

Member Profile: David Baker

SPUR Board member, major donor, progressive urban activist, bicyclist and architect.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE STREET IN SAN FRANCISCO?

I know everyone will think it's crazy, but I really like Market Street. It's a great Beaux Arts boulevard, and has that wonderful strong axis with the Ferry Building tower at the end. Every sort of person is on Market Street all at the same time, and increasingly they're there on bikes.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO JOIN SPUR?

To save the world, or at least the city.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO BE AN ARCHITECT?

I was born and grew up in a passive-solar modern house that my dad designed and built in 1948. He dropped out of ninth grade because he had to ride a horse 10 miles to school during Michigan winters, but he was a really smart and creative guy. I decided to be an architect when I was 8 after reading a series of books he gave me on famous modern architects.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CONTEMPORARY BUILDING?

The de Young Museum by Herzog and de Mueron in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WISH WERE DIFFERENT ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO?

I would like us to assume a more cutting-edge leadership role in creating a green, livable urban environment that can serve as a model. This would mean being less selfish and more open to being healthy and sustainable, in particular regarding issues of cultural automobile dominance. Global warming is a social-justice issue — maintaining a viable planet for future generations is undeniably more important than convenient driving and parking. I think San Francisco can be a leader and example on how to create a livable city without killing the planet, but we're going to have to change a lot of people's minds about a lot of



things. The important question to ask now about any policy or action is, "Does this reduce, or increase, global warming?"

WHAT'S THE MOST POSITIVE RECENT CHANGE IN THE CITY?

We're beginning to wake up on the challenge and linkage of global warming and urban livability, in terms of putting life first. This is necessary for survival, so it's good.