

Recreation and Parks Commission Applicant

Chelsea Lawson

Application Date: 05/26/21

Reside in Santa Monica: yes

If yes, number of years: 7

Hold an elected position: no

If yes, please specify:

INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:

No direct experience on city boards/commissions but I worked for 3 years for LA Mayor Garcetti's office which exposed me to many facets of governing and civic life.

Community activities:

My main activity in my community is picking up trash. Particularly during the coronavirus quarantine, I have gone on almost daily missions to clear litter from the streets (I wish it were all gone by now!) I also volunteer with Westside Friends to deliver hot meals to seniors in need, Hack for LA (west side), and am part of a hula hoop group that meets weekly and is open to all levels.

Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:

My educational background is in public policy (BA Duke 2012) and data science (MS USC 2016). These two disciplines come together in my work at Cityfi, a small urban advisory firm, where I assist various cities and departments with analytics, civic engagement, and strategic planning.

When it comes to skills and strengths, I am highly organized and driven to make Santa Monica the best it can be. I am passionate about rec and parks and am confident I would contribute to the needs of the commission and of residents in the coming years.

Goals:

I do not intend to recreate the wheel- Santa Monica has some excellent plans for its parks and recreation in the years to come. My goal is to work with the public and with private partners to move these plans along smoothly and efficiently. I will serve all of our residents and will also be cognizant of our greater responsibility to the environment, such as by pursuing drought-resistant landscaping or preventing trash from ending up in waterways/the ocean.

I also very much like the ideas of parklets and "urban acupuncture," where small areas of green space can transform a person's experience of living in the city.

Vision:

I'd like to see the rec and parks commission be a leader and exemplar for other committees and areas. My focus on civic engagement and public-private partnerships will assist with this, as well as my ability to work well with all sorts of people to get things done.

Personal Qualities:

I will share two examples that demonstrate these critical qualities:

The first was on a Cityfi project with Miami-Dade Department of Public Works last year. The department was looking to understand and communicate the value of public transit investments. I created a Social Return on Investment interactive visual that attempted to put numbers to intangible benefits like equity and quality of life in the same framework as financial return. I believe these sorts of out-of-the-box approaches to planning and budgeting are deeply needed to overcome short-sightedness in public decision-making, and to engage the public. Blog post here: <https://link.medium.com/H57TjOp6i8>

The second example is in my experience in the LA Mayor's Office. I managed the Open Data program there, where I needed to work with every single department to communicate the value of collecting and sharing data, listen to their needs, and provide hands on assistance. While we sometimes had competing needs, I forged countless relationships that I still hold dear today.

How you see yourself working with staff and your fellow Commissioners to advance arts and/or recreation goals in a broad way:

I see myself working with the others mentioned to understand needs and address them. For example, Santa Monica Airport Park is currently on hold until a funding source is identified. Even just as an interested resident, I have already been in touch with staff to understand what options they have already explored and discuss ideas for public-private partnerships.

Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?

yes

How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)

On the City's website (smgov.net or santamonica.gov)

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Occupation: Consultant

Business name: Cityfi

Business address: 2314 28th St Apt 2

Santa Monica, CA 90405

Business phone: 914-450-4178