



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 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. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.

Candidate Name: Luana Espana

Email: luana4parks.com

Phone Number: (510) 470-1590

Office & District Sought: East Bay Regional Park District Director Ward 4

Campaign Website: <https://www.luana4parks.com>

Social Media Handles

- Twitter: n/a
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/luana4parks>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/luana4parks/>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/luana-espana/>
- TikTok: n/a

Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$20,000

Funds Raised To Date: I am currently using personal funds to kick-start my campaign.

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?

In the 1950s, my father's family migrated from New Orleans, Louisiana, to West Oakland. I grew up in San Leandro, but my family's cultural center was in Oakland. Before graduate school, I ran the After-School Program at Elmhurst Middle School in East Oakland. For the last 11 years, I have worked as a Community Affairs Representative in the Social Responsibility Division at the Port of Oakland.



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

The top two challenges facing Oakland are crime and homelessness. The bright spots are the cultural legacy of speaking truth to power in the struggle for social justice and equality and the ingenuity of creating a new future despite the challenges and obstacles.

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

As a community leader, I am committed to representing your interests and concerns. My track record includes developing strategic partnerships, making impact-focused community grants, and building consensus across diverse stakeholders. I am here to represent your voice in the East Bay Regional Park District Ward 4. For over ten years, I have advised leaders and made policy recommendations on the Executive Committees of the East Bay Regional Park District Park Advisory Committee, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council Board, and Hayward Area Recreation & Park District Citizen Advisory Committee. I am prepared to address pressing issues such as climate resiliency, equitable access, and sustainable planning. I am a trail runner, backpacker, and NOLS wilderness school alum. This personal connection and first-hand experience have given me a deep understanding of open spaces and wilderness areas, which I will bring to my role as your East Bay Regional Park District Director. I earned my Bachelor of Arts in Politics and Spanish Literary Studies from Occidental College and my Master of Public Policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. I will use critical thinking and a data-driven approach to develop and evaluate the Second Century District Plan.

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

I have advised leaders and made policy recommendations on the Executive Committees of the East Bay Regional Park District Park Advisory Committee, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council Board, and Hayward Area Recreation & Park District Citizen Advisory. My outstanding accomplishments are reducing gaps on the Bay Area Ridge Trail (RT), creating a DEI policy and integrating it into the RT's strategic plan, and developing parks in Ashland.

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 in the campaign are to address climate resiliency issues in the Second Century District Plan, prioritize EBRPD staffing levels in critical areas, explore funding opportunities to open and maintain land-banked properties, and ensure equitable access from career pathways to parks and services.



My vision is for the agency in 10 years to be a climate-resilient park district. The District will open new parks with the appropriate staffing levels and sustainable funding. The District's staff and user groups will reflect the demographics of their communities.

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

The completion of the Second Century Plan with measurable outcomes and an increase in equitable access to jobs and parks and services.

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 Park District has a history of responsible fiscal management and a strong financial position. Moody's Rating Service and Standard and Poor's (S&P) Global Ratings awarded the East Bay Regional Park District with AAA ratings. I will consider the budget priorities as a balance of competing needs with the flexibility to make land acquisitions and main existing parks.

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).

The East Bay Regional Parks is known for providing high service quality and value to communities. However, the exponential growth of park users has presented new challenges for the park to navigate.

We discussed service quality and trail user group conflicts in the Trail User Working Group (TUWG). The District can address many service quality issues by incorporating the TUWG's ideas and solutions.

Looking ahead, the District faces a significant service quality issue. To maintain a high level of service quality, increase staffing levels, and open land bank lands, it is imperative that we explore new funding options, including a ballot measure.

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).



I will work with the District's first chief equity officer to better understand the opportunities to address equity and expand access to the District's parks. I will ensure that the District's commitment to addressing equity and expanding access is prominent in the Second Century District Plan with measurable goals, providing reassurance and confidence in the plan's direction.

I will ask the District to evaluate the recreational programs and establish a baseline to measure the District's performance in providing equity and access to recreational programs across the Wards. Also, I will work with local parks and recreation organizations to explore opportunities for collaboration to increase underserved populations' access to the District's parks.

I will work with the Cultural Resource Unit to develop deeper staff engagement with Indigenous people. I will encourage the District to access Redbud Resource Group's programs and resources, collaborate with the Native American Health Center in areas such as the Healthy Parks Healthy People Program, appoint Indigenous people on the District's Committees, and provide access to their ancestral land to maintain cultural practices.

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).

Climate Resiliency is the number one issue facing the EBRPD. Ward 4 has four shoreline parks where addressing sea level rise is a priority and one inland park where reducing wildfire is a priority.

As the EBRPD District 4 Director, I will work to prioritize climate resiliency in the Second Century District Plan. Through local and regional initiatives, I will continue EBRPD's work to address climate change, warming waters, sea level rise, shoreline erosion, and wildfire reduction. I will support fuel reduction crews who need to remove dead or dying trees and innovative techniques to manage and remove materials from an 80-acre forest as the carbonizer.