



Questionnaire for 2011 Austin City Council Candidates

Candidate's Name:

Position Sought:

What neighborhood do you live in?

Do you belong to your neighborhood or homeowner's association?

Have you participated in neighborhood planning? If so, how?

I. PLANNING AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

1. The assumptions in Austin's comprehensive planning effort, Imagine Austin, predict that the city's population will double by 2050. Do you believe that forecast is inevitable? What problems does that forecast present?
2. Do you believe that the preferred growth scenario as proposed by city staff provides sufficient data to verify whether growth will pay for the infrastructure it requires? What will you do to ensure that growth pays for itself?
3. Do you believe that adopted neighborhood plans should be incorporated verbatim into the new comprehensive plan, giving equal weight to the text and the future land use map (FLUM) of the neighborhood plan? In cases where the new comprehensive plan conflicts with existing neighborhood plans, would you require that changes be subject to the neighborhood plan amendment process?
4. How would you ensure that the Imagine Austin plan is implemented?

II. BUDGET

1. As the city faces reduced revenues and increased budget demands, what measures can the city take to maintain the quality of services and our community values? What would you cut and what would you refuse to cut? If staff reductions are required, how would you determine which employees, departments, or executives are affected?
2. What are your criteria to support any proposed electric and water rate increases?
3. Do the city's public safety contracts put an undue burden on the city budget? What do you think are the most important factors in the upcoming police "Meet and Confer" process?
4. Despite the poor economy and the current deficits for federal, state, and local budgets, the city is proceeding with several large capital improvement projects, such as Water Treatment Plant 4, extensive new underground wastewater lines, and Waller Creek Tunnel Project. Do you think the City Council is being fiscally responsible, and what you would do to control the costs of these capital improvement projects?

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Will you vote against subsidies to large employers? Will you require a total cost-benefit analysis before voting on any subsidies or loans to any businesses?
2. Should the City of Austin subsidize small businesses, especially those involved in music and entertainment? What forms of support do you think are appropriate for local businesses?
3. Should the City of Austin be financially involved in developing an 800+ room hotel to promote the convention business?

IV. TRANSPORTATION

1. Do you support improved bus service, better bike lanes, more sidewalks, and other pedestrian improvements? Please comment on the policies or projects that you think would best address Austin's transportation needs.
2. Do you support the urban rail system proposed by Mayor Leffingwell?
3. The city presently requires developers to provide a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) only for very large projects (more than 2000 car trips per day). TIAs have no expiration date, and the analysis does not include adjacent neighborhoods. What would you do to ensure that the City Council and land use commissions receive traffic analyses that accurately reflect the impact of a proposed project?

V. ZONING

1. Describe a contested land use case or other neighborhood issue where you supported the neighborhood position at a City Council meeting or other hearing.
2. In cases where a neighborhood opposes up-zoning to convert residential use to a commercial use, and where adequate commercially zoned property is already available, will you commit to vote against such up-zoning?
3. Do you agree with the recent City Council vote to approve a Planned Unit Development (PUD) at 801 Barton Springs Road, within the Waterfront Overlay, despite the staff and Planning Commission recommendations against the PUD? Will you support the reinstatement of a clear method for increasing development entitlements commensurate with community benefits, as outlined in the 1986 city code?
4. Do you support the existing compatibility standards that provide buffers between commercial and residential properties? Under what circumstances, if any, do you think compatibility standards should be waived? How could compatibility be improved?

VI. COMMUNITY VALUES

1. Do you believe that affordable housing should be distributed throughout the city? 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?
2. Do you support the Citywide Strategic Priority to encourage families with children to live in the urban core? How would you implement it?

3. Do you support the equitable distribution of the property tax burden among residential and commercial properties? Will you seek to correct the underassessment of commercial properties by the Travis Central Appraisal District? Will you support a homestead exemption for city taxpayers?

VII. ENVIRONMENT

1. The Master Plan Phase 1 Watershed Report estimates that Austin needs \$800 million in capital funding and an ongoing \$2-5 million per year to address serious problems of flooding, erosion, and water quality degradation in 17 watersheds. What would you do to help ensure these waterways are cleaned up, and what changes would you support to limit the degradation of our creeks and lakes? Will you commit to instructing the City Manager to assess the drinking supply watersheds that were deferred to Phase II of the Master Plan?
2. Do you think the penalties in the city's tree protection ordinances are sufficient to deter violations and to preserve our urban forest? If not, what measures would you take to help ensure the preservation of mature trees?
3. Do you support the energy and water conservation policies of the City of Austin utilities? How would you change them?
4. The City Council has approved at least \$350 million for construction of Water Treatment Plant 4, yet the engineering and environmental studies have not been completed. How well do you think the city has vetted this project, and what would you do to ensure that this infrastructure investment is not a financial or environmental disaster?

VIII. CITY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

1. Do you feel that the current City Council adequately represents the diverse interests of the entire population of 750,000? What changes to the city charter would you support within the next year to change the way we elect the City Council or otherwise restructure city government?
2. Do you support the creation of a representative citizens' group to recommend a structure and district boundaries for the election of council members from geographic districts? If the City Council proposes a charter amendment for single-member districts, will you sponsor a simultaneous amendment establishing an independent body to oversee periodic redistricting?
3. What would you do to help ensure that Council business is conducted in public view and that you have adequate information prior to making decisions? Will you commit to making your own calendar public?

*****END OF QUESTIONNAIRE*****

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME