

## **GREEN PARTY**

### **1) Were the Green Party to offer you its endorsement, would you accept it?**

Yes

### **2) How long have you lived in Austin?**

18+ years

### **3) Why are you running for City Council?**

I am running for Austin City Council Place 3 – challenging incumbent Jennifer Kim – because we can do better. I am concerned about the direction Austin is going, and because of my deep love for our city, I am prepared to do something about it.

I specifically decided to challenge the incumbent in Place 3, because of her reputation for inaccessibility. I have a long history of being approachable, accessible and accountable. I see accessibility as being the single most important aspect of a Council member's job. If elected, I will make my calendar public, so citizens can see who I am meeting with and how I am spending my time when I am on their dime, and I will work to see that online resources are more readily available so that anyone interested in following City action can do so.

My background is different from most City officials in that I offer a diverse history of leadership in the public, private and non-profit sectors. I may be a newcomer to politics, but I am not a newcomer to the issues. Whether co-founding the Austin Clean Energy Initiative, serving on the board of PeopleFund, or volunteering for countless other organizations, I've been working on issues like affordable housing, environmental protection, and economic development for years. I have thrived on student politics at the University of Texas, worked for two Texas governors launching AmeriCorps statewide, worked as a corporate peon, earned a Harvard MBA, founded an Internet startup which I sold to a public company in 2005, run a local community foundation working with Austin's high tech sector, 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 election 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. You have to get along with people to get things done, and I know how to do both.

### **4) What is your definition of "affordable housing"?**

60-80% Median Family Income.

### **5) Does Austin have a sufficient supply of affordable housing? If not, how would you address this issue?**

No. The City's best immediate strategies for delivering meaningful housing 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. We should follow the recommendations from the Affordable Housing Incentives Task Force and create more tools that leverage the findings in the current downtown planning process. Creating mechanisms that encourage private sector investment in addressing our affordable housing challenges is important, as is strengthening the relationship the City has with leading nonprofits working successfully in this arena. We need to create a clear and transparent method for reporting and performance review to ensure we're getting the results we expect from the bond program, which is a first of its kind, as well as from the downtown development incentives program. We should do everything we can to prove these programs work, so we can continue to do them. Regarding other affordability strategies, we should explore targeted exemptions and tax relief for original residents, and also seek ways to influence the legislature with respect to its over-reliance on property taxes, which is contributing directly to our affordable housing challenges.

**6) Austin is one of the most traffic-congested cities for its size in the country. What is your vision for addressing this problem?**

Growth means traffic problems. There are no easy answers. This is one of the few topics I've discovered where people seem to hate the solutions even more than they hate the problem. When we talk about traffic, we're really talking about land use in general, so the first step I'd suggest is that we 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, we have to include transportation planning in zoning and neighborhood planning discussions in a broader, more meaningful way. We should also look for ways to involve our community's biggest traffic generators (i.e. major employers, UT, state government) to see if there are ways to "stage" arrivals and departures to change the traffic patterns so we can use our existing transportation capacity more efficiently. We must work together with the County and State to explore options for funding mass transit 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 make sure that every dollar spent on tolls in Austin stays in Austin. I also support increasing investment in sidewalk repairs and 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. 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.

**7) Briefly outline how you would approach homelessness in Austin.**

First, I would explore expanding rehabilitative housing and other services to help people get back on their feet. We've also got to do more to leverage the strengths of our local nonprofits, and help them better address these challenges. I plan to build on my extensive experience in the nonprofit sector to improve the way the City does business with basic needs providers. I will also work hard to create new resources by bringing private sector

partners to the table, and I will actively pursue additional sources of federal funding that will likely become available with the upcoming change in White House administrations. Austin must not only get its "fair share" of those funds, it should hopefully get even *more* – by competing as successfully on that front as we do on many others. We also have to expand services for mental illness and substance abuse if we want to better address part root causes.

**8) How can the city council give a greater voice to neighborhoods and citizen planning groups in the city's planning processes?**

Too many people I've spoken with seem to feel "duped" after engaging in the neighborhood planning process. They feel their time and energy may have been wasted. We need to reboot the neighborhood planning process to be more inclusive and predictable. Currently, code enforcement is complaint-driven, and Future Land Use Plans are taken only as recommendations. People are surprised to learn that their plan makes recommendations, but a newly proposed project that conforms to zoning requirements but not the intent of the neighborhood plan can and is still often pursued. We can and should find ways to better implement the recommendations generated by neighborhood plans, as well as methods for connecting the dots between one neighborhood's plan and the next. I'd like to increase the availability of training, planning, research, and survey tools so that all neighborhoods have equal opportunity for success. I will seek ways to better utilize email and text messaging as a city-wide communication tool and do greater outreach to educate and include more citizens in the process. I'd like to see the City's website offer more mechanisms for feedback and virtual neighborhood forums. As a matter of policy, I believe that City staff should be instructed to encourage developers (even single family home-owners) to dialogue with their neighbors before entering into the permitting process as part of their permitting application. I would also explore the creation of a user-friendly guide to development regulations and seek distribution support from local realtors during the home and property sales process.

**9) What are your thoughts about how toll roads have been implemented in the Austin area over the last 15 years? What do you believe is the best Approach to toll road implementation in our area in the future?**

I'm not for tolling any road that has already been paid for with gas tax revenue in any way, shape or form, period. However, I don't and won't categorically oppose tolls as a way to finance the construction of needed new roads when there is no other viable financing method and when tolling is transparent and accountable, and revenue distribution is equitable. Tolls would always be my last choice to relieve traffic congestion.

**10) Do you believe Austin should have an open-government ordinance? If so, briefly describe what such an amendment should look like.**

I am strongly committed to an open and transparent city government. I don't know specifically how an amendment should be worded to reflect this, but I think we can do a better job of utilizing the Internet to empower citizens with early, honest, easily accessible information. I know that a process is currently ongoing to improve the functionality of the City's website in this regard, and I expect to engage significantly in that process if I am

elected to serve. Austin city government should lead the nation in accomplishing efficient electronic interaction with citizens who wish to participate in the democratic process this way.

As I said earlier, accessibility is a key component in open government. I specifically decided to challenge the incumbent in Place 3, because of her reputation for inaccessibility. I see accessibility as the most important aspect of a Council member's job. The best way to change the perception that City Hall is closed off from everyday citizens is to prove that perception wrong through action. I will make my calendar public and work to see that online resources are more readily available so that anyone interested in following City action can do so.

**11) What are your thoughts on the possibility of Austin having a single-member-district or single-member/at-large hybrid City Council?**

It is possible that we could be better served by a mixed system of representation that incorporates both single-member districts and at-large districts. A mixed system would ensure that every citizen has more than just one representative, while still offering the opportunity for more accountable, more accessible and possibly more diverse representation than the current system affords.

**12) Would you support having Austin's Police Monitor report directly to City Council?**

The idea has merit and I am open to exploring it. I'm not prepared to say right now that I support it, however, because the function and authority of the Police Monitor have largely been a product of the negotiations between the City and the public safety unions. Those negotiations are in progress now, so I'm reluctant establish a hard-line position without more information and a better sense of where it fits into the overall negotiating priorities.

**13) Briefly outline your thoughts and feelings about future real estate development in the contributing and recharge zones of the Edward's Aquifer.**

I'm for directing as much future real estate development as we can into the Desired Development Zone (east) and away from the Drinking Water Protection Zone (southwest). I am also for enforcing the SOS ordinance, dedicating more resources to purchasing additional land over the Edwards Aquifer, and protecting what we already own.

**14) Austin has a very substantive green building program, and much of the new residential construction in Austin is very "green" in terms of energy efficiency and higher-density construction. What is your view on how to make such green opportunities affordable for middle- and low-income families?**

There are many things every family can do to live green. It may be something as simple as switching light bulbs to compact fluorescents or keeping the thermostat at 78 degrees during the day. We must do more to promote recycling and the reduction of electricity. The key is educating consumers and families about what they can do while also letting them know that anyone can live a greener lifestyle and that everyone's efforts make a difference.

**15) Austin is growing rapidly. What is your vision on how to manage this growth?**

We are growing and that means change – both good and bad. We need to do a better job with planning to help good development happen where it should and stop bad development from happening anywhere. The bottom line is that we must make sure that Austin stays Austin rather than becoming Anytown, USA. We can accomplish this through judicious development decisions, a commitment to sustainability, better transportation decisions and maintaining a process that is transparent and inclusive of all parties. We also need to expand availability of training, planning, and research & survey tools to help the neighborhood planning process work better.

**16) Some cities across the country have occasionally passed resolutions regarding important national issues, such as the Bush administration's invasion and occupation of Iraq. Do you believe it is appropriate for a city council to entertain such resolutions on occasion?**

Yes, but I believe the most important role of the City Council is to ensure we meet the needs of our people locally.

**17) More than one proposal has been offered on how to handle the traffic problems along highway 290 in Oak Hill and in the area of the "Y." What are your thoughts on how to handle the problem?**

I have not yet seen a workable model for fix290's alternative and do not believe it has the broad community, but I am also not convinced the approved tollway build-out plan has been fully vetted yet either. I will fight alongside many citizens involved in the tollway build-out plan to ensure the achievement of transparency, maximum environmental protection, and equitable distribution of any revenue generated, and I will also request that TxDOT complete the required environmental impact study before any plans begin.

**18) As Austin grows, we may at some point face a water shortage. What can we do now to address this issue?**

Austin is a community with active and involved citizens concerned about protecting the environment, but we can always do more to educate consumers on efficiency. To that end, I would encourage our residents and businesses to increase voluntary water reduction efforts and would also expand education and outreach programs to teach individuals how to reduce water use. We should also explore expanding efforts like the Free Toilet Program and WashWise Rebate program to encourage consumers to purchase water-efficient utilities and products. If elected, I will make it a top priority to ensure that Austin is pursuing a smart, effective long-term strategy on water conservation and on the related timing of construction of water infrastructure.

**19) Do you believe that Austin is dedicating sufficient resources to health and human services? What changes would you make if any?**

No. It is wonderful that Austin is consistently recognized for its economic vitality, but until everyone's basic human needs are met, we have very few bragging rights as far as I am

concerned. Too often issues related to poverty are at the bottom of our City's priority list rather than at the top. This has direct consequences on our public safety network in particular as many of our public safety personnel are regularly performing tasks much closer to social work than law enforcement and emergency response. Our City contracts with more than 60 health and human service organizations and spends tens of millions of dollars each year, but we've got to do more to create lasting solutions and leverage the strengths of our local nonprofit organizations. I plan to build on my extensive experience in the nonprofit sector to improve the way the City does business with basic needs providers and will also work hard to create new resources by bringing private sector partners to the table. I will also explore new sources of federal funding that will likely become available with the upcoming change in White House administrations. Austin must not only get its fair share of those funds, it should get even more - by competing as successfully on that front as we do on so many others.