



## 250 Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

*Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.*

*All submissions will be unedited for spelling, grammar, and format and published on [empoweroakland.com](http://empoweroakland.com) to educate Oakland voters. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their Candidate Endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made by early September.*

*Please email the completed questionnaire as a .doc or .pdf document to [info@empoweroakland.com](mailto:info@empoweroakland.com). Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.*

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**Campaign Website:** LyndaD4Parks.com  
**Social Media Handles**

- Twitter: <https://x.com/lyndad4parks>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lyndad4parks>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lyndad4parks>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lynda-deschambault-00973620/>
- TikTok: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lynda-deschambault-00973620/>

**Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$75,000**  
**Funds Raised To Date: \$27,000**

### General Questions

- 1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?**
  - ✓ ENERGY CONSULTANT. I first became immersed in the diversity of Oakland, in early 1990’s while working downtown on a consulting project with a Demand Management Company, where I oversaw their energy efficiency rebates program for the Oakland community. Both for low income and small businesses. While working full time, I took public transportation, walked the neighborhoods, supported local businesses, hosted and attended after work meetings for my team in the local area of 12<sup>th</sup> Street Station during the early 1990’s.
  - ✓ FEDERAL INVESTIGATOR OF OAKLANDS TOXIC RELEASES SITES. In the late 1990’s, I oversaw the Toxics Releases Inventory Program. I inspected Oakland manufacturers to ensure they were in compliance with the law. When needed, I assessed penalties and took actions at facilities such as smelters, foundries, cement plants and fiberglass companies to reduce emissions. As an advocate, I fought for those settlement dollars to go to tribes and to the underserved communities affected by the toxic harms. The year I directed the enforcement program, we received an award from USEPA in Washington DC for the largest settlements in the history of the program in the Bay Area / Region 9.



- ✓ **FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CHAMPION.** I oversaw the public outreach portion of the USEPA Community Right-to-Know program. I worked with the environmental justice communities of Richmond and Oakland, providing grants and training Citizens for Better Environment (CBE) and Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) to ensure they had the knowledge and the tools to participate in public hearings--knowing about the releases, concentrations and frequency of exposure in their communities.
- ✓ **IMPORT/EXPORT INSPECTOR AND ENFORCEMENT AGENT.** I was the program leader on the import/export program under TSCA (Toxic Substances Control Act). I worked closely and provided workshop trainings for Homeland Security after 9/11. I collaborated with the Port of Oakland focusing on existing regulations, the importance of compliance and protecting the community from unregistered chemicals entering the Oakland port. Our team won awards for stopping a barrage of toxic heavy metal fly ash waste from being distributed thru our port as "fertilizers." Our work resulted in new and stricter labeling and testing requirements, preventing tons of agricultural foods from exposure to potential tragedy.
- ✓ **LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLIMATE ACTION.** I was selected for the competitive USEPA Region 9 Leadership Development program, and was placed in the Oakland office of the ICLEI USA (<https://iclei.org/>) where I developed GHG Emission Inventories for 15 cities. As the place-based Federal Program Administrator of this program, located in Oakland, we secured grant funding to do workshop training to cities and counties, and access cutting-edge software to calculate their first baseline GHG inventories. Each city was also provided a draft outline for their first Climate Action Plan.

**2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?**

**CHALLENGES.** 1. Community safety. There is an ongoing need for initiatives to implement crime prevention techniques to address violent crimes. 2. Homelessness and affordable housing. Homelessness has doubled in the last 10 years. Driven by a housing crisis and continuing economic inequality that hits Oakland's most vulnerable

**BRIGHT SPOTS.** 1. Rich Diversity. Oakland is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States, with a rich cultural tapestry reflected in its neighborhoods and cuisine. 2. Community and Pride. "Neighborhood Voices" for festivals grants, highlights the cultural expressions, stories, histories, and heritage of Oakland's many communities and neighborhoods. 3. Persistence. Oaklanders never give up and keep trying to solve tough problems, doing whatever it takes.

**3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?**

Protecting the environment—and protecting people--that is my life's work. I am honored to already be of public service to the nation's largest regional park district in the nation as a commissioner for more than 5 years and continue to serve proudly.



I should be elected because I have, for the past four decades, been an advocate for environmental science, environmental justice, environmental education, and strong parks stewardship. I will work to enhance and preserve these fundamental concepts. Moreover, I am the only candidate with in-the-field experience spanning 37-years in environmental science, including 20 years at the USEPA, policy experience as Mayor, founder and director of Contra Costa Climate Leaders. The only candidate with 5+ years' service as a Parks Advisory Commissioner. I have a deep understanding of the current challenges the parks are facing and the urgency to act now.

Our public resources are facing a lot of pressures: fire, disease, algal blooms, sea level rise. We need leaders with science and public policy background to shape the EBRPD's 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Plan. I am the only environmental scientist in this race and would bring that knowledge and experience to the Board.

I am also the only candidate already doing the work! I have been a commissioner for nearly 6 years, as retiring Dee Rosario's appointee. I understand the issues and the agency—and I am ready to get to work.

We have two candidates running for Ward 2--- but for very different reasons. I may not have an extensive list of political endorsements or plans for higher office; but my supporters recognize, as I do, that we are facing a climate emergency and understand the need for a committed, deeply involved, environmental scientist to serve on the EBRPD Board.

I am the only candidate with policymaking experience as an elected official. I have volunteered and served. I have worked my way up. I am also the only candidate with years of union experience. As a dues-paying member, I participated regularly in union meetings, union demonstrations, and provided input on letters and agreements. I have been at the bargaining table! I look forward to working with AFSCME, the Park District's employee union, to improve overall job satisfaction with better communication, training and compensation.

Experience matters! We can no longer afford to use special districts that oversee our limited and threatened natural resources as a political stepping-stone to higher office. District Park Directors must be skilled and knowledgeable, ensuring that our natural resources are preserved and the workers who maintain them are recognized, valued and properly compensated

I have an MBA and I have managed and balanced large budgets for soil-contaminated cleanups and community "Right-to-Know" programs. I have had fiduciary responsibility for the City I served and for the non-profit, I founded.

I honor the 7 generations principle of Native wisdom by mentoring the next generation; keenly listening, closely observing and learning from park users of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

The largest regional park district in the nation deserves experienced attention. Let us work together to make our public parklands climate resilient. I am endorsed by current and former Mayors, elected officials, tribal leaders, union leaders, community leaders, scientists and



environmental organizations. I know the science and have the experience. Now I need your voices, support and most importantly, I would be honored to have your endorsement and vote. Experience matters!

**4. Prior to running for office, how were you involved in local government and/or your community? What were your biggest accomplishments?**

- Moraga Youth Involvement Advisor 1990-1992 appointed
- Moraga Parks & Recreation Commissioner 1999-2001 appointed
- Moraga Mayor and Councilmember 2004-2008 elected
- Moraga Town/Gown Saint Mary’s Liaison 2004-2008 appointed
- League of California Cities  
Environmental Quality Committee 2004-2008 appointed
- Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority 2004-2008 appointed
- East Bay Regional Parks District  
Parks Advisory Committee 2017-present appointed

My accomplishments include:

As a Federal Leader: I oversaw the USEPA Community Right-to-Know program where I implemented outreach to tribal and school communities; served as project manager of three superfund sites, where I engaged the community, conducted site investigations and applied various clean-up technologies including ground water, soil extraction, indoor air, habitat restoration and reuse of contaminated lands. I initiated the region’s first energy and climate team, and founded the agency’s green cities program. I championed a community project that returned a half million dollars in funds to better protect an underserved community in the Central Valley that had been exposed to toxic chemicals. Internationally and in tandem with the United Nations, I was involved with the acceleration of policy setting and understanding of international laws in order to build capacity in three developing African Countries.

As a Local Policy Leader: I successfully advocated for infill development, preservation of open space and ridgelines, guided Moraga in accepting the Town’s first open space preserve and developed its Habitat Preservation and Conservation Plan. Under my leadership, the Town of Moraga passed developer impact fees, negotiated a \$1.7 million fund for protecting open space and recreation, started a curbside recycling, opened farmers' markets, developed backyard farming, supported plastic bag bans, enrolled more than a dozen cities in Community Choice energy programs, and introduced PACE financing. I provided guidance to various cities on climate action plans, general plan updates and electric vehicle infrastructure. We shared these best practices thru workshops, newsletters and social media. Local government is where it starts. Local Actions move the world.

East Bay Regional Parks

**5. What are the top needs of East Bay Regional Parks? What is your vision for the agency in 10 years?**

My priorities: <https://lyndad4parks.com/priorities/>

I will be one of 7 elected officials driving policy for the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), the largest regional park district in the nation. I will oversee 75 parks, which



cover a total of 120,000 acres. Other states and countries look to us at the EBRPD as their role model. Together we can achieve:

- **Climate Resilience.** Ensure that an emergency response plan is in place and risks such as fire, sea level rise, drought, disease, and extreme weather events are adequately managed for the protection of the people, wildlife and the land.
- **Community Involvement.** Build capacity for engaging diverse users and ensuring that our parks are accessible, including to those with disabilities, and representative of the current and future needs of our rich and varied cultural and community groups.
- **Park Use Guidelines.** Develop science-driven criteria to minimize user conflicts and insure preservation of natural wildlife habitats.
- **Second Century Plan.** Shape the development of a comprehensive, forward-looking plan that combines new technologies with the wisdom of Native land stewards to guide the second century of the East Bay Regional Park District.
- **A Balanced and Sustainable Budget.** Provide financial stability and resources needed to support a dedicated workforce, park maintenance, land acquisition, and healthy outdoor spaces for generations to enjoy.

My vision is one that supports and honors the 7 generations principle of Native wisdom, by mentoring the next generation and listening deeply, observing closely and learning from parks users of all ages, diverse backgrounds, traditions and interests.

**6. What specific and measurable accomplishments will you deliver to address those needs in 2 years? In 4 years?**

In the first two years, I envision more robust and science driven staff reports. More focus on the natural resources and a review of the environmental consideration of their success over the next several generations. I will initiate a plan to name our parks in a way that recognizes the first people. Moreover, that we write, approve and complete a final 2<sup>nd</sup> Century plan, complete with EIR and public review. I will work to ensure that we add in new robust chapters on climate resilience, building representative community capacity and an equity plan for increased representation. Each section shall have clear measurable deliverable outcomes that will help guide annual reviews and ensure implementation over the coming decades. I also see Measure WW extended so that we have the funds to enable the Park District to meet the increasing demand of protecting open space for recreation and wildlife habitat. The plan would be to continue the funding available directly to cities and special park districts to ensure our communities also have the funds for high priority community park projects. In the longer term, I hope to see our parks responding to climate resilience strategies, growing and connecting wildlife corridors, and partnering with cities, nonprofits and programs to get more people to the parks and when needed--taking parks programs to the people. *"In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand and we will understand only what we are taught."* --African proverb.





**7. What is your perspective of the fiscal budget of the East Bay Regional Parks? How will you think about budget priorities?**

The East Bay Regional Parks District has a \$316 Million dollar budget to oversee 75 parks and 120,000 acres of land. You can find the EBRPD budget details at [https://www.ebparks.org/public-info/budget#2024\\_adopted](https://www.ebparks.org/public-info/budget#2024_adopted).

The budget is balanced and responsibly managed.

As we continue to grow and acquire lands, we will need to secure additional funding and support. These are taxpayers' dollars, and the budget process should always include employee and community participation, with an open and transparent budget process, will improve overall trust and credibility. EBRPD workers are the most knowledgeable of operations and play an important role in setting priorities and identifying opportunities.

I would ensure that we conduct meetings early in the process and often. A clear communication plan upfront is an assurance that we capture all groups and all interests. Active listening is the critical element. I would like to see ongoing contact with workers in the field, not only during budget-building cycles.

I hold an MBA in Organizational Development. I was a project manager of three major USEPA Superfund sites with a full-time, multi-year campaign to manage a \$110 million budget and to coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies. I worked closely with contract workers, tribes and communities to get and keep the clean-up and rehab moving forward as efficiently as possible.

**8. Please describe how you plan to address service quality if elected (or re-elected). Summarize the problem(s) East Bay Regional Parks faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable).**

I would work with colleagues, staff and stakeholders to balance recreation with land preservation. I would employ science-based and pragmatic decision-making to address and balance service quality. Engaging all stakeholders in the community and actively seeking the voices that have been missing from the table is key and a priority for me.

I recognize the need to balance trade-offs which is why, in addition to community involvement, I prioritized setting park use guidelines to minimize user conflicts and insure preservation of natural wildlife habitats. These criteria would also need to address under what circumstances recreation may need to take a back seat to conserving sensitive areas and protecting endangered species.

The district might consider separate single user group access areas that we know will not allow animals and habitat to exist i.e. an intensive bike park only. And perhaps there could be areas that mitigate this impact by designating areas that are off limits to recreational users so that sensitive habitats can flourish.

**9. Please describe how you plan to address equity and expanding access to East Bay Regional parklands, recreational and cultural resources if elected (or re-elected).**



Equity and diversity mean that we do not all start from the same place, and we must acknowledge it and make adjustments for imbalances. I commit to working with the EBRPD to change our institutions. I understand that there have been recent EBRPD staff hires working to ensure that we build programs and relationships that better mirror the communities we serve. But the process must be institutionalized. It needs to be part of the master plan and it needs to be part of the everyday work at the parks. I would support at least some of our meetings going to evenings, and if not, then to bring Parks to people by holding sessions at community centers, libraries, schools and wherever the community is.

I will work with the new equity manager, unions, and community groups to ensure that the EBRPD's 2<sup>nd</sup> Century plan includes (and institutionalizes) a separate chapter on diversity and environmental justice, along with a measurable plan that addresses the needs for a diversified workforce, representation from all park users and coalition of stakeholders committed to parkland and habitat preservation and protection.

I will work to ensure that every staff report institutionalizes a section that considers "equity" in every and all decisions. When elected, I will also ensure that policymakers work more closely with union stewards and the land stewardship team so that policy decisions are science-driven and address environmental justice issues.

**10. Please describe how you plan to address climate change and the threat of wildfires in your East Bay Regional Park district if elected (or re-elected).**

My platform puts the climate crisis at the top of the list: <https://lyndad4parks.com/priorities/> I will be one of 7 elected officials driving policy for the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), the largest regional park district in the nation. I will oversee 75 parks, which covers a total of 120,000 acres.

Other states and countries look to us at the EBRPD as a role model. However, the EBRPD does not yet have a Climate Action Plan, nor have they declared a climate emergency. I have asked this agency for these two key actions as a member of the public. Therefore, as an elected official, I will work with my colleagues to get these two items on the agenda and ultimately approved.

The District is writing its "2<sup>nd</sup> Century Plan," which is its master or general plan. It will function as the blueprint for the agency for decades to come. My local policy work, as an elected official and former Mayor, has prepared me for driving policy, collaborating deeply with important stakeholders and specifically, writing General Plans. As executive director of Contra Costa County's Climate Leaders (4CL), I have hosted workshops and shared best practices with local leaders who are in the process of updating their General Plans.

I will work to develop clear and measurable deliverables in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Plan including a Climate Resilience Chapter. I will work to ensure that staff reports include a section that assesses "climate impact" along with "fiscal impact," along with "equity considerations."

I support continuation of the Agency's [Vegetation Management Program \(VMP\)](#), a cost-sharing program that focuses on the use of prescribed fire, and some mechanical means, for addressing wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues. It is a



complex fix to a much-needed problem. Climate change is causing drought, death of trees, erosion and disease. Our parks are adjacent to our built environments. Our parks are assets and also threats to our communities and families. The Oakland Hills fire taught us this tough and tragic lesson.

The EBRPD stewardship team has made a monumental effort to secure and use FEMA funds responsibly. I understand that there is an East Bay Fire group. If there is, I believe the District needs to participate and share information with the Parks Advisory Committee.

The EBRPD website has a page dedicated to wildfire resilience: <https://www.ebparks.org/natural-resources/wildfire-resilience>. It includes annual Stewardship Reports and a Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan. The EBRPD seems to have found a balance to target the most dangerous areas and use more cost efficient thinning, when funds and workforce are available. The agency should continue to monitor.

With my experience, I would identify and recommend solicitation of additional funds thru CEQA mitigation projects, Invest in America funds, the Inflation Reduction Act, and continued use of groups like Civic Corps who currently play a crucial role for our parks while training the next generation of park stewards.

**Experience Matters!**

I have the degrees, the experience, and the passion to do the work necessary to protect people and the environment.