quality of life for our community. Halfway through this 15-year initiative, the City is nowhere near the original targets in most goal areas. As a Councilmember, I will commit to achieving all Green Vision goals by the target year of 2022 and will work with staff to develop concrete strategies for getting there.

Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan -- It will be critical in coming years for city and county leaders to closely monitor implementation of the SCVHP in order to ensure that we achieve its expected mitigation benefits, that land acquisition plans are clearly understood and prioritized, and that successes in both protection and expedited planning and/or permitting processes are highlighted to reduce opposition to the program.

3. What are the principal areas of the environment on which you will work if elected? How will you deal with them?

Please see my answer to #2 as I feel that adequately addresses this question.

4. Are you a Sierra Club member? Membership is not required for endorsement.
No, I am not currently a member.

**Issue Questions:**

**Climate Change**

5. Would you advocate for performance improvements to your city’s climate change plan and what would those changes be?

Yes, I would focus on reducing the City’s negative impacts on our environment through modernization of facilities, diversion of waste streams, expanded efficiency in irrigation and landscaping, and by working with VTA to reduce emissions from transportation. I would also encourage expanding recycling services to include citywide residential composting in order to divert more waste from our landfills. And I would push for San José to invest in renewable energy projects such as Community Choice Aggregation that cut costs while creating new jobs and opportunities for private sector partnerships (see answer to #8).

6. What else should your city do to reduce greenhouse gas generation?

First and foremost, city leaders must follow through on the Urban Village concept in our long-term development plans in order to create a more walkable, bikeable, and sustainable San José, with a focus on building “complete streets” that safely accommodate all modes of transportation.

Additionally, the City should move its auto fleets to hybrid and/or electric vehicles and provide more charging stations for electric vehicles in public parking garages and spaces. The City should also incentivize private developers and businesses to do the same. And we should continue to invest in programs such as Bay Area Bike Share and public events like the highly successful VivaCalleSJ to encourage more residents to utilize alternative modes of transportation. In order to live up to the moniker of “Capital of Silicon Valley”, San José must lead by example in moving our residents and our region to take action to prevent further negative impacts from climate change.

**Sea Level Rise**

7. Scientific analysis overwhelmingly concludes that sea levels are already rising and that San Mateo and Santa Clara counties are seriously threatened in this century. Please give us your thoughts as to the near term tasks that you think should be undertaken by your city and the Bay Area at large? Would you consider changing the San Jose General Plan in low lying areas north of Highway 237?

In the near term, a key obstacle to taking action to protect against the impact of sea level rise is revenue. I have publicly endorsed 2016’s Measure AA, a Bay Area-wide measure
appearing on the June 7th ballot, which calls for approval of a $12-per-parcel annual tax to enhance wetlands and wildlife habitat, expand public access and recreational opportunities, and protect public infrastructure – such as highways, wastewater treatment plants, and schools – from the threat of rising sea levels.

But this effort cannot and will not end with a ballot measure. City leaders and key stakeholders must continue to work together to develop comprehensive solutions to protect our existing environment, reduce negative impacts, and plan for restoration so that future generations are not saddled with mistakes of the past. This includes examining potential changes to our General Plan as it relates to low-lying areas north of Hwy. 237, particularly in the vulnerable and long-standing community of Alviso.

**Community Choice Aggregation**

8. All 20 cities in San Mateo County and 14 cities in Santa Clara County are starting Community Choice (Energy) Aggregation. Please give us your thoughts regarding public management vs. private management scenarios as San Jose moves forward on Community Choice Aggregation.

I support Community Choice Aggregation for San José. CCA creates consumer choice where none currently exists by offering an alternative to monopoly utilities. Furthermore, the environmental benefits of CCA would be a tremendous step toward achieving the goals of San José’s Green Vision strategy, particularly regarding greenhouse gas emissions. With every other city in Santa Clara County and virtually every county in the Bay Area pursuing CCA, San José is already late to the game, and I believe the time is now to act.

I also believe that San José should manage their CCA program in-house, rather than outsourcing it to the private sector. The City has the resources to do this, and all of our neighbors are pursuing self-implemented solutions. Outsourcing of any public service is far more complicated, and often far less cost-effective than most claims. Loss of autonomy and control of the level of service provided to our residents is a significant concern; second only to the loss of quality, well paid stable City jobs for our hard working public servants.

**Sustainable Land Use**

9. What are your views about the creation of downtown and transit hub specific plans that zone for building heights sufficient to generate significant economic value that will benefit your entire community and provide significant affordable housing? What types of development conditions (for example: Residential Parking Permit Programs to reduce redundant parking) would you support to reduce land waste, unit cost and auto dependency?

Long-term city planning in San José already includes specific plans for Downtown as well as more than 70 “urban villages” throughout the city, which would be developed along transit corridors and on top of transit hubs such as Diridon Station and future BART stations in
Berryessa, Alum Rock, and Downtown. I support these plans, and as a councilmember, I would work with my colleagues and city staff to ensure that they are implemented in a manner that generates the fullest possible environmental and economic impact.

While residential parking permit programs can be difficult to implement and costly to manage – particularly with depleted ranks in our Police Department and Code Enforcement – I am in favor of reducing the number of allowable parking spaces in new developments that meet certain standards for density and proximity to transit options.

**Transportation**

10. What types of transportation projects would you support to provide people with an alternative to the private auto?

In short: All of the above. Our valley’s population is expected to grow significantly over the next 50 years, and our transportation systems must be to prepared to move those new residents from work to school to a Sharks game in an efficient manner. Successful multi-modal transit systems are more efficient and affordable than lone drivers in cars, and take the people who need it most to where they most need to go. With an eye toward efficiency and effectiveness, we need to ensure that our transit infrastructure serves our entire community with affordable options for those with and without cars. That means using data and analytics to focus upgrades and maintenance in areas with the most demand. It also means keeping our transit system clean and safe for all users.

But beyond trains and buses, we need to make our streets safe and accessible for bikes and pedestrians. By embracing a multi-modal transportation system, we can reduce traffic on our roads, improve the productivity of our workforce, and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Like many issues, transportation does not exist in a vacuum, and we shouldn’t treat it as such. New transportation strategies should be directly tied to high-density housing and commercial development in targeted areas.

**Open Space & Urban Recreation – Access to Nature**

11. How will you ensure that residents in your city will have access to safe and enjoyable parks and open space? What is your position on development sprawl in North Coyote Valley?

In order to build a more vibrant and healthy community, we must invest in our parks, trails, and open spaces. First and foremost, the City should protect and seek to increase available funding to not only develop new parklands but preserve existing parklands, improve their accessibility for all residents, and ensure that they are distributed equitably throughout the city and our region. This can be done through fees and tax measures but also in concert with state and federal resources. We should also examine every opportunity to leverage government funds to drive partnerships with business, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors.
As San José takes on a more urban character, and our long-term planning encourages infill development at higher densities, it is even more critical that we have adequate open space to meet the needs of our diverse and growing population and maintain the viability of our local ecosystems. With that in mind, I am adamantly opposed to further development in North Coyote Valley, and I would work to see that our greenbelt is protected from the same suburban sprawl that created many of the structural and systemic challenges our city faces today. This includes the preservation of Almaden Ranch and other open spaces outside our urban growth boundary.

**Water Conservation & Recycling, Rivers & Creeks**

12. California will continue to face increasing droughts. Do you support the project for potable reuse of recycled water in San Jose? What are your concerns about the project if any? What other actions do you support to make San Jose a water smart city?

   I support the reuse of recycled water in San José, which is already proving to be a vital resource for irrigation and other uses, but it can and should also be used to supplement existing sources of drinking water. The City should continue to invest in new technologies and delivery methods to improve and expand our recycled water usage.

   We should also work with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and our retail water providers like San José Water Company to encourage the adoption of smart water meters and other tools that are proven to help residents and businesses reduce their water consumption. By coming together around a shared vision of water as a finite resource, we can prepare for future droughts and other impacts of climate change.

13. What is your position on stream setback requirements for development? Do you believe current requirements are too strict, too lax, or just right?

   While I cannot purport to be an expert on the specific riparian setback requirements in the California Environmental Quality Act, the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan, and other policies related to development around streams and other natural resources, it is critical that city leaders respect these policies and defend them against encroachment. These policies and the protections they enshrine were arrived at through extensive public outreach and input, but it is a sad reality that they can be skirted or nullified by six votes at any given City Council meeting on a Tuesday afternoon. I would work to ensure that every development project lived up to the standards put in place to protect native plants and species, and most importantly, migration corridors for local wildlife.

**Wildlife**

14. Integrating nature and habitat into the City is important to the Sierra Club. Would you support programs to protect open space and parks in the City, plant more oaks and other native
trees, protect stream corridors and require that buildings incorporate measures to protect birds from collision with glass?

Yes. Programs such as this would not only help to preserve our diverse and vibrant local ecosystem but also improve the quality of life for our residents.

15. Would you support the continued development of a Bird Safe Buildings ordinance?

Yes. In 2014, I had the privilege of moderating a panel discussion sponsored by the Willow Glen Neighborhood Association on the “Great Outdoors”, which featured a representative from the local Audubon Society who did a wonderful job of educating our members and neighbors on this important yet often overlooked issue.

Zero Waste

16. Do you believe that recycling can be improved in your city and, if yes, how, in your opinion, might that be achieved?

Yes. The City must do its part to mitigate its waste stream, not only to reduce the demand for landfills but to reduce harmful emissions associated with the production, transportation, and storage of that waste.

Here are a few ways San José could make advances in this area:

- Provide a platform for citywide residential composting;
- Deploy onsite recycling stations in all city-owned facilities;
- Sponsor and host hazardous waste collection programs in all 10 council districts;
- Reuse as many items as practicable as a normal business practice; and
- Audit our capital inventory to see where upgrades can be made to reduce paper and other waste (e.g. investing in high-yield printers and toners).

Additionally, I support the current citywide bans on single-use plastic bags and polystyrene packaging, as well as efforts to make all city festivals and events zero waste.

Campaign Readiness:

Tell us about your campaign readiness, including funding, volunteers, and organization. Please bring examples of your prior and current campaign literature.

I have more than decade of experience as an intern, field organizer, communications director, manager, and general consultant on campaigns for school board, city council, county supervisor, state senate, and President of the United States. Last year, I served as manager and senior strategic consultant on the winning campaign in a special election for
the District 4 seat on the San José City Council. If there’s anything a life in politics has taught me, it’s that walking wins, money helps, and the candidate can’t do it alone.

That’s why I’m excited to have the team at 50+1 Strategies on board my campaign. They’re bringing a 100% win rate with San Francisco candidates to San José, and their community organizer approach fits perfectly with our local electorate. We have a plan to knock on the door of every likely voter in this election before they cast their ballots. Face-to-face conversations are still the most effective method of mobilizing voters, and I plan to make them a staple of my life for the next three months.

But this type of campaign isn’t cheap, and I’ll need to work hard to raise the money we need to make it happen. With that in mind, I picked up the phone and posted the third-highest total of funds raised during the first financial reporting period – with the most individual donors of any candidate in the District 6 race. The average donation to our campaign was just 15% of the maximum allowed, which means our donors have the capacity to give more in order to help us meet future fundraising goals.

Please list your endorsements. If they are on your website – please just insert your URL.

I’m honored to have the endorsement of environmental leaders like State Assemblymember Rich Gordon and Sunnyvale Councilmember and former Mayor Jim Griffith.

You can find a full list at www.peterforsanjose.com/endorsements.

Please include below an exact copy of your ballot statement as submitted at filing.

Peter Allen
Nonprofit Executive/Small Business Owner

As a third-generation native of San José, I’m proud of the city my hometown has become, and excited by the immense potential that still defines it. I’ve watched us grow from the Valley of Heart’s Delight into the Capital of Silicon Valley, but I know that prosperity for all is still a work in progress.

Many of our hardworking neighbors are struggling to make ends meet in the shadows of sparkling new high rises and freeway overpasses. I’m running for City Council to build a San José that works for everyone.

Having been raised by a public school teacher and a CPA, I value a quality education, a strong work ethic, and the dignity of earning a paycheck. These are the values we need in our civic leaders.

As a nonprofit executive, small business owner, and Chair of the San José Arts Commission, I’ve learned the best
decisions for a community are made as a community. By coming together around our shared vision for a healthy, equitable, and vibrant San José, we can find lasting solutions to the challenges we all face. I hope to earn your vote.

Please visit www.peterforsanjose.com to learn more.