

Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) 2009 City Council Candidates Forum

Questionnaire Responses – Mayor

Question	Josiah James Ingalls	Lee Leffingwell
What neighborhood do you live in?	East Riverside Drive	I live in the Balcones neighborhood.
Do you belong to your neighborhood or home-owner's association?	No	Yes, I belong HPWBNA, the Highland Park West Balcones Neighborhood Association.
Have you participated in neighborhood planning? If so, how?	No	I've not participated in neighborhood planning at the neighborhood level, but have at the Council level.
Planning		
1. Comprehensive Planning. Have you ever read Austin's existing comprehensive plan? If so, have you ever used it to guide your decision making? The current City Council has directed that a new comprehensive planning process be initiated. Do you support moving forward with that effort? What specific mechanisms would you put into place to ensure that we won't ignore the new plan for 30 years as with the previous plan?	I have not yet read Austin's current comprehensive plan.	Yes, I am familiar with the Austin Tomorrow Plan and I have tried to apply many of the principles of the document in my decision-making on Council, especially with regard to evaluating the environmental impact of proposed new development. I enthusiastically support moving forward with a new planning process, and am hopeful that this process will help us identify meaningful solutions to a host of challenges we continue to face as a growing, changing community. Many of the issues of concern to our citizens – transportation, public safety, social services, environmental protection, neighborhood planning, historic preservation – are closely connected to each other; a new comprehensive planning process should help us illuminate those connections and inform future decisions that work to the benefit of the whole. In order to help ensure that Austin's new comprehensive plan has more "teeth" than the Austin Tomorrow Plan, I'd like to see City staff analyze all future development cases in the context of the new plan (i.e. how does each case as proposed meet or violate the provisions of the comprehensive plan?), and I'd like to see City staff – or perhaps the City Auditor – conduct a regular, ongoing analysis of major City decisions and actions in the context of the plan.
2. Growth Management. Over the decades, Austin has used growth models that predicted a doubling of the population every 10 years, every 20 years, in 30 years, and by 2050. Which of these forecasts do you think we should use in the new Comprehensive Plan, or do you have a better way to think about growth? How many people do you think Austin and the current ETJ can sustain? Please give a number. Will you push to include the carrying capacities of our natural resources and a realistic analysis of our infrastructure needs and how we will pay for them in the comprehensive plan?	Considering our current rate of growth I feel that the city should plan for doubling in size within the next twenty years. Considering that no person can predict future breakthroughs in science and technology which will contribute to what is actually attainable in our building standards, we also can not predict how possible future breakthroughs will affect what is possible with our current building standards or future building standards that will be passed by future generations so to simply ask how many people can we fit in a certain amount of space is a question that is scientifically impossible to answer. Yes, we must include the carrying capacities of our natural resources and a realistic analysis of our infrastructure needs and how we will pay for them in the comprehensive plan.	I do believe we have to give credence to our historical growth patterns, which have been very consistent over time, in planning for future growth. I'm not prepared to speculate as to how many people Austin and the current ETJ can sustain, but I do believe that our new comprehensive planning process should help us arrive at a rough figure. Yes, I do believe that our new comprehensive plan should incorporate a thorough analysis of our access to natural resources – especially water – and the capacity of our current infrastructure to service future growth, as well as an analysis of the potential cost of our projected future infrastructure needs relative to the benefits of projected future growth.

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<p>3. Citizen Participation. Do you believe a City Council appointed citizens’ task force or advisory committee would be beneficial in comprehensive planning? If so, would you involve a task force during the development stage to work with the consultant, at the implementation stage, or both? If not, what steps would you take to ensure community participation?</p>	<p>I feel that a community task force would be beneficial during all stages of developing a new comprehensive plan. I also feel that the City Council should set as a standard that no elected official or person on the Board of Directors of a corporation should be allowed to be on this community task force.</p>	<p>Yes, I believe a citizens’ advisory committee should be engaged in the comprehensive planning process, and it is my strong preference that such a committee be in place from the beginning of the process. In order for our comprehensive plan to have the buy-in it needs from the community to be successful over the long term, I believe the process must be citizen-driven rather than consultant-driven.</p>
<p>4. Neighborhood Plans. Have you ever read a neighborhood plan? Will you commit to respect neighborhood plans and vote against zoning changes that are opposed by neighborhood plan contact teams and that conflict with the goals of adopted neighborhood plans?</p>	<p>No, I have never read a neighborhood plan. I would oppose rezoning property that conflicts with existing neighborhood plans as long as the existing neighborhood plans continue to represent the best interest of the people as a whole.</p>	<p>I have not read all neighborhood plans but I have read many of them. I can’t commit to always vote in lock step with the provisions of every neighborhood plan, but I do place a very high value on the provisions of each plan, and would only consider voting in a way that is inconsistent with a neighborhood plan if there was an abundantly clear and broadly compelling rationale for doing so. This would likely be limited to issues of public safety, or instance where new information had become available subsequent to the neighborhood planning process. I can and will commit to confer with the neighborhood plan contact team in every case like this before voting.</p>
<p>5. Plan Integration. Do you believe that neighborhood plans lay a foundation for the comprehensive plan or will the comprehensive plan lead to modifications/adjustments to existing neighborhood plans?</p>	<p>I think that the comprehensive plan will define neighborhood plans because the neighborhood plans are based on the comprehensive plan.</p>	<p>Neighborhood plans should be respected in the comprehensive planning process, but I believe it’s reasonable to believe that the comprehensive plan could necessitate some modifications. In those cases, I believe that each proposed modification should be presented to the neighborhood for approval.</p>
<p>Zoning/Development Issues Planning</p>		
<p>6. Neighborhood Support. If you have served on the City Council or the Planning Commission please identify a few cases where you understood neighborhood versus development concerns and supported the neighborhood position. If not, please provide examples of any neighborhood issues you have supported at City Council or Planning Commission.</p>	<p>I have only had one opportunity to get involved with neighborhood planning but due to my job schedule I was unable to participate.</p>	<p>I’ve consistently voted in the interest of neighborhood protection and I’ll be happy to review as many specific examples as you care to hear – and perhaps more – at the upcoming ANC forum.</p>

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<p>7. Waterfront Overlay Protection. Do you agree with the Waterfront Overlay Task Force (WOTF) findings that it is important to reestablish the waterfront overlay protections from the 1986 code that were removed in the 1999 plain English rewrite? Will you push to codify and vote to reinstate the maximum height limits from the 1986 code such that they supersede any other provisions of the Land Development Code (including Planned Unit Development (PUD) Districts, Planned Development Area (PDA) Combining Districts and Commercial Design Standards)? Will you oppose current rezoning requests if they violate the intent of the 1986 ordinance?</p>	<p>I would honor the height limits established in the 1986 Waterfront Overlay District because I believe that our society needs to set limits and standards in order to ensure the good of the people. Yes, I will push to codify and vote to reinstate the maximum height limits from the 1986 code such that they supersede any other provisions of the Land Development Code. Yes, I would oppose current rezoning requests if they violate the intent of the 1986 ordinance.</p>	<p>Yes, yes, and yes.</p>
<p>8. Valid Petitions. If you have served on the City Council or Planning Commission, please give examples of when you voted against a valid petition of the community and your rationale for doing so. Please describe any other circumstances where you would not support a valid petition. If you have not served on City Council or Planning Commission please describe under what circumstances you would not support a valid petition of the community and give a specific example.</p>	<p>I would uphold a valid petition as long as it does not go against local, state, and federal law; restrict or take away from a person’s rights; and does not put any person or persons in possible danger.</p>	<p>As stated above regarding neighborhood plans, I would only ever vote (and have only ever voted) against valid petitions when there is an abundantly clear and broadly compelling rationale for doing so. This includes instances where public safety is at risk. I’ve also seen what I consider to be abuse of the valid petition process by individuals or small groups who disagree with the clear, prevailing will of a neighborhood, and have also factored those considerations into my decision making. I want to be certain that neighborhood advocates feel a strong sense of surety about my values regarding neighborhood plans and valid petitions, and as such will do all I can before casting any vote against either to ensure there is a clear understanding of the criteria by which I’ve made that judgment.</p>
<p>9. Compatibility Standards. The following questions have to do with compatibility standards that address preserving/protecting the integrity, character and residential fabric of existing established neighborhoods.</p>		
<p>a. Will you commit to support the existing zoning compatibility standards that provide buffers between commercial and residential properties? Under what circumstances, if any, do you think compatibility standards should be waived?</p>	<p>Yes, I would support the existing zoning compatibility standards. If the compatibility standards contradict federal and state laws then the compatibility standards should be waived and amended so it does not conflict with federal and state laws.</p>	<p>Yes, I will commit to support existing compatibility standards. While waivers are within the purview of the Board of Adjustment, the only circumstance I can think of under which I would consider supporting a waiver of compatibility standards would involve a risk to public safety.</p>

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<p>b. Will you commit to maintain existing regulations established by the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards and vote against any effort to weaken or reduce their effectiveness?</p>	<p>Yes I would as long as it does not conflict with federal and state law.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>c. Will you vote against an up-zoning from residential to commercial when a neighborhood opposes the up-zoning or there is a Restrictive Covenant that would be violated by the up-zoning? Describe any circumstances under which you believe such up-zonings are appropriate. What if the residential property is adjacent to a shallow commercial lot on a Core Transit Corridor?</p>	<p>Up-zoning should only be considered if the majority of the surrounding residents and/or businesses are in support of the up-zoning, as long as the City Council was provided with accurate and detailed data on the possible environmental effects of the proposed up-zoning.</p>	<p>I can't commit to oppose every single case that a neighborhood opposes, but I will give the opinion of the neighborhood great weight, and I can and will commit to oppose cases that violate a Restrictive Covenant. I'll not only vote to opposes cases that violate a Restrictive Covenant to which the City is a party, I'll also work to see that the City's zoning application process does a better job of revealing the existence of private Restrictive Covenants, and vote against cases that violate those, too.</p>
<p>d. Will you uphold all the current compromise restrictions and standards set forth in the Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) ordinance? These include no increased height over base zoning, compliance with compatibility standards, affordability as set forth by neighborhood associations' recommendations, and availability of expedited residential permit parking? If not, please explain. Do you believe that these standards should apply to properties opted-in after the initial VMU process? Would you ever support using Central Urban Redevelopment (CURE) for VMU projects to allow excess height over limits in the base district and, if so, under what circumstances?</p>	<p>I think that we should amend our current Vertical Mixed Use ordinance to state that no new Vertical Mixed Use properties are allowed to be placed downtown from I-35 to Lamar and from 11th Street to Town Lake in order to preserve our Downtown district. Yes I believe that these standards should apply to properties opted-in after the initial VMU process. I would not support using CURE for VMU projects to allow excess height over limits in the base district.</p>	<p>Yes, yes, and no, there are no circumstances that I can think of now.</p>
<p>e. Will you commit to help develop and adopt Neighborhood-Side Design Standards to ensure compatibility between residential neighborhoods and adjacent Core Transit Corridors?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Yes. I think this was a failing of the Commercial Design Standards development process, and needs to be addressed.</p>

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<p>f. City Council has recently amended the noise ordinance to provide a permitting process that allows for public input and potential restrictions on venues to ensure compatibility with nearby residences. Included with these revisions is a one year review to determine if the new process is effective. If it proves not to be effective are you willing to support structured restrictions on decibel levels and hours for live music venues within 600’ of residences? Will you commit to keeping any newly designated entertainment districts away from established residential neighborhoods?</p>	<p>As long as it does not include the downtown district from I-35 to Lamar and 11th Street to Town Lake.</p>	<p>Yes and yes. I think one means by which we can and should determine the efficacy of the new process is to survey adjacent neighborhoods.</p>
<p>10. Code Compliance. Will you commit to vote against rezoning to bring code violations into compliance if the rezoning is opposed by the neighborhood and nearby neighbors?</p>	<p>Yes I would.</p>	<p>I can’t commit to oppose every single case that a neighborhood opposes, but I will give the opinion of the neighborhood great weight. I do believe it’s appropriate to fully explore whether or not a code violation can be cured in any other way before agreeing to cure it with rezoning.</p>
<p>11. Traffic Impact Analysis. The city presently requires developers to provide a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) describing the impact of their proposed project. Often their consultants have failed to consider traffic at special events or have purposefully taken traffic counts at off-peak times. In addition, the scope of TIAs is very limited and does not consider the impact on the broader area including adjacent neighborhoods. Would you commit to improving this process such that TIAs accurately reflect impact and how would you go about doing so?</p>	<p>I would promote setting a new required standard that requires developers to give TIA that include the potential traffic impact for holidays, special events and peak rush hour traffic.</p>	<p>Yes, I think we can improve the TIA process, and that we should consider the cumulative impact of proposed future development in a given area when analyzing traffic impact.</p>

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Community Values		
<p>12. Affordable Housing. In its February 2007 report, the Affordable Housing Incentives Task Force listed the principle of geographic dispersion as its #1 priority. Do you believe in the core value of equitable distribution of affordable housing throughout the city, rather than the practice of concentrating it in lower-income neighborhoods? If so, given that the city is statutorily prohibited from mandating inclusionary zoning, what steps would you take to assure the best return on investment for the limited public funds available for affordable housing while also accomplishing the priority of fair and equitable geographic distribution?</p>	<p>Yes, I believe we should distribute affordable public housing throughout the city. I would work towards amending the local law so that it does not discriminate against providing low income housing for low income citizens.</p>	<p>As noted above, I think many of the issues of concern to Austin citizens are connected, and this is especially true of affordable housing issues. For example, I think we need to do a better job of making economic development decisions – such as locating major employers – in the context of housing concerns (i.e. is there nearby housing that is accessible to future employees?). While it’s clear that the best tool we have now to help us address our affordable housing crisis is bond funding approved in 2006, I hope and trust that our comprehensive planning process will help us determine how we can best accomplish geographic distribution of affordable housing, which I agree must be a top priority.</p>
<p>13. Property Tax Impacts. Presently the city does not consider the tax impact on properties near a proposed project. In some cases, allowing major up-zonings that increase land values have a ripple effect on nearby properties. Housing that is affordable to medium and low-income families can be heavily taxed which forces these families to move. Would you support the development of an assessment tool which would enable the City of Austin to evaluate and maintain historical data on the impact on nearby property values of proposed up-zonings, code changes and large scale developments?</p>	<p>Yes I would support that.</p>	<p>Yes, and I believe we can and should work with the Travis County Appraisal District to accomplish this.</p>

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<p>14. Local Business Support. Will you vote to pay further subsidies to Simon Properties? Please explain the extent to which you would pay further subsidies versus focusing city resources on support for locally-owned businesses.</p>	<p>I would focus resources on locally-owned businesses.</p>	<p>If Simon Properties continues to meet the performance criteria contained in their agreement with the City, I will support continuing to pay the agreed-upon rebates. I didn't support the Domain deal in 2003 – in fact I was one of only a handful of citizens who publicly testified against it – and I continue to believe that it is not an advantageous agreement overall. However, I believe in the principle that the City should be obligated to honor its legal agreements. I've said recently that if the City's budget crisis were ever to necessitate pay cuts for City employees, and thus require us to solicit renegotiation of our current legal agreements with those employees who work under a negotiated contract, then I would be willing to first ask those parties with whom the City has other contractual agreements – including tax incentive agreements – to renegotiate as well. I do hold our legal agreements sacrosanct and do not support a unilateral effort to undo any agreement (as was proposed by Proposition 2), but I don't believe it should be forbidden to ask people to help share in a sacrifice, if a sacrifice is required. They can always say no.</p>
<p>15. Historic Preservation. Presently, several neighborhoods are attempting to get a local historic designation through volunteer efforts and fundraising, but the Local Historic District application process is proving to be prohibitively expensive and time-consuming. Both the Heritage Society and the Landmark Commission have recommended that the city's historic district ordinance be revised to curtail the ownership and occupancy history requirements and to lower the owner sign-on requirement from 60% to 51% of the acreage. These changes would bring Austin more in line with Fort Worth, Dallas, San Antonio and all Austin's peer cities nationally. Would you vote in favor of these changes?</p>	<p>No, I would not support these changes.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>

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<p>16. Educational Impact Assessment. The city and school district are working to create an educational impact assessment for major developments, redevelopments, and code changes. How would you use this information? Would you vote to rezone a property to allow a major residential development if the schools in the area are at maximum capacity? Why or why not?</p>	<p>I would use the information to determine where we need more schools. I would not support rezoning a property to allow a major residential development if the schools in the area are at maximum capacity, due to the fact that it is the job of the City to ensure the quality of life of the citizens which includes giving all children an equal education.</p>	<p>I believe the City needs to do a much better job overall of making decisions in the context of our school system and the provision of education. This is another area where I hope and trust that our comprehensive planning process can help us make better, more holistic choices. Without knowing specifics, I can't say for sure if I would vote to oppose a residential development in an area where the schools are at maximum capacity; it might depend, for example, on whether the school district would consider amending attendance boundaries for the area or the school. In general, I would like to the City of Austin work much more closely with AISD, and specifically on planning future AISD bond packages.</p>
<p>17. Healthcare District. In March '09, the City's Community Health Clinics and a large portion of the Human Services Department (if not all), will transfer to a new 501c3 organization run by the Travis County Healthcare District. How will the Mayor/City Council insure that the same or better level of healthcare services are provided by the new organization, if it has no direct reports into City Staff or City Council?</p>	<p>At which point the City's Community Health Clinics and a large portion of the Human Services Department (if not all) transfer over to the Travis County Healthcare District, the City will no longer have jurisdiction over these services and will be forced to work closer with Travis County in order to insure the quality of healthcare.</p>	<p>I believe the City Council needs to exercise its best judgment in appointing Board members to the Travis County Healthcare District and hold those appointments accountable for the performance of the District. I believe we should also conduct regular, formal evaluations of the District's performance, and compare, on an ongoing basis, the cost and quality of healthcare services delivered by the District versus those previously delivered by the City. A favorable comparison should give us confidence that the District is on the right track, while an unfavorable comparison should raise concerns.</p>
<p>18. Parkland. Providing parks within walking distance is an important community priority, one that has become even more critical as densification results in many residences with little or no yard space and as private open space disappears. The new parkland dedication ordinance provides opportunities to create small neighborhood and urban pocket parks. Do you think parkland dedication fees are adequate and do you think they could be better used to provide pocket parks? The Families and Children's Task Force recommended working toward new goals for park or green space access in the city: ¼ mile for urban core and ½ mile for other parts of the city. Do you support this recommendation and if so what policies would you put in place to achieve it?</p>	<p>I do support putting in more parks but I believe that it should wait until we have fixed some of the more urgent tasks facing us in these tough economic times.</p>	<p>I'm willing to explore the possibility of increasing the parkland dedication fee to make it more consistent with the higher parkland dedication fees that I know are charged in other communities. I know that the City's Parks and Recreation Department is currently conducting a study to determine the extent to which Austin is in compliance with the recommendations of the Families and Children's Task Force - recommendations that I strongly support. Once we determine how much work there is to do to meet those recommendations, we can look both at modifying the parkland dedication fee, and at considering bond funding in our next bond package, as a way to meet our goals.</p>

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<p>19. Urban Tree Protection. How would you maintain our urban forest/urban tree canopy? Would you commit to increasing fines and penalties for the removal of protected trees to the point that it would no longer be profitable to ignore the ordinance? Would you support a true one-to-one replacement on diameter inches lost when our city arborist allows for mitigation? Would you support extending protection to smaller trees (currently at 19”) for certain species in order to keep more of our mature shade trees?</p>	<p>I would maintain our urban forest/urban tree canopy by increasing fines and penalties for the removal of protected trees to the point that it would no longer be profitable to ignore the ordinance, supporting a true one-to-one replacement on diameter inches lost when our city arborist allows for mitigation, and extending protection to smaller trees for certain species in order to keep more of our mature shade trees.</p>	<p>Yes, yes and yes. I think we should begin to consider a tree policy that not only provides for a fair replacement of diameter inches, but also considers the duration of time until a replication of the current tree canopy is achieved.</p>
<p>City Government</p>		
<p>20. City Legal Accountability. Do you believe it is a problem when city legal acts of its own accord and in opposition to the will of our elected officials? Would you advocate for and vote to put a change to the city charter on the ballot so the City Attorney reports to the City Council instead of the City Manager? If not, what other solution would you propose to remedy these issues?</p>	<p>I do believe it is a problem when city legal acts of its own accord and in opposition to the will of our elected officials. Yes I would advocate for and vote to put a change to the city charter on the ballot so the City Attorney reports to the City Council instead of the City Manager.</p>	<p>Yes, enthusiastically. Council Member Martinez and I brought this proposed City Charter amendment to the City Council for consideration in 2007, and it lost on a vote of 4-3. My main opponent in this race voted against it. If elected, I will bring this proposal again to the new Council, and would expect it to pass.</p>
<p>21. Boards and Commissions. The City Boards and Commissions (B/C) system is one of the most important and easily accessible channels for public input. It is also a mechanism to provide a wealth of expertise to City Council and serves as an important check and balance system on city staff. How do (will) you choose your Boards and Commissions appointees and how do (will) you communicate with and seek input from them? What actions or policy direction would you initiate to allow for timely and meaningful input to the City Council by the B/C system on all decisions within their purview?</p>	<p>I would choose my Boards and Commissions appointees by how much compassion and caring the individual has towards our community and helping for the good of all instead of continuing with our current system of choosing according to how much political connections someone has and I would keep an open line of communication with them at all times instead of pushing them aside when new situations arise. I would set a new policy that City Council can not make a final ruling until they have received input from the Boards and Commissions appointees.</p>	<p>As a five-year veteran of the Environmental Board, I take the City Board and Commission system very seriously and deeply value the input from the citizens who take the time to serve. I carefully vet all of my appointments, and do my best to communicate with each regularly, whether in person, over the phone, or via email. As part of my platform, I have proposed extending the time between finalizing City Council agendas and holding City Council meetings, in order to give everyone – even Council members – more time to see big issues coming; a commensurate extension should apply to input from Boards and Commissions.</p>

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<p>22. Board of Adjustments. Every month 2/3 of all Board of Adjustment cases are postponed largely because the Board encourages applicants from the dais to withdraw their request and come back with a better justification for their variance. Moreover, some applicants are allowed postponements and reconsiderations with seemingly no limit. These policies create backlogs of variance request cases, added staff workload, and hundreds of wasted hours for resident stakeholders. If you are elected and become a member of the Audit and Finance Council Committee will you commit to modifying the Board bylaws as necessary to ensure reasonable and consistent procedures are followed? What steps will you take to ensure that your appointee is operating without conflicts of interest? How will you ensure that they are considering cases as per Local Government Code (211.009) based on “unnecessary hardships” rather than financial or personal hardship/gain?</p>	<p>Yes I would commit to modifying the Board bylaws as necessary to ensure reasonable and consistent procedures are followed. I would ensure that my appointee is operating without conflicts of interest by frequently monitoring his or her work and by informing my appointee that if there is a conflict of interest and they do not bring it to my attention and it is discovered then my appointee would be terminated from their position. This question is a contradiction in terms because all unnecessary hardships are either personal or financial in nature.</p>	<p>Yes, if a modification of Board bylaws are necessary to ensure that procedures are reasonable and consistent, I would support it. To ensure that Board of Adjustment members have no conflict of interest, each member should file the required financial disclosures and recuse himself or herself when appropriate. The best way to use to ensure that the Board of Adjustment is only considering those cases they should according to State Law is to maintain strict oversight.</p>

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<p>23. City Government Structure. Turnout for last year’s City Council elections was an abysmal 8% of registered voters. Essentially, all City Council members are elected by the same 15,000 voters in the North West quarter of the city to represent the diverse interests of the entire population of 750,000. Are you satisfied with the current Council election system? If not, how would you change it?</p>	<p>I am not satisfied with the current Council election system. I would change the existing system by amending the City Councils job descriptions to include so many hours of service per year dedicated to encouraging all citizens to register to vote as well as educating our citizens on how important their vote is.</p>	<p>I personally support a change to a mixed system that includes both single member district representation and at-large representation. I believe a mixed system could help improve city government overall by ensuring that citizens have representatives from their area of town with an intimate understanding of the ongoing issues and concerns in that area, while also preserving a broader, citywide perspective on the Council. I also believe that localizing some Council races could help make public service an option for more people of different backgrounds by elevating the efficacy of neighborhood-level grassroots campaigning over that of raising ever more campaign cash to buy ever more 30-second TV ads. Ultimately I think the goal must be to craft a carefully balanced system that offers as many of the upsides and as few of the downsides as possible of both approaches, while also safeguarding (or even better, expanding) minority representation on the Council. More important than my personal position is my support for giving Austin citizens the opportunity to vote on a clear, realistic proposal as soon as possible, and I will make it a priority to do so if I'm elected mayor. I was really disappointed when we were not able to get a good proposal to the ballot last year. I think the first step should be to convene a new City Charter Revision Commission later this year and get to work to educate and engage the community in a process of crafting the best possible proposal. We've heard before that single member district proposals have failed at the ballot in Austin six or seven times over the past twenty years. But the fact is that we've never put a balanced, mixed system of representation in front of Austin voters, and I believe we should.</p>
<p>Budget</p>		
<p>24. Budget Cuts. As city revenues shrink, do you believe that city departmental budgets should be cut equally across the board? Why or why not? How would you address increasing needs and demands that are a result of the economic downturn such as rising crime rates, more homeless people on the streets and increased needs for basic health and human services? Would you support cutting salaries of top city executives (or exerting pressure for voluntary cuts when salaries are contractually set) including the Mayor and City Council? What other areas would you cut and what would you refuse to cut?</p>	<p>We should not cut budgets equally across the board. Instead we should try to prevent cutting the budgets of the departments that directly affect the citizen’s lives such as emergency and social services. I would address the increasing needs and demands that are a result of the economic downturn by insuring that we have no wasteful spending such as giving or loaning money to private corporations and by holding the persons who run our local government departments accountable to every cent they spend.</p>	<p>I believe that if any City employee is forced to accept a pay freeze or pay cut as result of our budget crisis, then all City employees should be asked to do so. The one exception I would make to this rule would be for top city executives, including the Mayor and Council, who I believe should be willing – if necessary – to accept pay cuts first as an expression of leadership. No, I don’t believe that all city department budgets should be cut equally across the board, because in times of crisis, all city services are not equal. As part of my platform, I have pledged to oppose budget cuts that would negatively impact the delivery of social services or public safety services, because now more than ever we need to ensure the reliability of our community’s safety net. I can’t overstate the importance of this, in my view. Already, there are people in Austin who are losing their jobs, their insurance, their cars, and in some cases their homes; what we can’t afford to let them lose is their dignity, their health, or their sense of safety. More than anything, Austin is a caring, compassionate community. Now is exactly the time to reaffirm our commitment to those core values.</p>

Question	Josiah James Ingalls	Lee Leffingwell
<p>25. Violent Crime and Public Safety. There is concern that cuts to the public safety budget could leave families in certain neighborhoods where violent crime rates are already much higher than normal, in particular Montopolis and some other east side areas, even more vulnerable to violent crimes. How will you ensure that these neighborhoods will get the public safety resources they need?</p>	<p>I will ensure that these neighborhoods will get the public safety resources they need by not cutting the budget of emergency services.</p>	<p>As noted in the response above, I've pledged to oppose budget cuts that would negatively impact the delivery of public safety services. Public safety is a fundamental obligation of local government. Yes, in times of economic uncertainty and shrinking revenue, we have a responsibility to save money. But we also have a responsibility to save lives.</p>
<p>26. Cost of Services. Would you support requiring comprehensive accountings to enable city leaders and the public to understand how the cost of providing a service compares to the fees collected for that service? Do you believe special events should pay for themselves? Please identify other city services or departments where fees could be made commensurate with the cost of services?</p>	<p>Yes I would support requiring comprehensive accounting and I would do so by pushing for a City ordinance that states that all branches of our local government have to document what they purchase, who approved the purchase, how much the purchase was, and what company the purchase was with. As for the matter of contracted work, our contract companies would have to provide to the city where those government dollars went with a detailed itemized list and all of the new purchasing data from this ordinance will be public record and posted on the City's website. This data will be combined with the data of fees collected in order to effectively show cost of services versus fees collected. I believe that special events should pay for themselves.</p>	<p>Yes, I believe we should do all we reasonably can to ensure that the fees charged for services are comparable to the cost of delivering those services. Yes, I believe we should work to ensure that special events pay for themselves, although I believe we do also have to consider the residual income of special events (such as sales tax revenue and hotel / motel bed tax revenue). Still, I believe the City should be good negotiators. If Jeff Jack can squeeze Mick Jagger for \$300,000 for Zilker Park, the City of Austin should be able to ensure that the immediate public costs of special events are fairly compensated.</p>
<p>27. Water Treatment Plant #4. Will you vote to defer the approval of additional contracts for WTP#4 until additional studies have been performed?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>My position on Water Treatment Plant #4 is that we should proceed with construction of capacity for 50MGD in order to ensure we are prepared to meet our own future water demands. At that point, I would support a delay in the construction of subsequent capacity in order to determine how effective we can expect all of our water conservation efforts to be over the long term. Right now I believe that we have inadequate data, compiled over too short of a time period, to conclude that our water conservation efforts can and should delay construction of at least the first phase of the facility.</p>