

**GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY QUESTIONNAIRE for
ALBANY CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES 2008**

Candidate name: Leo Panian
Occupation: Structural Engineer
Campaign Chair: Leo Panian
Treasurer: Carolyn Corbelli

1. Why did you choose to run for the Albany City Council?

I wish to serve on the city council to promote progressive leadership based on a long-term vision for our city, emphasizing sustainable development, protection of open spaces, and improvement of the quality of life of Albany residents.

2. Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of City Council.

I have served as an appointed city Planning & Zoning Commissioner for the last four years and I am currently the chair. In my official capacity, I have been involved in a wide range of issues, including the crafting of city-wide ordinances, leading planning initiatives, and implementing new building standards, including Albany's Green Building Program. I am an accomplished Structural Engineer and have been in professional practice in the Bay Area for over fourteen years. I am a graduate of UC Berkeley with a Master's degree, specializing in earthquake engineering.

3. Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development. What are some specific ideas do you intend to pursue if elected?

As a community, we need to do a better job of creating more and better quality housing. We need to keep Albany livable by attracting the creation of more affordable housing by strengthening the city's efforts to reach its goals under the General Plan.

I would strengthen the city's efforts to combat aerial pesticide spraying and augment the efforts to implement integrated pest-management practices.

I would pursue ways that the city could make it more attractive for property owners to install solar panels on buildings.

I would redouble our efforts to restore our creeks and preserve remaining natural open space. Recently, Albany was recognized as the California's "Greenest" City and I would work hard to maintain that distinction.

4. Albany is currently conducting a visioning process for the waterfront to proactively establish the community's desires for this part of the city. Do you support the current visioning effort? Why or why not? What is your vision for the future of the Waterfront? What was your position on the development proposed by Magna/Caruso?

I have supported and participated in Albany's efforts to establish a community based, informed plan for the future of our waterfront. Our policy decisions regarding the waterfront require broad participation and a basis in sound facts and informed opinions. It's my expectation the visioning process will provide the community with enough understanding of the challenges and opportunities, the costs and the tradeoffs, for good collective decision making.

I see the waterfront as an irreplaceable resource in an urban environment that is constantly under pressure from development. We should seek to maximize remaining large-scale open spaces and reinforce natural ecosystems, particularly at this spectacular site.

I did not support the Magna/Caruso vision for redeveloping Golden Gate Fields. It was out-of-scale and out-of-touch with the needs of the community. It was unimaginative and formulaic. It would have posed a burden to our transportation infrastructure and create more pollution from increased automobile traffic. It would have negatively impacted local retailers on our main commercial corridors. The project seemed oblivious to natural environment and included no serious consideration to ecological design suiting its location. Its benefits would not have outweighed the cost.

5. What is your opinion of the proposed development at UC Village? What do you think the city's goals should be in negotiating with the University regarding the UC Village/Gill Tract property?

As a Planning & Zoning commissioner I participated in the formal public hearings regarding the proposed retail grocery and senior housing development bordered by two creeks. During those sessions, I offered numerous suggestions to better integrate such a development. These included prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle access, ensuring that the creeks are protected and enhanced, placing parking below grade to preserve open space and create a safer and more a friendly streetscape along San Pablo Avenue.

I support the project in general but would like to see it better developed to suit the needs of the community as expressed at the preliminary study sessions.

Albany would be better served to engage the University more actively with regards the future of UC Village/Gill Tract property as a whole. Albany residents have long expressed a desire to maintain the Gill Tract property as open space that should be used as agricultural educational resource. If these lands are developed in piecemeal, we may lose the opportunity to adequately protect and maintain it.

We could explore making zoning changes and use permits contingent on a wider discussion of long-term planning goals involving the entire site and its relationship with the city.

6. What is your opinion concerning dense infill developments, such as have occurred at the former mortuary site on San Pablo and are under discussion for Safeway on Solano and planned for the southeast corner of El Cerrito Plaza? What mitigations do you envision to balance the impact of dense infill?

These projects have had mixed results. While some have generated much needed housing, they have largely failed as a result of poor design and inappropriate scale.

As a city, we need to raise the standard on quality on the larger projects, and insist the new developments are realized with a higher level of care and respect.

We should emphasize a thoughtful approach to land use policy that maximizes open space, improves pedestrian and bike access, and encourages sites to take advantage of mass transit lines.

7. What is your vision for future development along Solano and San Pablo Avenues?

As a key regional transportation corridor, it is important to maintain and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of this vital stretch of road, with particular emphasis on mass transit and the interconnection of multi-modal hubs.

Balancing these needs along with accommodating an increasing number of multi-unit, mixed-use residential developments will require a thoughtful approach that balances the increased density by improving pedestrian and bicycle access.

We should promote higher quality of design and construction, with the appropriate scale and density. We should seek to maintain the economic livelihood of these corridors while maintaining a pedestrian friendly environment.

We should revisit our design and development guidelines, and make sure

they serve these needs.

8. Albany's General Plan states "The City of Albany is committed to working toward an overall goal of reducing reliance on the automobile as the primary means of transportation." How do you envision supporting this goal?

Reducing the reliance on cars requires effective alternatives. This means prioritizing the safety and accessibility of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. It also means that important goods and services as well as access to mass transit are easily available to residents.

We need to support the efforts to complete the city's bike paths and connect them with the Bay Trail.

In addition to encouraging alternatives, as a city we should review parking policies, particularly in pedestrian zones, to make sure we are not encouraging more driving trips by providing free on-street parking.

We should promote public transit by considering a local BART stop on Solano, without parking, as envisioned in the 50 year BART plan.

9. Where should the funding for the city budget come from in the future? How do you propose to ensure Albany's future financial health?

The city relies on commercial revenues for its finances and it will continue to do so in the near future. This means keeping the businesses that operate in Albany healthy and thriving. We need to maintain a balance between large businesses and the many more small ones that are key to the city's financial well being and at the heart of Albany's character.

We need to attract the types of businesses and developments that will continue to provide a stable financial base as well as furthering Albany's mission.

10. Do you think the City Council should try to participate in or influence regional, state and/or national policy? What are your criteria for making this decision?

Municipal politics represent a democratic arena that is more personal and more connected with the immediate needs of a community than any other. As such we have an obligation to represent these issues at the City Council. I recognize that as an individual city, we may not have much influence on policy at a national level. However, the Council should not shy away from representing the sentiments of its citizens on global or national issues by passing resolutions communicating them to federal legislators.

Our needs as a city are better served through strong regional and state advocacy. This was exemplified by the effectiveness of Albany's and other cities' efforts to stop the aerial spraying against the light-brown apple moth by state officials.

Participation in broader policy areas should reflect the citizen's or the Council's level of concern on a given issue. We should be open to decide as a community.

11. What would you propose for Albany's response to the current global warming crisis?

Today we are faced with unprecedented environmental challenges that have to be addressed on a local level, through local initiatives. Ultimately these will have to do with access to the increasingly scarce key resources such as energy, clean water.

While Albany is ahead of most cities in its efforts, we have only recently begun the transformations in response to global climate change and energy use. Our recently implemented green building standards, which seek to minimize the environmental impact of our structures, represent one of those strategies.

For example, we need to look for ways to manage energy needs as a community. I would look for ways that the city can promote the use of solar energy with incentives for property owners. We should be ambitious in setting energy self-sufficiency goals. We should study the possibility to get off the centralized electric grid within a generation.

12. What is your vision of Albany in 5, 10, 20 years? How would you promote community-wide dialogue and participation regarding sustainability?

I would like to see Albany sustain its well-deserved reputation for excellent schools, a safe and family-friendly community, and environmental leadership. We are fortunate to be organized as such a small city in this important region. We can participate more directly and more effectively in decision making that affects us directly.

We must maintain the openness and transparency of our public processes and invite a wider discussion over issues.

I see this election and my candidacy as an effort to place sustainability at the heart of city politics and decision making. We can promote community-wide dialogue by raising awareness and representing principled positions on sustainability on the city council.

13. What is your opinion of the proposed charter amendment to switch from an appointed to elected mayor?

I support the amendment.

A four-year mayor will give Albany residents a consistent voice in local and regional decision making. The brief term served by the current appointed mayor limits Albany's influence with our regional, state and federal representatives. Consistent, steady representation increases our chance of success in a very competitive environment for federal, state and local funds.

Our current system excludes Albany's representation on regional governing bodies whose decisions directly affect Albany. Appointed mayors are ineligible for seats on the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and the Bay Area Air Quality Board.

The amendment would enable mayoral election by instant runoff voting (IRV). This method would result in more issue-focused campaigns while determining which candidate has majority support in a single election.

14. Who else has endorsed you or is supporting your candidacy?

The Sierra Club
Albany Mayor Robert Lieber
Council member Marge Atkinson
Council member Joanne Wile
School Board member Miriam Walden

15. The following are the 10 Key Values of the Green Party (more details available at <http://www.cagreens.org/platform/10k.shtml>).

In view of these values, why do you feel your candidacy merits Green Party endorsement?

Green Party 10 Key Values:

1. Ecological wisdom
2. Social Justice
3. Non violence
4. Grassroots democracy
5. Decentralization
6. Community based economics
7. Feminism
8. Respect for diversity
9. Personal and global responsibility
10. Sustainability

I hold these values personally and authentically. These guide my

political motivations and are at the root of decision to run for elected office. These values also represent community and family values that should be at the core of decision making in Albany.

I strongly oppose the wars being waged in Iraq and Afghanistan and I stand against the violence and militarism in our foreign policy. I am committed to global responsibility through local action.

Grassroots democracy and community involvement in civic life is a strong part of life in Albany. We should reinforce and respect diversity and multi-culturalism, as we constitute truly a global community in a most local setting. These are the reasons we chose to live and raise a family in Albany.

My candidacy merits the Green Party endorsement because I can articulate these values effectively to lead city policy.

16. Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

I am dedicated to a progressive leadership. I am committed to social and environmental justice. I want to continue the path that Albany has been on over the last four years and build on the successes that will improve the future for our community.

For more background visit www.leopanian.com