

LPoV Candidate Questionnaire Nov 2022

General Questions

Candidate Name *

Matt Dorsey

Candidate Website

<https://www.mattdorsey.org/>

Why are you running for *this* office?

I am running for District 6 Supervisor to represent the people and communities of District 6. I believe my more than 30 years of experience in and around San Francisco local government and politics prepares me well to be a forceful, independent and effective advocate for those I represent and for the City I serve.

My work in San Francisco began more than 30 years ago, when as a newly arrived college graduate I served as a deputy press secretary and campaign finance assistant to former San Francisco District Attorney Arlo Smith in his 1990 bid for California Attorney General. Following a narrow loss for that office, D.A. Smith hired me to manage his successful 1991 re-election, and in that capacity I worked on the formation of a groundbreaking District Attorney's Hate Crimes Task Force to develop protocols for investigators and prosecutors to pursue cases under what were then newly enacted hate crime statutes in California. Early my career, it was an invaluable lesson on the diversity our City celebrates and must work vigilantly to protect.

Following a period of several years in which I worked in the Clinton Administration's Democratic National Committee and as a Democratic political consultant, I worked in 2001 for Dennis Herrera's campaign for City Attorney of San Francisco. Following Dennis Herrera's election, I soon after joined his office as communications director and senior advisor, and our work together over the next 14 years encompassed the broad panoply of high-profile legal issues facing the City and County of San Francisco — including housing, tenant protections, public safety, consumer protection, public integrity and more. Two of the highest profile achievements during my tenure in that office, in which my own role was central, involved that office's nine-year legal battle for LGBTQ+ marriage equality and the lawsuit that saved City College of San Francisco from closure by rogue accreditors.

After a three-year period in private sector consulting, which included successfully defending San Francisco's restrictions on vaping products from a well-funded ballot measure campaign by Juul Labs, Inc., I joined the San Francisco Police Department as director of strategic communications in January 2020. In that role, I managed a media relations unit that was distinguished among its public sector counterparts for 24/7 accessibility and that played a leading role in evangelizing the importance of 21st century police reforms that SFPD had been pursuing since 2016.

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If elected, do you commit to completing your entire term?

Yes

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What are your values, and how did you get them?

My activism in Democratic politics goes back to my childhood enthusiasm for Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign when I was 10 years old, and as a young person who was even then coming to terms with being gay, I have always worked to stand with those marginalized, disenfranchised and disadvantaged.

Although we may have our disagreements from time to time over how we do that in San Francisco politics, I think the values I share with the League of Pissed Off Voters' members were well recognized in 2012, when I earned this club's endorsement in my successful bid for Democratic County Central Committee.

I think they were understood, too, in 2019 – when the League of Pissed Off Voters was one of the few to stand with Supervisor Shamann Walton and me against Juul Labs' multi-million ballot measure to bring their vaping products and candy-flavored nicotine pods back to store shelves.

What communities do you represent, and how do they hold you accountable?

Beyond the District 6 neighborhoods I represent as supervisor, I also represent members of marginalized communities who often share personally with me how much they value the place I offer them by having a seat at the table in local government.

I am also the first openly identified member of the substance use disorder recovery community to serve on the Board of Supervisors in a generation (since Bill Maher in the 1990s).

Should I win in November, I will make history as San Francisco's first openly HIV-positive supervisor ever elected.

I'm also the second member of the LGBTQ+ community currently serving on the Board of Supervisors.

All of these community members – and many others – hold me accountable by letting me know their concerns, their hopes and frankly their disappointments in what I'm doing for them. I'm enough of a City Hall veteran not to take it personally, of course, and to understand that they have a right to hold me accountable to help govern our City in a way that's effective, equitable and responsive.

What three endorsements are you most proud of?

The Northern California Carpenters Union, Mayor London Breed and State Senator Scott Wiener.

What are the top three issues you will work on, and how will you implement solutions in a timely manner?

Affordable housing, public safety, and drug addiction are three issues I am committed to make real progress on, because they are all core issues affecting District 6 and our City at large.

District 6 has one of the highest traffic fatalities, congestion, and levels of air pollution in San Francisco. However, D6 has an opportunity to serve as a global and national model for how urban environments can become more livable, healthy, and safe if we prioritize low-carbon modes of transportation, like walking, biking, and public transit.

To improve street safety, I'm working to champion a speed enforcement camera pilot program first initiated by former Asb. David Chiu. This program will save lives, prevent injuries and regain progress we've recently lost in our objectives around Vision Zero. Additionally, I'm exploring with the support of the San Francisco City Attorney's Office possible non-enforcement-related speed camera options — like warning notices or even solely for data collection — until state law authorizes automated enforcement.

Other improvements I'm exploring in the District include widening sidewalk curb ramps, creating more protected bicycle lanes, replacing outdated traffic light countdowns with longer countdowns, and lowering vehicle speeds on busy and notoriously congested streets.

I'm a strong advocate for housing, and I'm the only member of the Board of Supervisors to have joined Mayor London Breed, Senator Scott Wiener and the Carpenters of Northern California in support of the Affordable Homes Now Charter Amendment to streamline housing production at all income levels, and in every part of San Francisco. The proposal will make it faster and easier to build affordable and new homes in San Francisco for low- and middle-income San Franciscans, public school teachers, and those who work in public schools or at community colleges. This will support a more sustainable transit-first City that makes it easier for our educators to both live and work in the City- avoiding hours-long commutes from as far as Antioch as congestion and gas prices get worse.

The main issue that inspired me to ask to be appointed supervisor was my own personal journey in recovery from drug addiction at a time when our City has a record-shattering crisis in drug overdose deaths. I will work for a comprehensive, citywide response that is modeled on European cities' approach — permissive policies around personal use and disruptive interventions around drug markets that seek non-carceral approaches first, like the Obama Administration's High Point Intervention Strategy.

What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?

None

What local and state commissions or policy bodies do you serve on?

Member of Board of Supervisors, Member of Youth, Young Adult, and Families Committee, Member of San Francisco County Transportation Authority, President of Treasure Island Mobility Management Agency

Please describe specific accomplishments in your activism. What did you get done, and what was your role?

As an out Gay man, I've been a firm advocate for LGBTQ+ equality throughout my life. I worked as a political consultant to Maine Won't Discriminate in 1995, successfully defeating a well-funded anti-LGBTQ campaign that would have repealed civil rights protections. My work for the cause of marriage equality began as a consultant to the No on Knight/Prop 22 campaign in California in 2000. It continued as an executive staff member for S.F. City Attorney Dennis Herrera over the course of 9 years, in which that office defended Mayor Gavin Newsom's 2004 decision to issue same-sex marriage licenses and ended with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to strike down the bigoted Prop 8 as unconstitutional.

Additionally, I've taken part in political activities with the Milk Club and Alice B. Toklas Club, and I have supported dozens of LGBT candidates nationwide. As a parishioner and former parish councilor at Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, I was a forceful public critic of San Francisco Archbishop Niederauer's political tactics in the Prop 8 campaign, and I strongly defended the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence from fundamentalist attacks that same year.

Please list specific ways you have shown up for immigrants at risk of deportation.

Although advocates occasionally faulted the San Francisco City Attorney's Office for not being aggressive enough on sanctuary policies during my 14 years on the executive staff there, the reality is that our office fiercely opposed George W. Bush's Administration's efforts through then-U.S. Attorney Joe Russienello to protect immigrants, and especially the undocumented immigrant community from egregious excesses of Republican Administrations.

Please list specific ways you have fought against racism and white supremacy.

I worked in the San Francisco City Attorney's Office during some of the most difficult times our city's police department ever faced over officer-involved shooting and excessive force cases. In 2016, San Francisco invited the Obama Administration's U.S. Department of Justice to do the most comprehensive review of SFPD in city history, and its October 2016 report identified 272 recommendations that would, if implemented, make SFPD a model of police reform in line with the standards of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Following a nationwide search for a police chief to lead SFPD through these reforms, the Police Commission hired William Scott to be SFPD's chief of police.

It was Bill Scott — a nationally recognized leader in police reform, and among the most progressive police chiefs in the nation — who inspired me to join SFPD as a civilian command staff member in January 2020, and I served as strategic communications director there through May 2022. Following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, I played a leadership role in evangelizing 21st century police reform to the more than 18,000 U.S. law enforcement agencies that looked to SFPD as a role model on reforms they, too, needed to implement.

SFPD still has a lot of work to do on racial disparities in policing — San Francisco itself has some of the worst wealth and income disparities — but it is making important progress, especially on dramatically reduced uses of force, and you can learn more at <https://sanfranciscopolice.org/reform>.

I would add that during my time on the executive staff of the City Attorney's Office, I also led the communications unit that used the bully pulpit to send a strong message to would-be wage-cheats and exploitative employers in litigation cases that accomplished much for working families and low-wage consumers. This work included the following cases on behalf of San Francisco's Office of Labor Standards Enforcement:

We secured \$1.3 million in compensation 275 current and former employees who were denied health care benefit expenditures from GMG Janitorial (July 2014)

We secured \$500,000 in back wages and interest for Tower Car Wash workers (July 2012)

We secured \$85,000 for underpaid employees of the now-defunct King Tin Restaurant. (Sept. 2006)

We secured \$440,000 for employees of Dick Lee Pastry, Inc. for wage theft and overtime (July 2011)

We secured \$7.7 million from Check 'n Go and Money Mart for predatory lending. (Aug. 2013)

We secured \$95,000 from Chipotle to compensate former and current employees for unpaid sick leave, under the Paid Sick Leave Ordinance (Sep. 2016)

Additionally, throughout my career, I have worked with and mentored young Latinx, Black and AAPI political activists in communications, research and political organizing activities — in private sector roles; in the San Francisco City Attorney's Office; in the 2019 No on C Campaign; and in the San Francisco Police Department.

Please give us some examples of situations you've encountered where gender and LGBTQ inequity was evident and what you did or would do to address it.

I have actively fought for LGBTQ rights throughout my career. In 1995 I worked as a political consultant to Maine Won't Discriminate, successfully defeating a well-funded anti-LGBTQ campaign that would have repealed civil rights protections.

In 2000, I worked as a consultant to the No on Knight/Prop 22 campaign in California to promote marriage equality.

I was also a member of City Attorney Dennis Herrera's executive staff as Communications Director when the office defended Mayor Gavin Newsom's 2004 decision to issue same-sex marriage licenses.

As a parishioner and former parish councilor at Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, I was a forceful public critic of San Francisco Archbishop Niederauer's political tactics in the Prop 8 campaign, and I strongly defended the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence from fundamentalist attacks that same year.

Amid a homelessness crisis, how can the City and County of San Francisco improve the effectiveness of our city's homelessness and supportive housing services?

Without abandoning our City's commitment to a "Housing First" approach to homelessness, I strongly believe that we cannot allow our City's streets and sidewalks to serve as the waiting room for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in San Francisco. That's why I'm co-sponsoring Supervisor Rafael Mandelman's "A Place for All," and for several reasons.

First, it's a safety issue. In fact, the change I recommended to Supervisor Mandelman after he previewed his proposal to me was to rebrand it as "A Safe Place for All." During my two-plus years on the San Francisco Police Department's command staff, some of the most brutally violent crimes I saw were those targeting unhoused San Franciscans— including one individual who was set on fire in his sleeping bag. I have been informed that surveys of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness overwhelmingly support and would accept secure, managed sheltering sites.

Second, it's a legal compliance issue. In 2018, the Ninth Circuit held in *Martin v. Boise* that municipalities cannot generally enforce anti-camping ordinances if they lack sufficient shelter facilities for their homeless population. Sufficient shelter capacity would enable San Francisco to enforce against street encampments and better, more compassionate care for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Third, it's an equity issue. I represent a district that faces the highest relative risk of liquefaction were San Francisco to suffer a serious seismic event. If District 6 residents were displaced from their homes because residential high-rises were red-tagged after an earthquake, I would spare no effort to ensure that our City stepped up to ensure that no one would be left to sleep on our sidewalks. How, then, in good conscience could I explain to our unhoused neighbors that I'd do less for them. That's why I strongly support A Place for All.

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What is your favorite park, and why?

Golden Gate Park is where I became a marathoner, and it has a special place in my heart as a result.

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Why do you want the League of Pissed Off Voters' endorsement?

I think you know me after all these years, and even though we'll sometimes disagree, you know my heart and you also know I'll be very effective on the Board of Supervisors in winning moderates over to progressive ideas.

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Is there anything else you want to tell us?

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Board of Supervisors

Do you support requiring 100% affordable housing on public land? If not, under what circumstances would you support allowing a percentage or all market-rate housing?

Yes

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Do you believe the amount of real estate contributions to a candidate impacts their fitness as a candidate?

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Other:

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Do you support the City funding community land trusts?

Yes

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Do you support congestion pricing for the downtown core?

Yes in principle, and I object to the spot application of this kind of scheme to Treasure Island alone. I could live with a fairer approach that was more equitably and broadly applied.

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What are your ideas for a comprehensive plan for the city to achieve Vision Zero?

To achieve Vision Zero, I'm working to champion a speed enforcement camera pilot program first initiated by former Asb. David Chiu. This program will save lives, prevent injuries and improve street safety. Additionally, I'm exploring with the support of the San Francisco City Attorney's Office possible non-enforcement-related speed camera options — like warning notices or even solely for data collection — until state law authorizes automated enforcement.

What role should city government play with regard to SFUSD, and what policies would you support / have you supported to support our public schools?

Currently, I am supporting legislation that would make it easier for public school teachers to live in San Francisco, which is critical given the shortage of teachers in SFUSD. I support the Affordable Homes Now Charter Amendment that will streamline housing production at all income levels, and in every part of San Francisco. The proposal will make it faster and easier to build affordable and new homes in San Francisco for low- and middle-income San Franciscans, public school teachers, and those who work in public schools or at community colleges.

What is your plan for addressing the housing needs in the city's Housing Element?

Affordable housing is a top priority of mine and I strongly believe the Housing Element can address San Francisco's affordability and displacement crisis. The Housing Element represents the first time in our civic history — which includes the more than five decades since the Federal Fair Housing Act was enacted in 1968 — that we as a City are committing to analyze racial disparities in our city planning and housing outcomes, and to adopt interventions to repair and reverse them.

Right now, San Francisco city policy excludes over 75 percent of properties from being accessible homeownership opportunities (i.e., less expensive condos, rent-capped apartments, or low-income housing). Thanks to interventions in state law and the work of the San Francisco Planning Department and Planning Commission, San Francisco's Housing Element will be eliminating this restrictive zoning and opening up rental and homeownership opportunities to BIPOC communities historically excluded from them.

To help fulfill the goals of the Housing element plan, I am a strong supporter of the Affordable Homes Now charter amendment that will appear on this November's ballot and will ensure San Francisco begins meeting state fair housing laws. The charter amendment will make it faster and easier to build affordable homes in San Francisco for low and middle income San Franciscans.

Additionally, I support rezoning high-resource neighborhoods on the north and west sides of the city to allow for multi-family housing to make these areas more accessible to Black, Brown, and low-income families.

How would you expand checks and balances in regards to mayoral appointments?

I think current checks and balances are sufficient, and that we should maintain a strong-mayor form of municipal government.

What metrics would you use to determine your success as Board Member in four years?

As D6 Supervisor, my top three policy issues are affordable housing, public safety, and addiction, which are core issues affecting District 6.

I would like to see an increase in affordable housing units along with a decline in drug overdoses in my district. Regarding public safety, I would like to reduce the number of traffic-related deaths and improve pedestrian safety.

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