



Endorsement Questionnaire for Santa Cruz City Council

NAME: Mike Rotkin

1. Why do you identify yourself as a Democrat?

I am a lifelong Democrat because I consider the Democrats the party of working people. Today, more than ever—since the Republicans have become such a dangerous and reactionary party, clearly committed to serving the interests of the super wealthy and multi-national corporations—the Democratic Party offers the only serious alternative to their attempts to destroy our Constitution, our values, and our needs as a nation.

2. What are your qualifications for this office?

I am running for a sixth term on the Santa Cruz City Council and have served four terms as Mayor of Santa Cruz. I have lived in Santa Cruz since 1969 and since that time I have been very active in a wide range of community movements addressing the concerns of the people of this community.

I am a lecturer and the Director of the Field Studies Program in Community Studies at UCSC, where I oversee hundreds of social change-related internships each year. Working closely with UCSC student groups and individuals on a wide variety of social justice and environmental issues, I have developed and am continuing to develop a good understanding of what needs to be done to move our campus, our community, and our world in more humane and rational directions.

I am a labor activist, having served ten years on the Santa Cruz Central Labor Council. I am the President of the AFT local representing Lecturers and Librarians at UCSC, and Vice President for Organizing of the UC-AFT statewide. I served for twenty years as the Chief Negotiator for the Lecturers Unit and currently serve on the bargaining team and work as a grievance officer for the union.

I was an organizer and one of the founders of Westside Neighbors. I was a founder and Board Member of the Westside Community Health Center, the first health center in Santa Cruz to take all patients, regardless of ability to pay. I helped lead the struggle for improved public transit in Santa Cruz and have served for over 22 years on the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District Board, including several terms as Board Chair. I helped lead the struggle that created the special sales tax in the County that provides the majority of funding for the bus system and oversaw the Transit District as it grew from six to almost 100 buses. I have been a major proponent of expanding bus service and especially express routes in the community and particularly to the UCSC campus. I was the original proponent of the Night Owl Service and bikes on buses.

I was active in the struggle to expand funding for social services in the County of Santa Cruz in the 1970s and played the leading role in getting the City of Santa Cruz to increase social service funding from \$80,000 per year when I was first elected to over \$2,000,000 at its height four years ago. (We since have had to cut funding because of

serious budget problems at the City.) I have also served on the Boards of Directors of Food and Nutrition (now renamed Community Bridges), the largest social service agency in the County as well as the Board of Directors of the Community Action Board and the Santa Cruz Community Credit Union. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and have helped lead the fight in this community against George Bush's attack on our civil liberties. I speak frequently in UCSC classes and local high schools and middle schools on civil liberties issues. I am a strong supporter of GLBT rights and have the endorsement of both the Santa Cruz GLBT Alliance and BAYMEC. I was the first councilmember in Santa Cruz to bring regular resolutions to the City Council on state, national, and international issues, e.g. opposition to the War in Iraq, to the Patriot Act, decreases in student loans, opposition to INS raids in Santa Cruz, etc. I am a life-long member of the NAACP, having done civil rights work in the south during the 1960s, and have written and lectured extensively in defense of affirmative action. Under my leadership, City employment went from 22% female to 53% female and people of color moved from less than 1% to over 7%. (We still have more work to do in the latter area!)

I have a great deal of experience in getting affordable housing built in our community. While the market rate housing here is far out of reach of the average citizen, Santa Cruz has the highest percentage of housing in the state available to very low-income individuals and families. It is still far too low a percent of our overall housing, but we have shown that, with commitment, affordable housing can be built.

I have been a strong environmental activist, playing a key role in creating a greenbelt around Santa Cruz, stopping offshore oil drilling in Monterey Bay, and helping create a National Marine Sanctuary. As Mayor, I had our city join the International Conference on Local Environmental Initiatives, and our city has led the way in reducing global warming through recycling, energy efficient lighting and pumps, solar energy on public buildings, green building, and capturing methane for power at the City's landfill and Sewer Treatment Plant. We banned pesticides in City parks and created an integrated pest management system that is now a model for cities around the country.

3. What are your priorities/goals for your term in office?

We need to restore funding for homeless services and other human services in the city and dramatically increase the number of affordable housing units we build. I'd like to reopen the Teen Center and Loudon Nelson Community Center to seven days a week and reopen Harvey West Swimming Pool from nine to twelve months of the year. We need more park rangers to protect our Greenbelt, River, and City Parks. We need to increase the pay and benefits for City employees and other public workers in Santa Cruz. None of these things are possible without additional revenue to the City of Santa Cruz, so I want to work to increase our tax base.

4. What is the most pressing challenge facing the office you are seeking and how do you plan to address that challenge?

Currently, the largest problem facing the City of Santa Cruz is our declining revenue for all of the environmental, affordable housing, social service, public safety, and recreational programs we have created over the past twenty-five years. In a very real way, all that we have gained is now at risk if we don't find a way to expand our tax base. Of course, we have to do that in a way that does not destroy the environment and other unique qualities of our local community. Some of the more promising ideas currently are the expansion of our tourist industry with a focus on ecotourism and arts-related tourism, making Santa Cruz into more of an industrial design center with a particular focus on design related to recreation and health (e.g. bicycle helmets, bicycles, skateboards,

surfboards, etc.), and supporting more high-tech and green industries on the Westside of Santa Cruz.

Because the City Council cannot impose its will on the voters of Santa Cruz, it is my priority to work closely with residents throughout our community, including the campus, to develop a consensus about the kind of development that the community will and will not support. This kind of grassroots community work is what I like most about being on the Santa Cruz City Council and where I think I can make a significant contribution as a councilmember.

5. Why should the College Democrats at UC Santa Cruz endorse your candidacy and what would you do to support UCSC students if elected?

As in the past, I will be a tireless advocate for the full range of progressive issues that are of concern to most UCSC students. I have been particularly effective in the past and will work in the future to expand bus service to UCSC, bicycle alternatives, and affordable housing. I will continue to work with UCSC student groups to bring progressive resolutions on state, national, and international issues to the City Council to help build a national movement to challenge the insanity of our current national administration and Congress. As in the past, I will be accessible and responsive to UCSC students and their concerns and will work with the College Democrats and other UCSC groups to effect progressive social change and social justice.

6. What are your concerns about the growth of UCSC? How would you go about solving these issues?

One of the most outrageous aspects of the current UCSC growth issue is the way in which UC officials have worked to create a false dichotomy between supporting access to higher education and protecting the local community from the impacts of UCSC growth. We can have both increased access to higher education and reasonable mitigations of growth impacts. It does, however, require the UC administration to make a commitment to actually plan how they will manage their growth – something they have not, at least until now, shown much interest in.

Neither the Campus Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) nor the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) required to accompany the LRDP begin to adequately address the impacts of proposed UCSC growth. This is not a plan that is good for the campus and bad for the town. The quality of life and the educational experience for the campus will be equally if not more negatively impacted by the growth that is being projected than the off-campus community. It is UCSC faculty, along with everyone else, who will be stuck in traffic every morning and every afternoon. It is the campus that will not be able to attract the best new faculty and staff due to a lack of affordable housing. Rising housing prices will limit the ability of many low- and middle-income students to attend UCSC, which already has the highest housing prices of any campus in the system. There is literally nothing in the LRDP or the EIR about mitigating the impacts on our transportation system, our housing market, or our water supply. Obviously, the campus and the community will have to cooperate in developing solutions to the problems created by campus growth. But the City was forced to put measures I and J on the ballot, and will be forced to sue the University over their inadequate environmental documents, because we need to do something to get the University's attention and force serious negotiations before this disaster unfolds, not after it has destroyed the quality of life in our community and for those who work and study at UCSC.

5. What are your thoughts on the "Party Ordinance"? Do you feel it is mutually beneficial to the students and the community? Why or why not?

The Party Ordinance was introduced to reduce the number of out-of-control parties taking place in Santa Cruz. Parties were taking place until the early morning hours on weeknights, with huge crowds— hundreds of people spilling out onto neighbors' lawns and trashing neighborhoods. It has been largely successful. However, over the last year (September 05-September 06) only four houses were cited under the ordinance. I believe that the ordinance did what all of our earlier attempts did not effectively do: send a message that people need to work with their neighbors to plan and hold parties that don't result in calls for police service.