

# Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) 2008 City Council Candidates Forum

## Questionnaire Responses – Place 4

Question	Robin Cravey	Cid Galindo	Laura Morrison
<b>Growth Management</b>			
1. Do you believe the City of Austin should have a comprehensive growth management plan?	Yes. Only by planning ahead can we ensure that our city grows in a sustainable way that is green, affordable, walkable, and bikeable.	As one of the fastest growing cities in America, I believe it is critically important to have a comprehensive growth management plan, and it is simply unacceptable that we do not have one. The lack of such a plan is frankly why we have stumbled from crisis to crisis in the past and failed to meet the challenges we face, from traffic congestion, to deteriorating water quality, to urban sprawl. I have spent four years on the Planning Commission developing a proposal for a comprehensive framework for growth that will allow us to engage in a productive dialogue about how we want to evolve and to help guide us in building a safer, greener, more prosperous city. My efforts culminated in a unanimous resolution of the Planning Commission, requesting Council to direct staff to update our obsolete 30-year-old Comprehensive Plan so we may begin in earnest, in a new political spirit of partnership and community-building, a dialogue toward a new, forward-looking plan. That updating process is now under way and should be completed this summer.	Yes. Our City Charter requires it, and as noted in the City Auditor's report of May 2006, we are not working to a comprehensive plan. As ANC President, I facilitated the membership's effort that resulted in the adoption of a resolution, "Call to Action to Manage Austin's Growth."
2. Will you, as a City Council member, in partnership with the ANC and a broad range of other community stakeholders, embark upon development of a viable growth management policy?	Yes. I have proposed initiating a new city-wide process to write a comprehensive plan for the city.	The creation of a viable growth management policy is the cornerstone of my campaign and my primary strength as a candidate. My academic and professional training as an economist, business analyst, and urban planner, and my four years as a Planning Commissioner have prepared me well for this task. I am the candidate best qualified to help us find common ground around a plan for positive change and sustainable growth in the years ahead. I look forward to many detailed conversations with the community about the work I have done in this area.	Yes. A viable plan is critical to our future and we must begin its development now. As noted in the ANC resolution, "A healthy future for the City of Austin that achieves our shared vision requires a viable and living growth management policy." I will ensure that this plan is developed in partnership with ANC and all stakeholders. It must be a plan that reflects the community's vision.

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<p>3. How would you ensure that the growth management policy is grounded in sound research and analysis, that it is applied consistently, collaboratively and comprehensively, that it is adhered to and that it is a living document?</p>	<p>I propose employing a process similar to the Austin Tomorrow Plan process of the 1970s, which employed extensive professional research as well as broad public input. I support an expanded planning staff sufficient to support the council, the planning commission, and other groups in making decisions consonant with the plan.</p>	<p>I personally have already done much of the analysis based on data provided by the city demographer, so I already have a good working understanding of the numbers. All the work of my Planning Commission committee was done collaboratively in public meetings attended by many interested citizens. Once a new Comprehensive Plan is adopted, I will work to make sure it has public support and is updated at least once every five years.</p>	<p>The ANC resolution proposes a roadmap for development and maintenance of a growth management policy (Section III), which I personally drafted after extensive group discussions. The roadmap addresses the issues listed in Question 3. I stand behind it as an approach that will achieve a successful outcome.</p>
<p>4. Will you commit to a thorough review of our economic development strategies to ensure that future growth will pay for itself and not result in taxpayer subsidies?</p>	<p>I intend to re-emphasize the principle of fair and equal taxation, under which tax rebates would not be a standard tool for business recruitment or economic development.</p>	<p>All our economic development work must be transparent and focused on industries that not only provide a significant net gain to the general fund, but are also in tune with a vision for building a safer, greener, more prosperous city. Any earnest discussion of economic development, future growth, and taxpayer subsidies, must however recognize that the greatest tax payer subsidies occur when we are obligated to provide city services to suburban “sprawl” developments that do not generate the property taxes required to pay for those services. Changing this fiscally irresponsible pattern of development is perhaps the most important justification for having a growth management plan.</p>	<p>Yes. We need to review our strategies to ensure that they meet the goals of the community and that they are not negatively impacting our individual tax bills. Subsidies should only be considered when there is a well analyzed positive return on the investment being made by the City, assurance that they do not negatively impact our local businesses, and a rigorous monitoring mechanism to ensure they are meeting well-defined performance measures.</p>
<p>5. Do you believe there is an alternative view to Austin’s current growth forecast assumptions that predict a doubling of the population by 2050? If so, will your view incorporate the carrying capacities of our natural resources to produce a sustainable community and how so?</p>	<p>I believe Austin’s population growth over the next 40 years could be either lower or higher than current forecasts, depending on many factors. We must be constantly aware of the carrying capacities of our natural resources, and we have learned that these can be squandered through waste or stretched through conservation.</p>	<p>Our growth is not so much a function of city government, as it is the result of demographic and economic forces throughout the country and the world, and a testament to the quality of life we have built here in Austin over the past decades. Therefore, we must plan properly to anticipate and absorb new growth in ways that are equitable, and environmentally and fiscally sound. That’s why a new comprehensive plan based on a growth framework like the one I have proposed, that directs development where we want it and away from where we don’t want it, is so critical.</p>	<p>Certainly there is a potential for a less than doubling of our population in 20 – 25 years as is often presented in Austin. Responsible planning considers various scenarios, an especially prudent approach at this time with the national economic situation particularly unsteady and gas prices heading toward \$4 per gallon. The capacity of our natural resources should be a piece of our scenario development, considering, for example, that water may be “infinitely” available with new technology, or it may not.</p>

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<b>Neighborhood Planning</b>			
<p>6. What do you consider to be the top three objectives of neighborhood planning, and do you think these objectives are being met under the current framework? If not, how do you propose to ensure that these objectives will be met?</p>	<p>Neighborhood planning should: 1) to allow residents of a neighborhood to influence the future composition and feel of their community, 2) to elaborate the city’s comprehensive plan, and 3) to provide certainty to developers as to what kind of development will be welcome or allowed in a given neighborhood. These objectives are not being well met because neighborhood residents are writing the plans without guidance from the city as to the goals of the process, the city’s comprehensive plan is outdated and overlaid by later policies not fully articulated, and developers do not see the process as producing viable plans. The solution is to rewrite the comprehensive plan to give a solid foundation to the neighborhood planning process.</p>	<p>The overarching objective of neighborhood planning should be to allow people to have a voice in the evolution of their neighborhoods within the context of a comprehensive growth plan for the city. Within that context the following are important objectives to consider: • Promote safety; • Evolve in harmony with the environment; • Reduce our dependence on automobiles</p>	<p>Neighborhood planning is broken. It should be a community driven process that identifies the priorities, values and needs of an area, creates a shared vision of how the neighborhood moves into the future, and provides surety as it does move into the future. These objectives are often not met. Adequate information for decision making is not consistently available. Notice problems limit participation. The focus becomes limited to land use planning. The community’s vision is sometimes opposed by staff. Once approved, the goals and objectives of the plan are not realized and the elements of the plan are too often overridden. Citizens often have a sense that valuable time has been wasted. The City Council needs to provide clear policy direction on the objectives of neighborhood planning and require that the process be modified to achieve those objectives. The scope of work for the 4 new “neighborhood ombudsman” should include support for achieving these objectives during development and implementation of the plan, and as such should be accountable to the Council as their tie to the citizens. The Planning Commission’s Neighborhood Planning Subcommittee should lead a community dialogue to develop specific recommendations to address these issues.</p>
<p>7. Has neighborhood planning alleviated any of the contention surrounding certain zoning and development issues since its inception?</p>	<p>Neighborhood planning has not done enough to alleviate contention between developers, staff and neighborhoods because the process was not entered into with a full understanding of its goals. This is why we must initiate and implement a new comprehensive plan, into which neighborhood plans would be incorporated. Council should then operate from the presumption that the neighborhood plan would be followed. When all parties know what to expect, the disputes will be greatly reduced.</p>	<p>In my experience, the reviews are mixed. Neighborhood planning has helped in some significant cases, but it has also created a city-vs.-neighborhood dynamic that divides us rather than uniting us. Neighborhood planning must be at the heart of a new comprehensive plan to move us beyond the divisions of the past and into a new political climate of collaboration and problem-solving.</p>	<p>In some circumstances, aspects of neighborhood planning have worked. In others, they have not. I have seen situations when having a neighborhood plan has alleviated contention in zoning and development issues. In these cases, the neighborhood plan was developed under a community-driven process and a proposed project or rezoning fulfills the goals and objectives of the plan.</p>

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8. Will you make the specific community-identified needs included in neighborhood plans a priority starting point for future bond packages?	I believe projects called for in the comprehensive plan and those called for in neighborhood plans should form the basis for future bond packages.	One of the purposes of neighborhood planning is to identify such needs and give them priority. As resources are always finite, however, there will be an issue of equitable distribution of such funds. We must have a structure in place to make sure that resulting bond election funds are distributed equitably among neighborhoods.	Yes. The community’s work in neighborhood planning should be respected and leveraged by incorporating the identified needs as a starting point in developing future bond packages. In addition, neighborhood plans are formally adopted as part of the Austin Tomorrow Plan, and the Charter (Chapter X) requires that all public improvements and facilities be consistent with this plan.
9. Do you think the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) should be the only enforceable component of neighborhood planning?	I would be willing to consider recommended code revisions and ordinances contained in neighborhood plans.	FLUMS per se are not enforceable; it is the zoning decisions that they guide that are enforceable. Neighborhood plans were not conceived to enforceable ordinances. It is the purview of the elected officials of the city to pass enforceable ordinances, and the role of the neighborhood plans to inform those decisions.	No. Clearly, there are other elements of neighborhood plans that identify additional specifics that should be enforced. My own neighborhood has experienced frustration in getting specifically articulated conditions enforced.
10. Will you require the city manager to process any proposed land use or zoning changes for any reason, such as the TOD ordinance, in accordance with the adopted neighborhood planning amendment process that includes full participation of all stakeholders for any property within a neighborhood planning area?	Yes, the participation of all stakeholders is important in making sure that all affected parties respects the process and feel that their views have been listened to and taken into account.	In principle, the city should have to follow the same rules that everyone else does. My main area of concern is full participation of all stakeholders. I think we need to do a much better job of constituting and formalizing neighborhood representation to ensure that all stakeholders are in fact represented in the neighborhood planning amendment process.	I support a requirement for zoning and land use proposals to be processed according to the neighborhood plan amendment ordinance. Station area plans for TODs do have a requirement to be adopted through the neighborhood plan amendment process. (25-2-766.21)
11. Will you direct staff to provide every neighborhood planning area an analysis of the existing zoning capacity before approving any zoning changes in the area?	I will advocate that the comprehensive planning process produce information about existing zoning capacity in each neighborhood.	I have been deeply involved in trying to determine reliable quantitative measures of population capacity by zoning district, and I will continue to insist on making that data available to the neighbors as part of the neighborhood planning process.	Existing zoning capacity is an important piece of information in zoning decisions. It is a critical piece of the discussion when arguments in favor of the change are based on a general statement that we need increased density. In those cases, I will ask for an analysis of existing zoning capacity in the area to ensure that the discussion is based on facts. In addition, I believe the City should embark on an effort to prepare existing zoning capacity information for the urban core, at a minimum.

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<b>Zoning</b>			
<p>12. Under what circumstances would you <u>not</u> support a valid petition of the community or a recommendation of a neighborhood plan team in a zoning case?</p>	<p>When I served on the Planning Commission, I voted against a valid petition in order to approve affordable housing, and I would do the same if a similar case arose.</p>	<p>I would not support a valid petition if it would result in something illegal, potentially illegal, or not be in the interest of public health and safety.</p>	<p>I commit to support a valid petition from nearby residents on zoning cases because I believe the intent of the process shows necessary respect for the local community. In general, I will support the recommendation of a neighborhood plan team. However, I have seen instances where serious questions have been raised about representation on a neighborhood plan team. I will need to take this type of consideration into account in my decision making.</p>
<p>13. Will you commit to support the existing zoning compatibility standards in general? Under what circumstances, if any, do you think compatibility standards should be waived?</p>	<p>I believe compatibility standards provide important neighborhood protections. I would work to establish modified standards to be applied when affordable housing is an important component of a development.</p>	<p>Compatibility standards play an important role in defining residential areas of a neighborhood, and I support that principle. Often, however, they prevent environmentally sound urban forms of development that would reduce our collective dependence on automobiles. That said, I would only consider waiving compatibility standards if there were significant support in the neighborhood to do so.</p>	<p>I do commit to supporting the compatibility standards in general and I have worked in the community to uphold the standards on many occasions. When consensus among all stakeholders is reached that there is a reasonable alternative to the standards, it is reasonable to consider waiving them.</p>
<p>14. Will you uphold the current compromise restrictions and standards set forth in the VMU ordinance including no increased height over base zoning, compliance with compatibility standards, no VMU/commercial creep, affordability as set forth by neighborhood associations’ recommendations, and availability of expedited residential permit parking?</p>	<p>I believe this ordinance must be reviewed. In practice it has been shown to contain loopholes, and the affordability component is weak.</p>	<p>The intention of VMU is to give neighborhoods a tool to direct growth along corridors while meeting other neighborhood objectives like affordable housing and more services within walking distance. I will support perfecting the ordinance to meet those objectives within the context of each neighborhood.</p>	<p>Yes. All of these elements are critical to a successful implementation of the VMU ordinance.</p>
<p>15. Will you make available to neighborhoods and to decision-making bodies relevant information regarding transportation, infrastructure, housing and other critical matters prior to making land use decisions?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>I will continue efforts to make all this information available on-line on the city’s website in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Open and informed discussion of issues must be a fundamental tenet of our city government. I will ask staff to make relevant information available to decision-making bodies and stakeholders including neighborhoods.</p>

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<p>16. In areas where a neighborhood opposes up-zoning to convert residential use to some other commercial use, and where adequate commercially zoned property is already available, will you commit to vote against such up-zoning?</p>	<p>In voting on a zoning request, I will consider the comprehensive plan, the neighborhood plan, neighbors’ wishes, the situation of the property, and the needs of the property-holder and the tenants. Inherent in these are also recommendations from boards, commissions, and staff.</p>	<p>In general, yes, I will commit to that under the circumstances described, but I am supportive of up-zoning multi-family residential uses to mixed-use zoning to allow for services to be more integrated into our neighborhoods to encourage pedestrian activity.</p>	<p>I do not support “commercial creep” into residential areas. I am aware of situations where a rezoning from residential to commercial is foreseen by a neighborhood plan, and I am not clear on measurements for assessing the “adequacy” of commercially zoned property in the area. Therefore, under appropriate conditions, I would not oppose the rezoning to commercial.</p>
<b>Community Values</b>			
<p>17. Will you commit to uphold the community’s desire to protect the Lady Bird Lake Corridor and vote against any proposed zoning change that would encroach on the current base zoning and Waterfront Overlay restrictions? Will you sponsor and vote for a re-drafting of the 1999 waterfront overlay to re-establish the spirit of the 1986 community consensus?</p>	<p>As a Planning Commissioner I supported the Town Lake Overlay, but found it not entirely clear. I would indeed sponsor and support a redrafting of the overlay, with community input, possibly as part of the comprehensive plan.</p>	<p>If we take a no-compromise position, we may never complete the Lady Bird Lake trail loop most Ausitinites would like to see, so some minor encroachment might be necessary for achieving the greater good. I have proposed the creation a grand central park from Redbud Trail to the Montopolis Bridge. That will require a thorough re-examination of the 1986 and 1999 language, and hopefully arrive at a compromise that will make future generations proud of what we are able to accomplish.</p>	<p>I have participated in community efforts opposing zoning changes that encroach on current zoning and Waterfront Overlay restrictions along Lady Bird Lake. I commit to vote against such zoning changes as a Council Member. A Waterfront Overlay Task Force is being appointed that will make recommendations to address ambiguous elements of the overlay language and I will support their recommendations to the extent that they reflect the spirit of the earlier community consensus.</p>
<p>18. Are you committed to making affordable housing on city-owned property a priority use?</p>	<p>Yes, that is a top issue in my platform. The city has lost some great opportunities by selling city-owned property to private interests. I have proposed and advocated publicly owned affordable housing on the Green Water Treatment Plant site.</p>	<p>Our objective should be to use the resources we have to maximize the number of affordable units we can provide and to distribute those units equitably throughout the city. To the extent that using city-owned property furthers those goals, I am supportive. Sometimes, however, leveraging valuable public land can result in more affordable units than building them on that land.</p>	<p>Yes. I am a member of the HousingWorks Policy Committee and understand that affordable housing on city-owned property is one component of a solution to the affordable housing struggle we have in Austin today.</p>
<p>19. How do you propose to ensure city-wide affordable housing, including in the downtown central business district. What levels of affordability do you think should be supported?</p>	<p>I believe we should add a chapter to our comprehensive plan for affordable housing, and we should start with downtown. I believe we should set a measurable goal to meet the housing needs of all our residents at all income levels.</p>	<p>I have proposed a reorganization of city departments along fixed sectors, generally following those established by the police department. Affordable housing funds should be distributed by sector throughout the city with at least 25 percent affordability in all projects that include city funding, using the Mueller redevelopment affordability requirements as a model.</p>	<p>There is no silver bullet in solving the affordable housing issue in Austin. We must not squander current opportunity we have to address the problem now and we must develop new approaches to work on the issue. The first step is to make strong use of the tools we do have. These include effective use of the recently approved housing bonds and of the Homestead Preservation Zone (HPZ); meeting the goals of affordable housing in TODs; strong application of CURE requirements for</p>

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			<p>affordable housing; adherence to VMU affordability levels; fair and informed specification of values for fee-in-lieu payments, for example in the proposed PUD ordinance (currently drafted at \$6/square foot); and encouraging stronger use of federal tax credits and better support from CoA departments for developers working on tax credit housing projects. We also must expand the tools we have in our toolbox and there are many possibilities to explore, among them, developing a timely plan for targeting existing housing for preservation and evaluating all City-owned property for potential affordable housing development. We must also collaborate with our state delegation to find additional solutions, e.g., special exemptions for long-term homesteads in traditionally low-income areas and a possible expansion of the boundaries of the HPZ. Specifically regarding downtown, we must require firm financial analyses and comparative studies when re-reviewing the fee-in-lieu amount in the “Interim” affordable housing incentives for downtown. It is currently set at \$10 for each square foot of bonus density but the consultants for the Downtown Plan have suggested that \$22/square foot might be more appropriate. The consultants have also suggested other approaches to pursue, i.e., mid-rise downtown affordable housing in the Capitol View Corridors and the affordable mixed use developments replacing parking garages on state-owned land. The levels of affordability that we support and encourage as a City must match our existing and future need for housing that will not be met by the market. Market rates for apartments are often affordable at an 80% MFI level, and so the City should support housing affordable to families below this income level. A key element of the comprehensive plan we should be developing is a housing study that identifies existing need and assesses future demand. I</p>

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<p>20. Do you think that historic preservation is important to Austin and will you support Local Historic Districts that meet the prescribed high standards for approval/support?</p>	<p>I do think it is important to preserve our city's character through historic preservation – that is how we will keep what makes Austin unique, and I would support Local Historic Districts.</p>	<p>Historic preservation is important and I will support Local Historic Districts that meet current requirements. I worked hard on fundraising for the restoration of the Suzanna Dickinson House, and came to realize that we must do a better job of identifying and protecting historic assets before they are essentially demolished through neglect. I will ask for an enumeration of our top 100 priorities for preservation and make sure they do not suffer that fate.</p>	<p>understand that an effort has begun on such a study, and its results need to be integrated into the comprehensive plan.</p> <p>Historic preservation is a key element in maintaining the character of our neighborhoods and I have worked with the community on many related issues. I believe Austin needs a current, viable preservation plan to help us retain our unique character. We also need well-defined protocols and rules for our historic preservation processes and I look forward to supporting the development of a plan and the protocols. Local Historic District designation is an important tool that is finally in place, and I assisted in the effort that recently resulted in the approval of Austin's first Local Historic District. I certainly support them in general and hope that many more neighborhoods will be able to move forward with applications. Because they are so new, I do not feel there is enough experience to make a firm commitment on specific conditions for my support.</p>
<p>21. Do you think that protection of the integrity and character of Austin's existing established neighborhoods is important and will you support maintaining existing standards established by the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards?</p>	<p>As a former Planning Commissioner and a 30-year resident of a center-city neighborhood, I think it's essential to protect the integrity and character of our established neighborhoods. I support adhering to the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards.</p>	<p>Integrity and character are what make our neighborhoods worth preserving. They are fundamental. That's why I am calling for establishing "areas of stability" in my proposal for improving the neighborhood planning process. The "Mcmansion" ordinance is positive step in the preservation of neighborhood scale, but has had a negative impact on affordability, another important community goal. It is an ordinance that still needs perfecting.</p>	<p>Yes, I believe that protecting the integrity and character of our established neighborhoods is critical. I have assisted neighborhoods all over Austin as they have worked for just this protection. I co-chaired the task force that recommended the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards. I believe we came up with a fair compromise and I will support maintaining these standards and all elements of our recommendations that went into the ordinance that Council approved.</p>

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<p>22. Do you believe outdoor music venues and the noise associated with them are problematic for neighborhoods within their audible range? If so, how do you propose to protect quality of life in our neighborhoods while supporting Austin’s unique position as “Live Music Capital”?</p>	<p>In well-known entertainment districts, new housing should be built with adequate soundproofing, and prospective buyers should be told about the sound level. Also, housing near entertainment districts should be affordable to musicians and waitstaff. In established neighborhoods, new music venues should install adequate soundproofing. In addition, the city should purchase a large number of decibel meters and assign them to a new code enforcement team. There must be communication between the businesses and the neighborhoods that are affected by these problems, perhaps mediation. But, if reasonable noise levels are being exceeded, the anti-noise ordinance should be enforced.</p>	<p>We should follow the principle that as density increases, so does our tolerance for sound. Our ordinances need to reflect this so that we can still be the Live Music Capital of the World, but just not in our residential neighborhoods. Additionally, sound measurements should be made from the point of the complaint, because of the difficulty in knowing the way sounds will travel from their source.</p>	<p>There are problems related to some outdoor music venues in proximity to residential areas. The impacts of sound are in part a symptom of the redevelopment of the city, and it is critical to resolve how we protect these two important facets of our community. There are several approaches to explore: improving building standards where new residential is going in near existing venues, creating a fund to help retrofit venues and advise them on sound abatement, studying noise contours to limit future problems through building placement and design, fair enforcement, and improved dialogue between interested parties across the community. I am hopeful that the newly appointed Live Music Task Force will develop effective recommendations in this regard.</p>
<b>Code Enforcement/Permitting</b>			
<p>23. What improvements should be made in the current code enforcement process to sufficiently deter improper and non-compliant construction?</p>	<p>Code enforcement has long been underfunded in Austin. I favor a major beefing up of this department. For a long time, code enforcement has been complaint-driven, meaning that only when someone complains does an inspector go out. Instead, it should be systematic and active, meaning that inspectors cover the city actively looking for code violations.</p>	<p>I have proposed re-organizing enforcement in sectors throughout the city and the assignment of one code enforcement officer to serve as a contact for the neighborhoods in that sector.</p>	<p>Over the past 2 years or so, the City has increased staffing and reorganized code enforcement under Solid Waste Services by sector but still we have problems. I believe we need to look now to improved inspection protocol, which can lead to clear accountability and reliable process. There are additional avenues to explore, for example increasing inspection requirements on projects that have involvement by those with a record of multiple code infractions. At the same time, we should increase their permitting fees to cover the cost of the additional oversight. The newly created neighborhood ombudsman positions should also include in their scope of work, responsiveness to citizen concerns about potentially non-compliant construction.</p>

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<p>24. How will you ensure that permitted project plans are designed and implemented to fully comply with all applicable codes and ordinances?</p>	<p>Project plans are subject to staff review before approval, and inspection during construction. I will advocate that these reviews and inspections be thorough and effective.</p>	<p>Plans are not permitted unless they meet applicable city codes. Compliance is the challenge. A re-organization of inspection functions into city sectors, as I have proposed, as well as hiring enough inspectors to keep up with the growth in each sector are strategies that I will pursue to address this issue.</p>	<p>Ensuring compliance is a critical responsibility of the City. One facet of the challenge we face is staff training and turnover. Fair treatment of staff and a culture that is free of intimidation from exercising judgment in areas of expertise is a key to a healthy work environment that benefits the individual staff members and the citizens of Austin. As a Council Member, I will work to foster a healthy work environment that values our staff. When questions of interpretation of the codes and ordinances arise, there must be an open discussion to ensure the intent of the law is followed rather than following the path that might lead to an answer that satisfies the most likely to sue the City. I believe the Council should be accountable to the citizens of Austin in discussions of interpretation and I will support changes that to foster that.</p>
<p>25. Do you believe that maintaining as much as possible of our urban forest/urban tree canopy is an important goal for Austin and if so what would you do to prevent the removal of protected trees by builders and developers who see it as a worthwhile trade-off to pay the small fine assessed as penalty?</p>	<p>Maintaining and expanding our urban forest are important for beauty, for connection to the natural world, and for reducing urban heat. State law limits penalties imposed for cutting protected trees. I would charge the Urban Forestry Board with recommending measures for preventing removal of protected trees.</p>	<p>I absolutely agree that the penalties for felling protected trees should be much higher to discourage the practice and send a clear signal of those values to the development community. We must recognize, however, that occasionally, we save a tree at the expense of housing a low-income family, and that is something we have to consider.</p>	<p>Yes, I believe that maintaining as much of our urban forest as possible is an important goal, not only to preserve the character of our neighborhoods but also to provide shade and mitigate the heat island effect in this harsh climate. A small fine for illegal tree removal is unfortunately not an adequate deterrent for those who willfully violate the law and we should explore what other cities have done to strengthen penalties. As I understand it, increasing the fines is not a feasible option. In my answer to Question 23 (on code enforcement), I suggested the possibility of increasing inspections and in tandem, increasing permitting fees for those who have multiple violations of the code. This could be an approach to use in enforcement of ordinances that protect our trees. Research into the approaches that other cities take will suggest other avenues to pursue, for example requirements for same-size replacement or performance bonds.</p>

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<p>26. Do you believe that tearing down a structure to its foundation should be classified as a remodel allowing for a completely new (often much larger) structure to be built which would not need to come into compliance with current code?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>That practice is counter-intuitive and should be discouraged. Generally, all new construction should meet code, whether it's a remodel or not.</p>	<p>No, I do not and I believe that a sanity check is in order here. As directed by Council, the Residential and Design Standards Task Force which I co-chaired, made a recommendation on the definition of "remodel" which I support. The recommendation clearly defines parameters for a "remodel" under the code. It is, I believe, a fair approach, and does not allow for a complete tear down to the foundation.</p>
<p><b>City Government Structure and Representational Effectiveness</b></p>			
<p>27. Do you favor continuing with our at-large form of city government, moving to single-member districts or moving to a combination of both and why?</p>	<p>I favor a mixed system of representation, with some council members elected at large (city-wide), and some elected from individual districts. This will allow the district –elected council members to have a closer relationship to the voters who elect them. It will also lower the cost of city council election campaigns and make it a realistic possibility for citizens who are not independently wealthy to run for a place on the Austin City Council.</p>	<p>The voters deserve a full conversation and the right to decide whether we've outgrown our current system. That's why I favor putting the issue on the ballot. Regardless of when we have the chance to have that vote, my ultimate support will depend on the actual map to ensure no dilution of any one segment's representation. In the meantime, however, I have proposed to re-organize city departments along sector lines, with a neighborhood ombudsman assigned to each sector. In the absence of a single-member district council, this person would be responsible for being the advocate for the neighborhoods in his or her sector and working with the various newly-organized city departments. This simple change in management structure will transform the city's ability to be more responsive to citizen and neighborhood needs.</p>	<p>I believe that a change to a combination system would bring the Council closer to the community and result in more effective governing of the city. Such a change would bring the following benefits: increased accountability of Council Members; better understanding by the Council of the issues facing citizens; lower cost of running a campaign with a follow-on benefit of encouraging a broader range of candidates; enhanced access to Council Members by the citizens; and potentially increased voter turnout. We need additional community dialogue and further study to develop the specifics of an optimal proposal to take to the voters.</p>
<p>28. Do you believe that the current City Council election process (at-large) fosters adequate community representation?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>The actual results of decades of elections show that inner-city voters dominate municipal elections. The challenge is to equalize voter turnout throughout the city. There is a compelling argument that single-member districts help accomplish that.</p>	<p>No. Our current system tends to favor representation from certain parts of the City, leaving other parts rarely, if ever, with a Council Member that intimately understands their issues.</p>

Question	Robin Cravey	Cid Galindo	Laura Morrison
<p>29. Please answer a. below if you are a current Council Member and b. if you are not.</p> <p>a. Do you have time to make regular efforts to stay in touch with the community including neighborhoods throughout the city? Do you have time and how do you manage soliciting input from affected neighborhoods regarding issues before Council?</p> <p>b. Will you make regular efforts to stay in touch with the community including neighborhoods throughout the city and how? Will you solicit input from affected neighborhoods regarding issues before Council? If so, describe the process you would use to involve impacted citizens.</p>	<p>Yes. The door to my council office will be open to visitors. I will make announced visits to city facilities in all parts of the city. I will maintain communications with neighborhoods throughout the city.</p>	<p>I'll have a monthly open lunch at the Spaghetti Warehouse, inviting all citizens, and I will look for every opportunity to meet in neighborhoods around the city with as many interested citizens as possible. Public policies must have public support to succeed.</p>	<p>My connection to the community is an integral part of the benefit I have to offer as a Council Member and I intend to be a voice for the community on Council. I fully intend to stay in touch with community stakeholders including neighborhoods. As often as my schedule allows, I will continue to attend ANC meetings and to drop in on individual neighborhood association meetings. Overall, I will monitor my schedule to ensure it is balanced and integrates community outreach as a basic tenet. I consider it a fundamental responsibility to understand the community's perspectives in making decisions. I will be proactive in gathering that perspective from neighborhoods and others on individual issues, by reaching out through neighborhood organizations and ANC. I will host regular discussions with community members to share ideas and information on upcoming issues. I will hold drop-in office hours to ease access for citizens.</p>

Question	Robin Cravey	Cid Galindo	Laura Morrison
<b>Open Governance</b>			
<p>30. How will you work to ensure that all materials citizens need to participate in city processes will be made available on-line with plenty of time for citizens to review, research, and respond prior to the meetings where the information will be considered. How will you empower city staff to place such info on-line? How may citizens participate more in city meetings without being physically present?</p>	<p>I will support adequate funding to hire the staff to keep city websites updated. Citizens already have the ability to send emails to councilmembers while council meetings are in progress. I would propose a task force to explore the potential for web-based meetings.</p>	<p>We can do a better job of posting information online and be more data-intensive in our decision-making. Especially in this high-tech city, we should be able to find common-sense solutions that improve government transparency without costing taxpayers more or increasing the burden on the city bureaucracy.</p>	<p>I have continually advocated for open government and productive, citizen participation. This will remain a top priority for me as a Council Member. We must have standards for making relevant materials available to the public in a timely fashion in order to allow for adequate consideration and response. If those standards are not met, I will ensure that additional time is allotted before moving forward. On-line posting of all information is feasible through agenda backups, the Amanda system, and customized city web pages in special circumstances. The City website revamping effort must maintain, as a top priority, a more understandable structure that presents information on topics for public access in a more cohesive way. Feedback from citizens that are not physically present at city meetings should be made available publicly so that it can be considered by the rest of the community. We must keep in mind that not all citizens have access to computers or the internet, and include procedures to foster their full participation in community dialogues.</p>

Question	Robin Cravey	Cid Galindo	Laura Morrison
<b>Working with AISD</b>			
<p>31. How do you propose for the City Council to work with AISD to protect our aquifer, build better buildings, and preserve/enhance existing neighborhood schools?</p>	<p>The council must foster a collaborative relationship with AISD. The school board and PTAs must be involved in writing our comprehensive plan. Meetings with a council/school board joint committee should be more frequent and substantive. The exchange of notices and staff contacts should also be increased. The city should work with the school board to collocate city facilities with schools to form community centers.</p>	<p>Communication between AISD and city planners leaves a lot of room for improvement. I will create a working group of city, county, and school district planners to meet on a regular basis to make sure we are doing all we can to find common ground for positive change.</p>	<p>The City of Austin and AISD have incredible untapped potential for productive collaboration, and there are mutual benefits to be realized. The City’s land use policies are intimately tied to the health of our schools, and conversely, the policies of AISD are tied to the health of our neighborhoods and the city at large. We must consider ourselves as partners in moving into the future. To foster the partnership, we must create a forum to identify common goals, communicate regularly, develop trusted relationships, and put protocols in place that recognize our interrelationship. One example on the City’s part would be to require a school impact analysis in land use cases. In general, AISD should be at the table in the comprehensive planning effort that we must undertake. AISD’s Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools draft report offers a plethora of other ideas that we need to explore.</p>

Question	Robin Cravey	Cid Galindo	Laura Morrison
<b>Business Development</b>			
<p>32. Will you work to reduce subsidies to large employers? Will you do a total cost-benefit analysis process before providing any subsidies or loans to any businesses? How will you help and support small businesses get started, thrive, and grow?</p>	<p>Yes. I disapprove of tax rebates to large corporations in general. Austin is a very desirable place to live and work, and we should not have to pay people to come here. Moreover, these types of subsidies violate the principle of fair and equal taxation. As the city develops and redevelops, we should work to ensure that we have an ample supply of affordable retail, office, and light industrial space for small business. We should always break our contracts for goods and services into the smallest practical dollar amounts to allow small businesses to bid on them. We should also provide programs to level the playing field for local businesses, and to help them navigate the city approval process.</p>	<p>A subsidy implies that there is no return, and we should never do that. But we must change our attitude about large employers. They should be our partners in building a great city by giving us a wider tax base, providing quality jobs, and creating the economic vitality that allows our small businesses to grow and prosper. We should partner with them in mutually beneficial arrangements that allow us to change the way we are growing as a city, and we should be very selective with the partners we choose. Our chosen partners should have track records of success and be in industries that are consistent with our values as a community.</p>	<p>Subsides for large businesses are a public investment in private enterprise. They can be appropriate if there is an adequate return on that investment in terms of community benefits. However, subsidy decisions, as with any investment, must consider a total cost-benefit analysis and I will support a requirement for such an analysis. We must be clear to use subsidies only if they incentivize a business that fits our community's goals, would not be developing here in the open market otherwise, and are not detrimental to our existing businesses. Any incentive agreement must be dependent on well-defined, measurable performance that is reported publicly on a regular basis. We must recognize that small businesses are, collectively, a huge part of our economy. They provide employment for a large number of our residents and are integral to the vibrancy of Austin. Permitting can be a special challenge for small businesses, often on a constrained budget and without the resources to hire agents for representation. I would propose that our permitting departments identify start up businesses and provide guidance on the processes that must be followed. I would also propose adequate small business ombudsman positions to be a voice to the City in identifying obstacles of a general nature and to provide assistance to the businesses in complying with regulations. The City should also work with the Austin Independent Business Alliance, to support their efforts in providing guidance to their members.</p>

Question	Robin Cravey	Cid Galindo	Laura Morrison
<b>Environment</b>			
<p>33. Within the city limits of Austin are a number of urban creeks and watersheds associated with those creeks. The creeks of Austin are jewels in Austin's crown, but they have been neglected by the amount of impervious cover that is allowed to be put on the ground and the lack of good water quality controls both in neighborhoods and in the commercial areas. Would you be willing to direct the City Manager to investigate how runoff in those watersheds can be cleaned up and the possibility of lowering impervious cover limits on development and redevelopment in the central city areas?</p>	<p>Our urban creeks are in deplorable condition, threatened by flooding and erosion as well as water quality degradation. They should be restored, preserved, and made the center of a great metropolitan system of greenbelts, trails, and parks. The staff this year expects to recommend solutions to many of the problems of our creeks this year, and I will support a vigorous program of implementation.</p>	<p>I will direct the city manager to investigate how runoff might be cleaned up and, if necessary, lower impervious cover limits on development. Water quality should be our holy grail. But it is important to keep in mind that water quality and impervious cover aren't necessarily correlated and that modern engineering techniques can maintain high levels of water quality even with high impervious cover.</p>	<p>The creeks running through our city are treasured amenities, providing a touch of nature in our urban environment. We must commit to protecting them, especially as the central city densifies. I would be willing to direct the City Manager to investigate an effort to clean up the runoff. Lower impervious cover limits are but one possible piece to be considered in improving the health of the creeks. I support a study that looks comprehensively at approaches to protection, including controls such water retention and filtering, barriers to limit runoff, strategic land purchases and restoration efforts.</p>
<p>34. What is your thinking/position on amending the SOS ordinance as Austin develops into the contributing and recharge zones of the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer? What elements would you see as necessary in order to consider amending the ordinance? Have you any background in the areas of pollutant loadings, impervious cover, state of the art water quality controls? Would you be willing to seek the advice and guidance of the scientists in the Watershed Protection Department of the City of Austin in order to obtain the best information available on pollutants, impervious cover, and water quality controls available currently?</p>	<p>I worked on the petition drive to put the SOS ordinance on the ballot. As Austin develops, I will consider amendments that do not vitiate protection of the aquifer. In considering amendments, I would consider protection of the aquifer foremost, and the creation of sensible settlement patterns and the provision of services and amenities to area residents must also be weighed. I have spent countless hours as a citizen activist, a law student and clerk, a council aide, and a planning commissioner studying issues of pollution, impervious cover, and water quality controls. I am not a scientist, and I have great respect for the city's scientists. I would rely on our city scientists, and the best outside advice we can obtain, to ensure our aquifer protection program is the best we can make it.</p>	<p>We must avail ourselves of all the tools we can to prevent further degradation of water quality as we grow. As a planning commissioner, I learned a great deal from city staff, hydrology engineers and water quality experts, and have a solid understanding of the science. The principal weakness of SOS is that it doesn't holistically address water quality on a watershed basis but instead takes an ad hoc site-by-site approach. This of course helps, but it does not provide the mechanism to mitigate grandfathered sites or prevent to development of existing undeveloped sites. I have proposed a transfer of development rights mechanism that will address both those issues and allow us to manage our watersheds in a more holistic way that will secure water quality in perpetuity.</p>	<p>Any consideration of amending the SOS ordinance should ensure that a careful analysis is done to show that it results in a net decrease in detrimental impacts to the aquifer. The analysis should include consideration of the potential for triggering secondary development. Any amendment should uphold the spirit of the SOS ordinance passed by the citizens of Austin, with requirements for adequate public review and strong (super-majority) Council support. Concerns of the Environmental Board and the environmental community must be adequately addressed. My background and expertise does not include the areas of pollutants etc., mentioned above. I would definitely seek out advice from the scientists on the City staff as well as experts in our community.</p>

Question	Robin Cravey	Cid Galindo	Laura Morrison
<b>Transportation</b>			
<p>35. Would you commit to support alternative transit options such as improved bus service, better bike lanes, more sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements? Do you support the proposed trolley system that Mayor Wynn is promoting and if so, how do you envision the city paying for it?</p>	<p>I have called for a transportation system based on shoeleather, bicycles, motorbikes, public transit, and then cars as a centerpiece of my campaign platform. We must move away from a car-centric society, and improving public transit, sidewalks, and bike lanes is imperative. We must update and implement our pedestrian and bike plans, and ensure that Capital Metro is serving all its customers. I do support a light rail system, and perhaps trolleys. I would have to look more closely at funding options but would consider issuing bonds. I also believe the use of bus rapid transit on high-ridership routes would be a cost-effective step in a transition to rail.</p>	<p>It is imperative that we find ways to reduce our dependence on automobiles. We can do that by first having a comprehensive master transportation and land use plan in place that calls for reasonable, convenient ways for people to get around, but also calls for building neighborhoods that allow employment, homes, and services to be built in much closer proximity to each other. Once the plan is in place, we should build on it incrementally with components such as the proposed trolley system, and expand those systems according to the master plan as funding and ridership increase.</p>	<p>Mobility is critical to the livability of Austin and to our economic well being. I believe we need a comprehensive transportation system that works for the entire community, for all ages, for residents in all parts of town, and for all economic levels. These alternative transit options must be a part of a complete system and I commit to supporting them. At this point, we do not yet have a full proposal of the ‘trolley system’. As the Transit Working Group proceeds in its work and fleshes out the Mayor’s proposal, I believe we must bring the community into the decision-making process, and evaluate real options for the projects with honest cost-benefit analyses so the public has the information to base decisions on. I will determine my position on the proposal when it is available for evaluation.</p>
<p>36. Will you support the changes in the CAMPO 2030 plan as requested in the City’s AMATP, thereby limiting roadway expansion in our core area neighborhoods?</p>	<p>Yes. I supported putting the change requests in the City’s AMATP, and I support writing them into the CAMPO TIP. Major widening of roadways such as South Lamar would be devastating to the city fabric.</p>	<p>Because we have not had a functioning comprehensive plan in 30 years, Austin confronts the challenge of a lack of East-West connections and the congestion that creates in our roadways. However, expanding roadways in most core area neighborhoods isn’t the solution. We have to find other land-use based solutions to our arterial congestion issues.</p>	<p>I do support limiting roadway expansion in our core area neighborhoods, and finding other mobility solutions. I need to become more familiar with the details of the AMATP, and look forward to further study of it.</p>