

## Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) 2009 City Council Candidates Forum Questionnaire Responses – Places 2 & 5

Question	Place 2 – Mike Martinez	Place 5 – Bill Spelman
What neighborhood do you live in?	I live in the Senate Hills Subdivision in Central East Austin within the boundaries of the Pecan Springs/Springdale Hill Neighborhood Association.	Hyde Park
Do you belong to your neighborhood or homeowner's association?	Yes, I am a member of my home owners association.	Yes.
Have you participated in neighborhood planning? If so, how?	No.	Yes, on the Council between 1997 and 2000, and as part of my neighborhood association.
Planning		
1. <b>Comprehensive Planning.</b> 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 read the comprehensive plan extensively, but cannot say emphatically that I have read the entire plan. I have used it to assist with my decision-making processes since being on the council, and do support the comprehensive planning process and have voted for the initial funding. Rather than specific mechanisms, I would advocate that we elect people who will respect the comprehensive plan. At the same time, I believe our comprehensive plan should be a guide for what is a living and rapidly changing planning environment. When I think about Austin 10 years ago, I remember a much different town, and not all of that progress is bad. We must continue to plan in order to make the best decisions possible as we move forward. I will continue to support the new comprehensive planning process as long as a strong public input component remains a part of the planning process. Without out citizens guiding and leading the process, I don't believe a new comprehensive plan can serve a that true guiding document for current and future councils.	<p>I refer to some of it frequently but have never read the entire document.</p> <p>Yes, the Austin Tomorrow Plan is the basic source for the distinction between the Desired Development Zone and the Drinking Water Protection Zone.</p> <p>Yes, if it is done properly with sufficient public participation, funding, and respect for the neighborhood planning effort.</p> <p>Implementation must be the responsibility of every department of the City and the community. I writing and passing a series of ordinances to implement the specific elements of the plan, naming a community advisory committee to oversee implementation, and backing up the plan with funding to support implementation.</p>
2. <b>Growth Management.</b> 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?	The 20 year standard is the one most often talked about. It is largely accepted due to the history of our City's growth and how consistently over time, we have doubled in population every 20 years. Our plans moving forward should question and determine if this growth trend is sustainable and viable. I agree with a full assessment of our infrastructure and how it relates to land use and growth. If our infrastructure is not capable of supporting development in any area (not just our desired development zone), then it should be a valid factor in council decision making in the future. In my opinion, growth, in certain instances, has not proven to pay for itself and that must be taken into consideration by our council.	<p>The average metro area in the U.S. is growing at about 1% per year due mostly to births – doubling about every 72 years. All our models thus assume a much higher growth rate than average. The comprehensive plan should use a scenario planning approach with a high, medium and low projection.</p> <p>There is no way to determine an exact number because of the potential variables of technology, density, and changing expectations for quality of life.</p> <p>Absolutely, the basic idea of carrying capacity should be part of a good comprehensive planning process.</p>

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<p>3. <b>Citizen Participation.</b> 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>Yes. This is the exact reason I supported a delay in the current process to ensure that there is a clear and defined citizen input process before council action on any expenditure or hiring of consultants. I am prepared to rebid this item if we determine that a valid portion of the matrix needs to be a component of how the citizens lead and input process would work.</p>	<p>Yes.  I would involve the committee at every stage in the plan.</p>
<p>4. <b>Neighborhood Plans.</b> 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>My commitment to every group I have spoken to, or responded to in the form of a questionnaire, is that I will continue to look at every zoning change on a case-by-case basis. I wholeheartedly respect and support the work that our plan contact teams do, and I will continue to look to neighborhood plans to aid me in my decisions. However, I cannot make blanket commitments on cases that have yet to come to Council.</p>	<p>Yes.  In almost every case that I can imagine I would support the neighborhood plan.</p>
<p>5. <b>Plan Integration.</b> 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 believe neighborhood plans are the foundation of any comprehensive plan. The NP’s are the detailed micro views of each part of our city. Our comprehensive plan is a satellite and macro view of how our city will evolve over the next several years. While there may be some minor modifications to NP’s that are in part spurred by the comprehensive plan, I truly believe most if not all changes that come down from the comprehensive plans to the neighborhoods will actually improve the overall growth and quality of life.</p>	<p>Neighborhood plans lay a foundation for the Comprehensive Plan in their area. However, it is possible during the course of the comprehensive planning process that neighborhoods may want to amend their plans.</p>

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<b>Zoning/Development Issues Planning</b>		
<p>6. <b>Neighborhood Support.</b> 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>One that comes to mind was the Redeemer Church case at the MLK TOD. I simply did not believe the applicant had done all that they could do in that case, and the Council was clearly split down the middle. I was the swing vote and I refused to give in. If you will recall, the Council sat deadly silent because no one wanted to make a motion up or down in this case. I made the motion to table the item until later in the evening due to a multi hour public hearing that we had pending on the agenda. I asked the applicant to step outside the Council Chambers to continue discussions with the Neighborhood to work out their issues. Within minutes both parties returned and begged the council to take up their item before the next public hearing, stating that the applicant had agreed to the neighborhood’s requests and there was mutual agreement.</p> <p>I was also the first council member to publicly take a position on the CWS PUD request on the shores of Lady Bird Lake which led to what we all agree was a positive outcome for the neighbors, future development, Lady Bird Lake, the Hike and Bike Trail, and the Waterfront Overlay ordinance.</p> <p>I was also the lead sponsor for the rewrite of the PUD ordinance that created a better development tool requiring the values of the neighbors and developers be stated up front before any request or negotiated process takes place, and put the policy decision more in the hand of Council, where I believe it should be.</p>	<p>I served on the council from 1997 to 2000 and supported many neighborhoods over the three years.</p>
<p>7. <b>Waterfront Overlay Protection.</b> 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>As mentioned in the previous answer, I was a co-sponsor of the creation of the WOTF and drafting of the ordinance to incorporate the recommendations of the WOTF, which is currently in the review process. So yes, I believe it is important to reaffirm those protections. I also believe the negotiated deal between CWS/Save Town Lake and the SRCC is a good example of how a project can work for a property owner while providing the community benefits to continue expanding access to the waterfront along with other public amenities.</p>	<p>Yes. The plain English amendments were never intended to change anything substantive.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>I will vote to uphold the intent of the 1986 ordinance.</p>

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<p>8. <b>Valid Petitions.</b> 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've voted for and against Valid Petitions during my first term on City Council. In some cases, they upheld the neighborhood's position, and in historical and Vertical Mixed Use cases they upheld a property owner's position. I believe a valid petition is a vital tool and must be maintained as a part of our process. But it is not, nor was it intended to be a veto or rejection of an applicant's request. While I realize and understand concerns of neighbors and will remain respectful of those concerns, I will continue to consider each case based on its merits.</p>	<p>In three years, I can only think of one case in which I voted against a valid petition of the community. The landowner of a single-family structure located at the corner of West 6th and MoPac sought a change from SF-3 to LO to allow his renters to post a sign. All similar structures along West 6th Street had already been rezoned and had been used for offices for years. The neighborhood objected and I disagreed with them. I might also consider voting against a valid petition if the issue involved public health or safety.</p>
<p>9. <b>Compatibility Standards.</b> 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>I believe our Compatibility Standards are a good method to mitigate the impact of commercial uses on residential properties. I support existing compatibility ordinances but at the same time understand that one size does not fit all, as shown in the CWS case where some compatibility was waived in order to achieve a superior product. But those variances should be granted online in clear cases where the community benefits and amenities are commensurate with the compatibility waived.</p>	<p>Yes.  No specific circumstances come to mind.</p>
<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>I support the regulations established but can not make a blanket commitment to cases that have yet to appear before Council. There is one issue with the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards that is troubling to me, that is the narrow provisions for duplexes. Duplexes can provide opportunities for affordable housing, and because their regulation was driven to address an extremely localized issue, the rest of the City has been penalized.</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>As stated previously, I base my decisions on what I believe is the best land use for the location. I take into account the public input process, staff recommendations, Neighborhood plans, Neighborhood input, and applicant positions.</p>	<p>Generally speaking, yes.  I would have to see the specific circumstances of the case.</p>

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<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>VMU doesn't entitle additional height and we've seen few examples of it in practice to determine its impact. I remained in full support of ALL opt-out requests from neighborhoods, and I believe that speaks to my understanding of many of the concerns that our community surrounding VMU. Typically, properties were opted out to allow Neighborhoods the ability to negotiate individual projects. See above for my position on blanket decisions.</p>	<p>I would anticipate upholding the compromise restrictions in most cases but cannot anticipate every possibility.</p> <p>I am not sure about the effect of the opt-in after the initial VMU process and require more information.</p> <p>I cannot think of a case in which I would.</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.</p>
<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>I was proud to have worked with Council Member Morrison on this issue over the last several months. The review process gets to what I consider to be the heart of the matter -- taking compatibility into consideration when issuing permits. A previous action authored by Council Member Morrison and myself attempted to streamline enforcement of decibel levels and hours of operation. The review process will allow us to address the consistent violators, and structured restrictions could be a way to get them to be better neighbors, but I am hopeful that the series of reforms we instituted in the past several months will address neighborhood concerns and provide for more dialogue between venues and their neighbors.</p>	<p>I await the results of the one-year review. I will consider all alternatives to ensure that our establish neighborhoods can co-exist with live music.</p> <p>Any newly designated entertainment districts should be developed with all stakeholders in discussion.</p>
<p>10. <b>Code Compliance.</b> 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>No...as stated previously I cannot take a stand on cases that have yet to come to Council.</p>	<p>In almost every case I can imagine the answer is yes.</p>

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<p>11. <b>Traffic Impact Analysis.</b> 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>The City uses national TIA standards which take some time to be updated. Whether the City has the staff time and expertise to develop a local version is debatable. Typically, TIAs happen during the site plan process but it is taken into consideration with zoning changes. Council has asked staff in specific instances to conduct further analysis with regard to localized impacts. As you witnessed my position regarding the Wild Flower Commons PUD request, I felt the traffic impact and vehicle lane miles traveled were critical components of the pending decision and directed staff and the developer to ensure that we were all operating under clear, accurate and valid data. I remain committed to such in the future.</p>	<p>Yes, TIAs need improvement. I will look to best practices from around the country to inform our local TIA evaluations.</p>
<b>Community Values</b>		
<p>12. <b>Affordable Housing.</b> 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 in the value of equitable distribution of affordable housing. We are obviously constrained by market forces that drive affordability to where the City can get the most out of very limited dollars, and the fact that we cannot utilize inclusionary zoning (other than within the Homestead Preservation District). The idea of using land banks and land trusts has the potential to assist us in these efforts. It is clear to me that the tools we are using at present are not working to accomplish affordable housing across the City at the level we would prefer, so I am committed to researching and finding new tools that can assist us. That is why both land banks and land trusts hold such great promise.</p>	<p>Yes.  There are a number of approaches such as leveraging partnerships with existing non- profits such as Foundation Communities, using existing public land with long-term leases to area nonprofits, using foreclosed or underutilized properties, and focusing on saving existing affordable housing stock.</p>
<p>13. <b>Property Tax Impacts.</b> 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.</p>	<p>Yes. This database could be valuable in analyzing the effects of a wide variety of land use policies.</p>

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<p>14. <b>Local Business Support.</b> 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>The Domain subsidies agreement was made before prior to my arrival on Council, and I believe that in order to not pay for that agreement, we would need to consider all our options before opening ourselves up to that liability. I have voted against entertaining these types of agreements in the future that include a retail component by both changing City policy and sponsoring a City ordinance to safeguard future councils from these types of decisions.</p>	<p>In the current economic and fiscal climate, every funding source should be considered.</p> <p>There is no question that the Domain provided some value to Austin residents. The question is whether it was worth the value of the contract. The city needs a transparent cost-benefit analysis to determine the value of the project to Austin residents.</p>
<p>15. <b>Historic Preservation.</b> 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>I am a supporter of the local historic district process, and worked to contribute funding from the Holly Good Neighbor Program money to facilitate the East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood’s efforts to create a local historic district. I would consider and work on other opportunities to improve and enhance the current ordinance.</p>	<p>I need more information as the specifics of this proposal but on the face of it seems reasonable.</p>
<p>16. <b>Educational Impact Assessment.</b> 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 this information in considering new developments in hopes that this type of information would be used by both the City and the school district in their planning processes to address capacity issues. For example, it might make sense to approve such a development if there are plans for a new school in the area that would alleviate the capacity issues. If that was not the case, it would definitely inform my decisions as a Council Member to have this type of assessment as well as a discussion with the school districts.</p>	<p>To analyze the impact on school attendance, overcrowding, infrastructure needs, transportation, affordable housing and many other important issues.</p> <p>The capacity of area schools should be a factor, though it may not always be the determining factor.</p>
<p>17. <b>Healthcare District.</b> 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>The decision to create the Healthcare District, and the subsequent transfer of operations came from a vote of the people and I supported the creating of the district. Council has worked diligently to ensure that our employees were seamlessly transitioned to the district, and made as whole as possible to ensure their production and morale remained as high as possible to provide the best possible level of service. One way to ensure a quality level of service is through our appointments to the Healthcare District Board, ensuring they are properly guiding such essential functions as the delivery of healthcare.</p>	<p>The clinics will transfer to the Healthcare District; public health will remain a City of Austin responsibility. The District is governed by a board, jointly appointed by the Travis County Commissioner’s Court and the Austin City Council. The City needs to be careful in making these appointments, perhaps coordinating with the County in doing so. Appointees should require comprehensive performance measures of District staff, and make regular reports to the Commissioner’s Court and the City Council.</p>

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<p>18. <b>Parkland.</b> 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 the goal of creating open space as closely as possible to all residents within all parts of our community. In our current economic climate it is difficult to commit to any policy initiative that would have a fiscal impact on our PARD Budget and the General Fund. I believe we have a tremendous opportunity with our new Parks and Recreation Department director, and I look forward to working with Mrs. Hensley in the future in obtaining all of our goals related to PARD.</p>	<p>We need to review the adequacy of the new parkland dedication ordinance. Depending on neighborhood conditions, pocket parks may be a better use of the funds.</p> <p>I support the recommendation and will look to the Comprehensive Plan to build support for achieving it.</p>
<p>19. <b>Urban Tree Protection.</b> 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 support the work of our Urban Forestry Board and the urban forestry community. While I realize and understand the importance of protecting our trees and other parts of our urban forestry, committing to a “one-size fits all” approach to mitigation of tree removal is not the best option. I do agree and support a better enforcement mechanism for those violating our existing tree ordinance, and will work to improve this with the input and support of our urban forest community.</p>	<p>I will look to experts in the field to protect our tree canopy and it has been suggested that an audit of the urban forest is a good first step.</p> <p>Yes. A fine should be sufficiently punitive to prevent bad behavior. It should never be just another cost of doing business.</p> <p>If the city arborist believes this is a sufficient replacement rate then I will support it.</p> <p>I would consider it.</p>
<p><b>City Government</b></p>		
<p>20. <b>City Legal Accountability.</b> 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>Yes. As you know, I was one of the strongest proponents of this measure getting on the November 2008 ballot, but we were unable to convince enough of our colleagues to allow the citizens the right to make a choice in this matter. I believe there is an inherent flaw in our legal advisory system when the City attorney is directly appointed by the City manager rather than the City Council. I will continue to strive for a ballot measure that would require the City attorney be appointed by a majority of the Council, but could only be removed by a super majority of the Council (6 votes presently) in order to avoid political fallout for legal advice given.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The vast majority of City legal work is done for City staff not the city council. On those occasions when the city council needs independent legal advice it should rely on outside counsel.</p>

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<p>21. <b>Boards and Commissions.</b> 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>There are many factors taken into consideration when appointing a citizen to a board or commission. Some of those include, but are not limited to; related experience, prior service, affiliations, diversity, make-up of other board members, etc.</p> <p>It may be true that there is some disconnect between Council and our appointees, some of which is set up by the administration process by City staff. I have learned throughout the course of my first term that taking a more active role in getting feedback from the citizens I appoint is crucial. I believe the Board and Commission process of our government is one of the, if not the, most critical aspect of public input. It is this citizen led and driven process that makes Austin one of the most active citizen participation communities in the entire country. I am proud of that and will continue to foster more opportunities for open government and public input.</p>	<p>As the primary author of the 2003 Boards and Commissions Task Force Report, I am on record supporting the need for a wide variety of viewpoints on all Boards and Commissions. To ensure that variety of viewpoints I will choose B&amp;C appointees from across the community. On communication and input see below.</p> <p>There are two ways, one procedural and one personal. The procedural approach is to direct staff to take fair and complete minutes of B&amp;C discussions to be distributed to the council. The principal value of B&amp;C review is in the discussion, and the city council currently has little information as to what the discussion was about. With this information the council can determine if a particular topic needs more attention. I will also call my appointees and other B&amp;C members as needed to get their advice more directly. I will also encourage them to call me if they believe there is something I need to know.</p>
<p>22. <b>Board of Adjustments.</b> 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>Many of the issues referenced were taken into consideration during the updates and revisions to the Boards and Commissions ordinance. All of our Boards and Commissions are required, by ordinance, to strictly follow Roberts Rules of Order. If this is not taking place, I would gladly take action to remove and replace members that repeatedly violate the by-laws of Boards and Commissions.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>I will make sure all disclosure forms are filed and if I receive a report that an appointee is operating under a conflict of interest I will remove them from the Board or Commission.</p> <p>The Board of Adjustment should be required to list specific hardships and include this list in the official record of the case before deciding in favor of the applicant.</p>

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<p>23. <b>City Government Structure.</b> 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 have advocated for the length of my first term, the need for a new system that will include both district representation and some level of at-large representation. I believe this council system will help achieve increased turnout in geographic areas of the city that have historically voted in limited numbers in city-wide elections. I wholeheartedly believe that if we are to make progress in this arena, it will have to be with much more significant community support. As with the city attorney issue, this measure was not placed on the ballot due to a lack of colleague support to allow the citizens the right to choose their form of government.</p>	<p>I am not satisfied with the current council representation system. Although Northwest Austin represents the biggest single bloc of voters, some other parts of the city turn out at high rates as well.</p> <p>I believe that other forms of representation such single member districts would improve accountability and would help ensure that all communities across the city have a voice. It is also important to consider other alternatives to improving representation such “double member districts” or a number of other options. Because I believe in examining a number of alternatives I do not have a specific proposal as to the number of districts or seats that I think would work best. Any transition to a new more accountable system must be done with wide community support to expect success.</p>
<b>Budget</b>		
<p>24. <b>Budget Cuts.</b> 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>I do not and will not support an “across the board” approach to budget cuts. We are not talking about closing a minimal gap that is only a one time event. In fact, we are facing a potential 3rd round of budget cuts for this fiscal year alone and the approach to cuts must be one of reason and precision. A shot gun approach to budget cuts at this point is irresponsible, and could further jeopardize critical City services that could otherwise be kept intact during one the most difficult economic recessions in our nation’s history. If necessary, I would consider a temporary reduction of salaries of our highest ranked and highest paid city employees. But let me be clear, there is nothing that I will propose that I will not apply directly to myself first. What message do we send our work force and our citizens if those of us in the highest paid and most influential positions are not willing to tighten our own belts first? I believe this is the exact problem with some of our largest and most wealthy corporations that have led to this current recession.</p> <p>Again, I can not take a presumptive approach to our current budget issue so it would inconsistent and irresponsible to state today what cost savings measures I would or would not support at this time. There are absolutely no sacred cows and all options must remain on the table until the economic downturn has passed.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Needs change during economic downturns.</p> <p>By leveraging existing services and working with the community to obtain their assistance with the problems.</p> <p>While this could raise some funds and may have some symbolic value, this is not a viable way of obtaining real savings.</p> <p>Almost everything is on the table. Nevertheless, I would refuse to default on any debt incurred by the city.</p>

Question	Place 2 – Mike Martinez	Place 5 – Bill Spelman
<p>25. <b>Violent Crime and Public Safety.</b> 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>As arguably the strongest advocate for public safety, I will remain committed to maintaining our core city services which includes public safety. During economic downturns, crimes such as theft and burglary only increase and we must remain mindful of this fact as we continue to attempt to close the budget gap. I do not believe our public safety departments should be exempt from finding savings and efficiencies to close the budget gap, but also believe we can find these savings within those departments without cutting service.</p>	<p>Among other subjects, I teach program evaluation at the LBJ School; I also spent seven years with a national association of big-city police chiefs before coming to Texas. So I know a fair amount about performance measurement and appropriate responses to emerging problems. I will institute a policy where Council members receive monthly or quarterly reports from each city department on neighborhood conditions and services delivered, including the police department. If there were a dramatic increase in crime in a particular neighborhood, the best response would depend on the type and location of the criminal activity, although it would generally require improved cooperation between the police and the public.</p>
<p>26. <b>Cost of Services.</b> 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>I would be more than happy to provide an accurate accounting, and believe this is necessary to make the best possible decisions. There are state statute requirements precluding Council from setting fees above and beyond costs incurred by the City. The Austin community is very active in many events taking place on any given weekend in Austin. There are almost 90 known events per year with only 52 weekends...due to this, there are inherent issues that we must continue to address. Most, if not all, events support local non-profit agencies in our community that are vital to Austin’s quality of life and philanthropic endeavors. I will continue to remain mindful of the many issues that arise with our events while continuing our supportive role and efforts in keeping Austin a place for all to enjoy and play.</p>	<p>This is already done for some services such as water and wastewater and other enterprise funds. I would support an expansion of the accounting.</p> <p>No, not necessarily, they may provide other benefits to the city other than financial.</p> <p>One suggestion could be for the police to charge for repeat calls for service.</p>
<p>27. <b>Water Treatment Plant #4.</b> Will you vote to defer the approval of additional contracts for WTP#4 until additional studies have been performed?</p>	<p>Water conservation should continue to be a priority for Austin, and I believe many of our efforts thus far have been very successful. However, in order to meet our future demands we must move forward with phase 1 of WTP4. I will consider delaying future phases of construction of WTP4 if conservation methods show measurable gains. There is no single solution to our water supply problems, which is why it’s so critical that we proceed with WTP4 while also striving for better water conservation. It has always been a priority for me to keep the cost of City services low, and will continue to be a priority for me in my next term.</p> <p>Without phase 1 of WTP4, we are severely restricted in our ability to improve costs and efficiencies at Davis (our most costly operation) and Ulrich. Having the ability to reduce production in portions of these facilities will allow us the opportunities to improve our water treatment process and provide costs savings in the future.</p>	<p>I believe it would be reasonable to postpone construction of Water Treatment Plant #4 considering our city’s difficult financial position, the success of the water conservation program, and opportunity for the comprehensive planning process to help redefine future growth patterns. The extremely high cost of this proposed plant requires a more prudent fiscal approach than we have seen to date.</p>