

Austinist Questions: Randi Shade

1. The Austin Music Commission is considering reducing the decibel limit under the city noise ordinance. Do you think that the noise ordinance should be changed?

With regard to downtown, my feeling is that if residents don't want to hear music, they should probably consider living elsewhere. Regarding residential neighborhoods outside of downtown, I am for strict, consistent and responsive enforcement of the current ordinances governing noise. Where there are specific situations at the neighborhood level that have proven to be persistently problematic, I am open to considering alternatives, including a reduction in the allowable decibel limit, if the Austin Music Commission recommends it.

2. Has the McMansion ordinance been successful? What do you think of City Council's recent decision to reject OCEAN's request to further restrict home sizes on small lots in East Austin?

I think the jury is still out on the success of the McMansion ordinance. I do appreciate the spirit of the effort, which is to protect the character and livability of our traditional neighborhoods, but I also recognize the challenges and concerns associated with constraining the rights of property owners to maximize their investment - which is often their largest investment - in their land and home. The bottom line is that until we have more experience with the implementation of the ordinance among opt-in neighborhoods, I can't fairly judge whether or not I think it has been successful. Regarding the OCEAN request for additional limitations, while I recognized the persuasive arguments on both sides, I supported the Council's decision because the limitations contained in the McMansion limitations are the result of an exhaustive community process, and I believe that the limitations should be uniform across the city for those neighborhoods who chose to opt in.

3. Some neighborhood groups have attempted to opt-out of the vertical-mixed-use program for most or all eligible properties in their neighborhood. Would you vote to approve or reject those decisions?

My strong inclination would always be to approve an opt-out decision made at the neighborhood level. However, if there is a clear, compelling and broad community interest at stake, and / or if it is plain that the decision-making process at the neighborhood level was not sufficiently inclusive or transparent, I would consider rejecting an opt-out decision.

4. What should the city government do to promote or discourage suburban development? What about condo/apartment development downtown? What about condo/apartment development in other parts of the city?

I strongly support the vision of facilitating greater density in Austin's central city and urban areas, especially if we can establish clear guidelines for how that density should interact with adjacent traditional neighborhoods. I also recognize that suburban

residential and commercial development is a reality and a necessity, and believe that the City's objective should be to make that development as sustainable and responsible as possible. For example, the City should steer suburban development into the Desired Development Zone (east) and away from the Drinking Water Protection Zone (southwest) whenever possible. With regard to both urban and suburban residential development, the City should also be working proactively to deliver broader and deeper levels of affordability.

5. Homes near downtown are generally more expensive than homes in the suburbs. Should the city do anything to change that? What?

Yes, as noted above, I believe the City should be working proactively to deliver affordability for both urban and suburban residents. Downtown Austin should not become a place where only the very wealthy can afford to live. I believe the City's best immediate strategies for delivering meaningful affordability involve the judicious use of the 2006 voter-approved affordable housing bonds, and other mechanisms for channeling funds into the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. I believe the City should also do more to encourage private sector investment in affordable housing, and to strengthen its relationship with the leading local nonprofits working successfully in this arena, such as People Fund (which launched the Community Land Trust) and Foundation Communities, both of which I am proud to have been involved with. Regarding other affordability strategies, I believe we should explore targeted tax relief for original residents, and also seek ways to influence the state legislature with respect to its over-reliance on property taxes, which is contributing directly to our affordable housing problems.

6. Austinites love cars (80% of us drive to work by ourselves), but hate traffic. What would you do to get Austinites to commute differently and/or reduce traffic? How often do you get to work by some method other than driving? What is your alternative method?

As the question itself implies, there are no easy answers when it comes to traffic congestion. This is one of the few topics I've discovered where people seem to hate the solutions even more than they hate the problem. Austin's traffic crisis is real and getting worse, and the only way out of the problem is to use every tool at our disposal, including more and better roads, expanded and improved bus service, regional and local passenger rail service, a downtown circulator system, improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and tactical approaches like promoting carpooling, deploying park & ride systems, incorporating HOV lanes, and exploring flex-time strategies for major local employers. We also have to do more to link land-use decisions with transportation planning. If we are to build a truly transit-oriented community where it is not necessary to get in a car to do everything (taking 2,000 pounds of metal along to buy one gallon of milk), we have to include transportation planning in zoning and neighborhood planning discussions in a broader, more meaningful way. The biggest question regarding traffic solutions is always about funding, though, so I believe the City must work together with the County and State, and through CAMPO, to explore options for funding mass transit in particular, and to make sure we're getting our City's fair share of federal dollars. Given the reality that toll

roads are part of the transportation equation, we must also make sure that every dollar spent on tolls in Austin stays in Austin. In terms of my own commute, I occasionally catch the bus at 5th and West Lynn into downtown, and I ride the Dillo to get around whenever I can.

7. Austin has the potential to be a great biking city and a lot of people bike recreationally, but it is difficult for most people to bike to work. What should the city do to improve the opportunity to bike-commute? Do you own a bike? How often do you ride it to work?

I support promoting biking and walking wherever possible, but especially in the central neighborhoods where it can pay the most dividends in terms of traffic (and pollution) reduction. As with most meaningful transportation solutions, creating and maintaining viable bicycling infrastructure citywide is largely a function of funding, and if elected I would explore options for devoting more resources to the task. I think there are also symbolic victories we can achieve in Austin to help promote the idea of bicycling as a viable form of transit, such as completing the cross-town central city Lance Armstrong Bikeway. If elected, I would also want to encourage major local employers to do more (or, in some cases, *something*) to foster bicycling to work, such as providing showers, adequate storage, bike parking, etc. I would make sure that as we attempt to more closely link land-use decisions with transportation planning, we always include bicycling in the mix.

8. Are you happy with the apparent resolution of the Las Manitas/Marriott controversy? If not, how do you think it should have been handled differently?

I'm not certain that the issue is fully resolved yet, but it appears at least that Las Manitas is, for now, set to move up the street. I strongly disagreed with the members of the City Council who voted to give the owners of Las Manitas a \$750,000 forgivable loan (grant) to facilitate the restaurant's move. Had I been on the City Council, I might have supported a long-term, low-interest loan to the restaurant owners from the same pool of funds (developer fees) to help facilitate their move, because I do recognize the value of helping to preserve iconic small local businesses whenever we can. But, I viewed this particular vote - which would have completely emptied the available pool of funds with no mechanism for filling it back up again for other small local businesses to benefit from - as defying logic. In fact, it was one of the main reasons I decided to run for the City Council against incumbent Jennifer Kim, one of the Council members who voted for it.

9. Do you think Austin is better now than it was 10 years ago? Do you think it will be better 10 years from now than it is now?

Absolutely, I believe that Austin is better now than it was 10 years ago. Even though almost everyone can point to at least one example of a favorite place - a restaurant or bar, for example - that has been lost to Austin's ongoing growth and development, and even though many people romanticize the smaller, quieter Austin of years past, to me it's plain that what we have gained as city (like *new* favorite restaurants and bars, for example) outweighs what we have lost. Whether or not we will be better 10 years from now is a

function of the decisions we make today (and on May 10th). My vision for our future - the vision I will pursue whether as a member of the City Council or as a citizen activist - is that Austin continue to be a clean, safe and prosperous community where everyone's voice is heard; where, at the very least, all citizens can meet their basic needs; and where everyone's entrepreneurial pursuits can come to fruition, whether in the public, private, or non-profit sector. I also hope we have more BBQ joints!

“A short statement about anything else you would like our readers to know about your campaign.”:

I am running for Austin City Council Place 3 – challenging incumbent Jennifer Kim – because we can do better. Like so many people, I love and care about Austin, am concerned about the direction our city is going, and want to do something about it. My background is different from most City officials. I have thrived on student politics at the University of Texas (elected student body President ‘87-‘88), served in state government (launched AmeriCorps in Texas), worked as a corporate peon, earned a Harvard MBA, founded an Internet startup (Charitygift), run a local community foundation (the Austin Entrepreneurs Foundation), and been a tireless supporter of all kinds of nonprofit organizations in town, sometimes as a grassroots volunteer and other times as a donor or board member. Based on that broad range of experience, I bring to this race a unique combination of passion and hands-on experience, and a strong desire to get things done right. As my longtime friends, colleagues, and clients will tell you, I build strong positive relationships that last a lifetime; I am approachable, accessible, and accountable; I know when to listen and learn, and when to speak up; and I bring diverse people together to get results. I want to invite you to please visit my campaign website, www.randishade.com, to learn more about me and my experience and qualifications, to ask any additional questions, or to share any feedback. Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I ask for your vote on May 10th.