

The San Francisco Chronicle's editorial board is sending a questionnaire to mayoral candidates to better understand their platform:

Keith Freedman for Mayor 2024

Tell us about yourself. Why have you decided to run for mayor? What are your qualifications?

I've been a proud resident of San Francisco for 28 years and have extensive experience in leadership, management, and community involvement. My career includes roles such as Operations Manager, Director of Professional Services, and VP of Operations. I have also run a small business in San Francisco for over 8 years, which has given me firsthand insight into the challenges and opportunities that local businesses face.

I am running for mayor because I believe San Francisco is at a critical juncture. We need leadership that prioritizes practical, innovative solutions to our city's most pressing problems, such as homelessness, public safety, economic recovery, and environmental sustainability. My experience in business, my work with various community organizations, and my role as co-chair of a Democratic Club have given me the skills to navigate complex issues, build partnerships, and deliver results that benefit all San Franciscans.

Public safety is a hot topic this election season. What steps do you think must be taken to increase safety on our streets?

Public safety starts with rebuilding trust between our communities and law enforcement. I believe in a community-policing model where officers work closely with residents to understand neighborhood needs and concerns. This means more foot patrols, increased engagement in community events, and rigorous training in cultural competency and de-escalation techniques.

I also support expanding alternatives to traditional policing, such as mental health response teams for non-violent incidents, which can help prevent escalation and ensure that those who need care receive it. Lastly, addressing underlying issues—such as homelessness and substance abuse—through comprehensive social services will contribute to making our streets safer for everyone.

Homelessness is growing in San Francisco and becoming more visible. How do you propose we address this crisis in the short and long term?

My plan to address homelessness is centered on both immediate relief and long-term solutions. In the short term, I propose expanding the number of temporary housing options, such as converting unused properties or utilizing cruise ships as transitional housing, to immediately provide people with a safe place to stay. Alongside this, we need comprehensive wraparound services—including mental health care, drug dependency treatment, and job training—to help individuals reintegrate into society.

In the long term, my “Rising Tide Initiative” aims to end homelessness by building more affordable housing units, streamlining city regulations for housing construction, and ensuring supportive services are available to those who need them. This includes focusing on permanent supportive housing, where residents can have privacy, access to amenities, and the support they need to regain stability.

How do you propose San Francisco navigate its looming \$790M budget deficit? Where would you propose cuts, and why?

To navigate the budget deficit, I propose a balanced approach that includes both strategic cuts and revenue generation. Cuts should come from areas where efficiency can be improved, such as reducing overhead and administrative costs within city agencies. I also propose auditing city departments to identify inefficiencies and cut unnecessary expenditures. It is crucial to protect essential services, especially those that support our most vulnerable populations.

On the revenue side, I would investing in economic growth by supporting small businesses and revitalizing tourism both of which can boost city revenue in the long run.

Muni is also facing a fiscal cliff, and may have to cut bus lines and service next year. Do you think it’s important to keep our public transportation system running? How would you make this happen?

It is absolutely crucial to maintain a robust public transportation system for San Francisco. Public transit is the lifeblood of our city, providing equitable access to jobs, education, and services while helping reduce emissions. I propose securing additional funding through local and state partnerships, as well as considering a dedicated transit tax that ensures Muni’s financial stability. However, we must first insure that additional tax dollars will not be misspent. Thorough auditing of the MTA is required before throwing good money after bad.

Moreover, we need to prioritize making Muni more efficient, such as improving route optimization and investing in electric and autonomous vehicles to reduce operational costs over time. Expanding transit alternatives and encouraging ridership through incentives will also be critical to generating revenue and keeping services operational.

Allegations of corruption continue to make headlines in San Francisco. What can be done to prevent favoritism, behested payments, and the misspending of city funds?

To prevent corruption, transparency must be at the core of all city operations. I propose mandatory public disclosure of all behested payments and tighter regulations around conflicts of interest involving public officials. We need to implement more stringent auditing processes, with independent oversight, to ensure that city funds are used effectively and as intended.

Additionally, strengthening the Ethics Commission, giving it more investigative authority, and ensuring its meetings are televised can provide the accountability needed to deter corruption. Whistleblower protections should also be enhanced to encourage reporting of unethical behavior without fear of retaliation.

San Francisco faces a state mandate that we build 82,000 units of housing in six years. What needs to happen to get this done?

To meet the ambitious housing target, we must remove barriers to building. This means streamlining the permitting process by implementing a uniform planning code that allows for quicker approvals and reducing redundant bureaucratic hurdles. We also need to incentivize developers to build affordable units by offering tax breaks or other financial incentives.

I will leverage public-private partnerships to fund affordable housing projects. Engaging Community Land Trusts and supporting co-op housing initiatives can also help ensure that these new units remain accessible to low- and middle-income residents.

Many efforts are being made to revitalize San Francisco's downtown neighborhoods. What else needs to be done to boost downtown's economy?

Revitalizing downtown requires a multi-faceted approach. First, we need to repurpose vacant office spaces, transforming them into housing or mixed-use developments that bring more residents downtown, creating a built-in customer base for local businesses. Secondly, incentivizing small businesses to set up in these neighborhoods, through grants or tax breaks, can encourage local entrepreneurship and bring unique shops and services back into these areas.

Investing in arts and culture is also key—by supporting events, festivals, and public art installations, we can draw both residents and tourists to the downtown core. Improving public transportation links to downtown and ensuring a clean, safe environment will further help make the area more attractive for businesses and visitors alike.

In addition, you can learn more about me by reviewing my responses to other organizations candidate questionnaires here:

<https://mayor.keithfreedman.com/issues/candidate-questionnaires-position-statements/>