

Questions and concerns asked to Rec and Park staff, regarding the private horse rental program in Golden Gate Park

- 1. What authority does the Rec and Park Department (RPD) have to introduce very large animals into the park?** The introduction of horses into Golden Gate Park was not included in the recent Master Plan for the park. Could RPD introduce other large animals, such as cows, or zebras? Buffalo reside in the park, but they are behind a fenced barrier and do not have interactions with the public. If RPD cannot introduce other large animals into the park, then why are horses allowed?]
- 2. Is there a maximum limit on the number of horses allowed in this horse-riding program?**
- 3. Addition of new stables in GG Park:** By what authority are you establishing new structures in Golden Gate Park, to be used exclusively by a private vendor? Why not put horses and stables in the existing historical stable area, next to the Polo Fields and next to the police horses stables? That area is further away from population centers. Golden Gate Park gardeners have told me it's because RPD doesn't want to interfere with the Outside Lands music festival, which gets top priority because it generates revenue. Is that true?
- 4. Vendor employees living in RVs the park:** By what authority does RPD allow contract employees of a private, for-profit independent contractor to *live* full-time in the park? And to establish living quarters in the form of several large recreational vehicle trailers in a public park? *Originally there were two large RV type structures that they were living in, then there were four, now there are three.* How many people are living in those three structures? What authority does RPD have for deciding the number of dwellings? How many more RV dwellings will there be? Is there a legal limit to the authority of RPD to allow additional structures? I am sure you are aware that homeless people are not allowed to live in GG Park – *so how can RPD give permission for anyone to live in the park?*
- 5. What public input process did RPD use in the recent past** to let neighbors know that horses were being introduced into the park for a pilot program, and to hear the public's concerns? What public process will be used in the future?
- 6. Why was there no public input before the announcement of the second six month pilot program?** Why the rush, with no opportunity for public input regarding the first pilot program?
- 7. What prevents RPD from extending the “pilot program” indefinitely?**
- 8. The “Strategic Plan 2019-23 Update”** previously posted on the RPD website, as well as the “Strategic Plan 2020-24 Update” posted at <https://sfrecpark.org/>, **ha** – so where does the authority come from to reintroduce large animals like horses when it is not part of the Master Plan, and when horses have not been permanently present in the park for 18 years?
- 9. Was the reintroduction of horses ever discussed by the Recreation and Park Commission?** Was it ever authorized by the Recreation and Park Commission? If so, on what dates? Please provide links to the notes, audio or video from those meetings. I looked on the Recreation and Park Commission website but could find no record and no authorization.
- 10. Environmental impact – Significant amount of impact from light and heavy vehicle traffic in the area–** the horse workers have been driving trucks and automobiles on the trails. These vehicles leave deep marks and ruts (especially when muddy) on the trails, which makes it more difficult to ride a bicycle and also unpleasant to walk due to the deep mud holes being gouged out. *The area around the horse stables and Bercut Corral looks like a muddy stockyard, and smells like one too, with lots of manure dropped in public areas.* This area includes a major thoroughfare for bicyclists and pedestrians that now must share this path with large pickup trucks and large horses (For example, I know people who live north of the park and regularly use this pathway to walk to the south to shop at Other Avenues organic food coop at 45th and Judah). Was there ever an environmental impact assessment made about these impacts? If so, please provide a link to the report.
- 11. Health issues:** I live in the area and I constantly see **horse droppings on park trails**. In addition, there is

a **strong stockyard smell** that overwhelms the area, stretching a couple of hundred yards from the stable area, sometimes (depending on how the wind blows) extending to the children's playground at 4th Ave. and Lincoln Way (which is very close to my house). That smell is a sign of high levels of particulate matter from horse manure that gets crushed and turned into powder, and floats in the air and mixes with surface water. Here are citations from three scientific studies showing the **health hazards to humans and dogs** related to horse manure in the environment, including pathogens like E. coli.

a. One Horse or a Hundred: Manure and Water Don't Mix – “Horse owners may not consider that horse manure contains pollutants and, under the right circumstances, can pose a threat to humans and the environment. A source of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, horse manure may also contain pathogens (including E. coli) that can be hazardous to human health. When manure is not managed properly, these contaminants can make their way into our water and cause problems.” <https://www.canr>.

b. Managing Manure, Erosion, and Water Quality in and Around Horse Pastures – “Horse manure contains nutrients and fecal pathogens. As rainwater flows through manure, it picks up these nutrients and pathogens and carries them along its path.” See <https://www.sciencedirect>.

c. Composting Horse Manure – “Uncontrolled stockpiles of horse manure can be an unsightly, smelly and fly-infested mess. Stockpiles also can cause runoff pollution in nearby streams and ponds.” <https://tammi.tamu>.

So with this much expanded horse ride program, RPD has introduced into the local environment and neighborhood *a real potential for health hazard to humans and their dogs*. Was there any kind of health, environmental and safety impact assessment before putting large animals in the park to assess the significant impacts on soil, smell, air quality, water quality and increased traffic? And related impacts, such as effects on neighborhood people who use these pathways both for recreation and for traveling from north of the park to the south? Will there be such a health, environmental and safety assessment following the second pilot program, before any decisions are made about making this program permanent?

12. High cost/unaffordability of the provided service for most San Franciscans– horse rides, as well as horse riding lessons, are [advertised for \\$80 per hour](#). Only a small demographic of families and individuals can afford that. Anecdotally, I and others have observed that most of the customers' vehicles tend to be BMWs, Lexus, Audis, Mercedes and other luxury-type vehicles. The horse-riding clientele tends to be from a demographic that is not representative of San Francisco generally, no doubt due to the high cost of this service. So RPD has created a service for higher income people, and in the process has made it more difficult for middle and lower income people to use this area of the public park due to the constant presence of large animals, trucks, autos, workers living in RVs in the park, and their clientele. In short, RPD has *turned this area of a public park into a private concession*. This is far different than, for example, boat rides at Stow Lake, which are affordable to a wide range of San Franciscans. Was any thought given to the likely demographic that is using this expensive service, and the impacts on those who live in the immediate neighborhood who cannot afford this service? Was a study done on economic impacts? If so, please provide a link to the report.

13. How/why was this company chosen? How did RPD pick this particular private concession that has such expensive pricing? Was there a competitive bidding process to award this contract? Are you aware that another vendor, [Mar Vista](#) which is located a few miles south of San Francisco in Daly City, is 25% cheaper (\$60 per hour) than the current vendor? Was there an RFP process for choosing the vendor? If not, why not? If so, please provide a link to the RFP results. Please provide **a link to the contract** that governs the relationship between Golden Gate Park/City of San Francisco and the vendor that was awarded this contract, Chaparral Ranch Horse Program.

14. Humane treatment of the horses – what kind of rules are in place to ensure the horses are treated properly? New York and New Orleans have regulations that protect working horses. Those protections include routine veterinary inspections, limits on the number of hours horses can work, limits on the kind of weather horses can work in, and even mandated vacations, where the horses must be put out to pasture. Does RPD have any such protections for the horses?

