



## **Candidate Questionnaire Responses from: Phil Ting**

### **Questions from the San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance**

#### **Access to Land**

One of the largest barriers to expanding urban agriculture in San Francisco is access to land. There are numerous potential locations including vacant lots, underutilized public land, and barren rooftops. How will you facilitate the linking of passionate gardeners and organizations with usable sites? And will you prioritize helping the SFUAA reach its goal of 12 new gardens by the end of 2012?

One of the great attributes of our city is its temperate climate, which allows for longer growing and flowering seasons for plants. I support encouraging gardening enthusiasts to use city spaces for gardening, as it will improve the quality of the local environment, both in ecological diversity and in appearance. Additionally indoor agriculture could transition brown fields and underused urban spaces into large farms that would lower carbon use by reducing transportation costs and creating more efficient growing environments. Overall, by improving the connection between the people in our community and the land, we can build on the richness of our great city. Urban gardens can teach our children more than just nutrition; it can teach them where their food comes from, and urban gardens can bring community members together strengthening the bonds and connect San Franciscans.

One of the key ways I hope to help the SFUAA, if elected mayor, is to work with the Green Schools Initiative to improve the local access to land on school property and allow that land to be used for the growing of fruits and vegetables to be used in those schools. I will also support the collaboration between the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and SFUAA to facilitate the cultivation and development of local gardens. If elected mayor, I will be supporting these ventures with the intent of helping the SFUAA meet its 2012 goals.

#### **City Support**

What role do you see the city government playing in supporting urban agriculture and the growing community of city gardeners and farmers? How will you work to create a more fluid and efficient system for the creation and maintenance of urban gardens and farms in SF?

As I mentioned, I think the first place where I see the city government working to support the community of gardeners is through our schools. By supporting gardening programs in our public schools, we not only provide sites for our adult city gardeners, but we also connect children to the land, educating them on where their food comes from and how it is grown.

On ResetSanFrancisco.org, the great many uses of urban and public spaces, like the development of parklets and urban gardening, is a constant theme. For example, in the Mission neighborhood, residents are coming to together to discuss how to spend millions of dollars to improve Dolores Park. The more we can engage community members in a dialogue about how to improve the neighborhood, the better – and that’s what I’ll strive to do as Mayor.

I’ve lived close to the community garden at 7th and Lawton for years. This is a great example of how a community can maintain a garden and improve the neighborhood at the same time. Visiting the Hayes Valley community garden was inspiring and a great example of how a community turned an eyesore and magnet for crime into a community jewel as it waits to get redeveloped. The city should continue to create opportunities for communities to be able to easily take over unused and neglected space and make them into urban gardens and sustainable spaces.

As mayor, I will also continue to support online tools, like the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department’s website that allows you to search for citywide locations of community gardens via GPS mapping. You can also learn how to become a community garden member and start one of your own through this site. This tool is a great example of the marriage of Web 2.0 technology with Gov 2.0 community involvement that is at the core of the Reset San Francisco community.

I am already working to maximize the use and value of each individual home and property through programs like GoSolarSF - the most successful local solar incentive. I have also worked with groups like Livable City to unbundle parking spaces from condominiums to reduce car use by not creating a financial incentive for individual car ownership. Just this week I also helped with an effort to create Green Grade for homes, which gives positive incentive for green upgrades by adding home value. Urban agriculture use can and should be added to this green grade program.

### **Access to Resources**

The will and manpower to create beautiful and effective urban agriculture projects is amply present as evidenced by the extensive community involvement in the work of SFUAA members (<http://www.sfuaa.org/membership.html>). However, a lack of resources such as tools, compost, mulch and money has continued to be a difficult obstacle to overcome. If you become mayor, what will you do to help increase the availability and distribution of resources for urban gardeners and farmers? And will you commit to ensuring that every supervisorial district is equipped with an urban agriculture resource center by 2012?

I believe that creating a greener, more environmentally friendly city is important to all San Franciscans. Ranked the “Greenest City” in the United States by a recent Siemens report, San Francisco has made significant environmental strides, but we can and should do more.

When I took over the Assessor-Recorder’s office in 2005, it was one of the most inefficient departments in the city. By increasing office efficiency and productivity, ending favoritism and putting my management experience to work, we helped clear a five-year backlog and collected over \$300 million in new revenue – money that can now be used for our city’s general fund. If we have the budget and the support I would implement these resource centers. I believe our urban gardens are one of the many things that should be funded by our general fund when the budget allows for it.

I think we should ensure every district has an urban agricultural resource center starting with the neighborhoods that have the least access to fresh fruits and vegetables - Districts 10 and 11.

### **San Francisco as a National Leader**

Since San Francisco prides itself on being a trailblazer for progressive causes, how will you make San Francisco a national leader in building a healthy and sustainable food system?

We should encourage more sustainable urban gardening, and this can help to solidify our status as an emerging capitol of the green economy. [Reset San Francisco launched a survey](#), with over 600 San Franciscans responding. Of those 600, 74% said they were “Very Likely” or “Likely” to support more incentives for urban gardens throughout the City. The support is there, but it is up to City leaders to encourage and educate residents on the benefits of community urban gardens. City Hall recently passed a bill making it easier to grow local food in San Francisco. As Mayor I will work to support and foster such.

In San Francisco, a staggering 150,000 people – 20% of the city's population – forgo food in order to pay their bills, and [many live in food deserts](#), inner-city spaces more than a mile from a grocer, which means they are without access to stores with fresh produce. The new bill makes it easier to sell homegrown produce. Produce from community and urban gardens can be sold at farmer’s markets and help turn a food desert into food oasis. Urban and community gardens can help provide much needed access to fresh produce in neighborhoods with food deserts. These urban and community gardens can also serve as a resource to educate the community about fresh food. Education is an essential component in making San Francisco a leader in healthy sustainable food.

### **Gardening and Agricultural Experience**

Do you currently grow, or have you ever grown, food in the city? We are curious to hear about anything from a small pot of herbs in a window sill to a full blown vegetable garden.

We have grown berries and rosemary in our backyard but have had little success. We applied to part of an urban gardening pilot project but our application was not accepted. We decided to try and garden as a way to teach our children a lesson about fresh food and sustainability and how every family can take greater ownership of their food consumption.

**[Note as of October 17: Mr. Ting did not include responses to the other questions in the questionnaire. We have contacted his campaign in the hope that he will send those answers soon. ]**