

Helene Schneider

Hello and thank you for watching. I am Helene Schneider and I appreciate this brief opportunity to talk about my candidacy for Santa Barbara Mayor.

These last 5 ½ years, I've had the honor to work on your behalf as your City Councilmember. During this time, I have been a consistent leader protecting our environment, ensuring public health and safety, protecting neighborhood character, investing in our youth, and reducing homelessness.

As a member of the Finance Committee, I presented balanced budgets that prioritized public safety and essential services, such as police neighborhood bike patrols, after-school programs and human services grants.

Today, the City of Santa Barbara faces unprecedented financial challenges resulting from our nation's economic downturn. While facing significant budget cuts our financial decisions must keep the City aligned with our community's values.

My five priorities for Santa Barbara's future include:

- 1) Creating a solid fiscal foundation by implementing policies that rebuild and maintain funds in City's reserve accounts.
- 2) Ensuring safe neighborhoods for our kids and community by making sure our sworn police force is fully staffed, investing in at-risk youth programs and building stronger connections between City Hall and neighborhood groups.
- 3) Strengthening our role as an environmental leader with clean creeks, beaches and pesticide-free parks, and by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels.
- 4) Partnering with local businesses towards economic recovery, and creating incentives for new green technology and start-up companies. and
- 5) Preserving neighborhood character and our cultural heritage by respecting Santa Barbara's small town feel, protecting open space, focusing on quality building design and promoting the arts and local artists.

First, the City must balance its budget and restore reserves. My background in human resources management will bring needed expertise in reviewing organizational structure and building a solid fiscal foundation. The City will have to become smaller; in fact, this last budget includes a reduction of over 40 positions in the General Fund, with no cuts in sworn police officers or firefighters.

The current level of gang-related violence, especially among our youth, is unacceptable and creates fear and tension for residents and visitors. We must fight gang violence with a balanced combination of enforcement and prevention. Accomplishing this requires a coordinated effort between the City, local district and County Schools, Probation & Sheriff's Departments, and a variety of social service agencies that focus on at-risk youth. Leadership from the next Mayor is imperative to sustain this broad-based regional effort over time, and this will be a top priority for me if elected.

Reducing homelessness also increases our public safety. I serve on the Governing Board of the Santa Barbara Countywide 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, where our coordinated efforts resulted in getting over 300 chronically homeless people off the streets. I've also been a leader advocating for a strong anti-panhandling ordinance, increased police presence on State Street, enhanced coordination between police and homeless outreach teams, and funding for essential mental health services.

I am a fierce protector of our environment. As Chair of the City's Sustainability Committee, I work with city departments to maximize energy and cost savings.

There are many ways we can be both environmentally strong and fiscally sound. For example, by conducting a simple lighting audit of all municipal buildings, the City saved over \$60,000 in electricity bills in one year. Another is through my work on the School District Recycling Committee, where some simple organizational and structural changes resulted in increased recycling and saving the school district \$80,000 in annual trash fees.

Sometimes, strong environmental projects also enhance public health and safety. One example is the Lower Mission Creek Restoration Project, which runs from Cabrillo Blvd. up to the Caltrans channel at Carrillo and the 101. I'm the Council liaison to this restoration project that provides flood control protection, increases water quality, replaces deteriorating bridges, adds new pocket parks and protects two endangered species. After decades of inactivity, we're finally seeing some momentum with funding opportunities from Congress and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

I am a strong advocate of slow growth policies. I have a proven record of preserving open space, such as in the Las Positas Valley, and opposing luxury condo mixed-use developments, and protecting renters, by opposing condo conversions.

These are just some examples where political leadership can be used to protect community values and embrace the opportunities of tomorrow, even under challenging economic times. I've worked hard for Santa Barbara these last 5 ½ years and would be honored to continue working as your next Mayor.

I ask you to join the Sierra Club, the League of Conservation Voters, former Mayors Harriet Miller and Sheila Lodge, Mayor Marty Blum, Supervisors Salud Carbajal, Janet Wolf and Doreen Farr, and many others in supporting my candidacy for Mayor. I'd appreciate your vote. Thank you for listening.