

Growth Management

1. Do you believe the City of Austin should have a comprehensive growth management plan?

Yes. I support an inclusive community-based process for creating a comprehensive growth management plan, but I am concerned about launching into an entirely new process in lieu of enhancing the current neighborhood planning process into which so many citizens have already invested their time and energy over many years. Too often we've seen our community engage in planning activities only to have a next approach trump the work already completed. I'd rather look first at ways for Austin neighborhoods to translate their work into something more meaningful – something that truly drives public safety and transportation decisions in addition to land use responsibility. I support the broad recommendations included in ANC's call to action to manage Austin's growth and will work to increase the planning resources identified and prioritized in the resolution.

2. Will you, as a City Council member, in partnership with the ANC and a broad range of other community stakeholders, embark upon development of a viable growth management policy?

Yes. I believe my biggest strength as a candidate is my ability to bring broad and balanced perspectives together to effectively get things done. I decided to challenge the incumbent Council Member specifically because of her reputation for inaccessibility and her resulting ineffectiveness over the last three years.

3. How would you ensure that the growth management policy is grounded in sound research and analysis, that it is applied consistently, collaboratively and comprehensively, that it is adhered to and that it is a living document?

As I mentioned above, we must increase planning resources so that everyone has access to the information needed to make good decisions. The process has to build on the work that's already been done and input must be broad and balanced. Once the plan is developed it becomes important to evaluate the plan's effectiveness and make adjustments as needed. Evaluating the plan will ensure that City staff implement the plan as intended by the policy makers and will also enable the Council to continue to work with stakeholders on an ongoing basis to ensure the plan is revised and/or modified as needed, so that the plan meets the community's needs over the long term.

4. Will you commit to a thorough review of our economic development strategies to ensure that future growth will pay for itself and not result in taxpayer subsidies?

Yes. It only makes sense for the City to evaluate whether it is getting the appropriate return on its investment. I will be a strong advocate for transparency, including the use of internal and independent auditors, to ensure that job creation, salaries, and/or any other performance requirements are being met before any City-granted economic benefit is

received. It's clear to me that increased tax revenue by itself hasn't solved our City's economic problems, because many other factors are also at work. We always have to consider costs, not just increased tax revenue. Local governments are carrying bigger burdens as state and federal services have been cut. A thriving community of large local employers can be beneficial to people at every economic level, but my bias is toward helping local employers succeed and providing job opportunities where the most direct, most obvious needs exist. Any economic development strategy that grows our base of large employers while generating neither job opportunities for a broad range of low and middle-income residents, nor new business and entrepreneurial ventures supporting the large employer, nor new tax revenue sufficient to pay for the cost of growth, is unacceptable in my book.

5. Do you believe there is an alternative view to Austin's current growth forecast assumptions that predict a doubling of the population by 2050? If so, will your view incorporate the carrying capacities of our natural resources to produce a sustainable community and how so?

There are always alternative views and unforeseen events that can make an impact; however, Austin has maintained a relatively constant rate of growth for more than 150 years (population doubling every 20 years). I am not a demography expert, but everything I've ever seen suggests that virtually any region in the southwest part of our country is going to continue to experience population growth in the foreseeable future. That's why the second part of this question seems far more important than the first part. There is so much we can do to become a sustainable community. To move us forward toward this goal and to help meet Austin's future water and energy needs, my decision-making on the City Council would always prioritize conservation, recycling, and the generation and distribution of renewable energy over coal or nuclear. I would push to continue to improve the City's residential and commercial energy efficiency programs, to help us conserve more. I would champion efforts to expand and streamline residential and business recycling programs. I would work to actively increase public involvement and awareness across all initiatives related to achieving sustainability. Too often people operate in individual silos which prevents maximum impact from any single initiative. I would also explore the role of Chief Sustainability Officer and find ways to ensure that sustainability planning is taken seriously from an operations perspective City-wide, department to department.

Neighborhood Planning

6. What do you consider to be the top three objectives of neighborhood planning, and do you think these objectives are being met under the current framework? If not, how do you propose to ensure that these objectives will be met?
 1. Preserve the unique characteristics of every neighborhood as defined by the residents of the neighborhood.
 2. Plan for future growth in a way that fits with the existing community.
 3. Communicate a clear directive to City Council and City staff for residents' and businesses' vision for the future of each neighborhood.

The idea of neighborhood plans is a good one, but the City has too often fallen short of maintaining the integrity of the plans. The plans are to be developed through a very deliberate process, but there is a lot of inconsistency from one neighborhood to the next, particularly when it comes to making modifications. I want to place more emphasis on neighborhood plans and their implementation, and I want to increase the resources available for staff, training, planning, information sharing, research and analysis.

7. Has neighborhood planning alleviated any of the contention surrounding certain zoning and development issues since its inception?

I think it helped in some ways and hurt in others, but generally has not succeeded in making a meaningful improvement in the way we plan. Neighborhood plans are designed to communicate a clear vision for an area to City planners and policy makers. Too often the City doesn't adhere to the plan and the vision that was intended. That's why so 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.

8. Will you make the specific community-identified needs included in neighborhood plans a priority starting point for future bond packages?

Yes. Yet another reason why comprehensive planning makes sense.

9. Do you think the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) should be the only enforceable component of neighborhood planning?

No. The entire package of documents warrants consideration or we should stop asking residents and business owners to painstakingly develop full-blown neighborhood plans which are then submitted for approval by the Planning Commission and City Council.

10. Will you require the city manager to process any proposed land use or zoning changes for any reason, such as the TOD ordinance, in accordance with the adopted neighborhood planning amendment process that includes full participation of all stakeholders for any property within a neighborhood planning area?

Yes. Again, there seems to be no point in having a watered down process that has no meaning. I don't want citizens to feel duped. As long we have the neighborhood planning process in place, we should adhere to its intent.

11. Will you direct staff to provide every neighborhood planning area an analysis of the existing zoning capacity before approving any zoning changes in the area?

Yes.

Zoning

12. Under what circumstances would you not support a valid petition of the community or a recommendation of a neighborhood plan team in a zoning case?

I know that a valid petition is an important tool for preventing inappropriate zoning changes. It often represents the desires of a significant portion of the residents in a given area of town. In almost every case, I would expect to strongly support a neighborhood's valid petition. But, I can't know exactly what the future holds, and I've learned in life that absolutes can get you in trouble. I can't make the pledge that I will never vote against a valid petition, but I can make the pledge that if I ever do it will be in the name of a clear, compelling, broad community value.

13. Will you commit to support the existing zoning compatibility standards in general? Under what circumstances, if any, do you think compatibility standards should be waived?

Yes, but again, I can't know exactly circumstance we might face, so I would leave the door open for waiving a compatibility requirement when there is a clear, compelling, broad community-value-based reason for doing so.

14. Will you uphold the current compromise restrictions and standards set forth in the VMU ordinance including no increased height over base zoning, compliance with compatibility standards, no VMU/commercial creep, affordability as set forth by neighborhood associations' recommendations, and availability of expedited residential permit parking?

Yes.

15. Will you make available to neighborhoods and to decision-making bodies relevant information regarding transportation, infrastructure, housing and other critical matters prior to making land use decisions?

Yes.

16. In areas where a neighborhood opposes up-zoning to convert residential use to some other commercial use, and where adequate commercially zoned property is already available, will you commit to vote against such up-zoning?

I would expect to oppose most conversions and upzonings when it's clear that neighborhoods don't want them, but I have to leave the door open to the possibility that specific circumstances could present a clear, compelling, broad community benefit. What's critical is to find and maintain balance on an

ongoing basis between the pressures of growth and the mission of preserving neighborhood integrity, through improved planning process and better communication.

Community Values

17. Will you commit to uphold the community's desire to protect the Lady Bird Lake Corridor and vote against any proposed zoning change that would encroach on the current base zoning and Waterfront Overlay restrictions? Will you sponsor and vote for a re-drafting of the 1999 waterfront overlay to re-establish the spirit of the 1986 community consensus?

Yes. I support re-establishing the spirit of the 1986 community consensus.

18. Are you committed to making affordable housing on city-owned property a priority use?

Yes. We can't ask developers to make affordable housing a priority and then not make it a priority on our City-owned property. For example, I supported the mandates for affordability that the City Council recently established for the redevelopment of the Green Water Treatment Plant site downtown, as well as the 40% set-aside in the Tax Increment Financing plan for affordable housing.

19. How do you propose to ensure city-wide affordable housing, including in the downtown central business district. What levels of affordability do you think should be supported?

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. We should do everything we can to prove that it works, so we can do it again. 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. As for levels of affordability to be supported – I think we need to focus on strategies for levels from 60% MFI to 80% MFI. Different levels and different objectives (i.e. rental vs. ownership) require different strategies.

20. Do you think that historic preservation is important to Austin and will you support Local Historic Districts that meet the prescribed high standards for approval/support?

I think historical preservation is critically important for maintaining Austin's unique character, but without knowing the details of a proposed Local Historical Districts ordinance, I can't commit to support it. I do support the general goals I imagine would inform such an ordinance. Regardless, if elected I will make sure that neighborhoods get better access to information about how to achieve historical preservation.

21. Do you think that protection of the integrity and character of Austin's existing established neighborhoods is important and will you support maintaining existing standards established by the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards?

Yes, based on my understanding of the standards.

22. Do you believe outdoor music venues and the noise associated with them are problematic for neighborhoods within their audible range? If so, how do you propose to protect quality of life in our neighborhoods while supporting Austin's unique position as "Live Music Capital"?

With regard to downtown, my feeling is that if residents don't want to hear music, they should seriously consider living elsewhere. With regard to residential neighborhoods outside of downtown, I am for strict enforcement of the current ordinances governing noise. In extreme circumstances, where there are specific situations at the neighborhood level that have proven to be persistently problematic, I would also be open to exploring public investment in technologies that could help deliver solutions.

Code Enforcement/Permitting

23. What improvements should be made in the current code enforcement process to sufficiently deter improper and non-compliant construction?

We should invest more in code enforcement and facilitate proactive rather than just complaint-driven code enforcement. We need better training, too, to achieve more consistent interpretation of the code. Improving code enforcement will be one of my top budget priorities if elected.

24. How will you ensure that permitted project plans are designed and implemented to fully comply with all applicable codes and ordinances?

In addition to the resources mentioned above, I would call for more inspections and also explore larger fines.

25. Do you believe that maintaining as much as possible of our urban forest/urban tree canopy is an important goal for Austin and if so what would you do to prevent the removal of protected trees by builders and developers who see it as a worthwhile trade-off to pay the small fine assessed as penalty?

I recommend the death penalty. Just kidding – it has been a long night☺, but I do think removal of a protected tree should be dealt with severely.

Maintaining our urban tree canopy is not just an aesthetic or even emotional issue, it's also a key strategy for achieving improved overall energy efficiency.

26. Do you believe that tearing down a structure to its foundation should be classified as a remodel allowing for a completely new (often much larger) structure to be built which would not need to come into compliance with current code?

No, and I support changing to code to prevent this from happening.

City Government Structure and Representational Effectiveness

27. Do you favor continuing with our at-large form of city government, moving to single-member districts or moving to a combination of both and why?

While I don't believe our current system is broken, I do believe it's 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 I believe still offering the opportunity for more accountable, more accessible and possibly more diverse representation than the current system affords. The devil is always in the details, however, and for now, the issue seems to be shelved for want of a clear, broad call for change.

28. Do you believe the current City Council election process (at-large) fosters adequate community representation?

I can't say for sure. So many of the challenges seem to be related to council member accessibility and outreach rather than the actual election process. As a candidate I will say that I think I have benefited from and gained a broader perspective than I might have otherwise had as a result of running city-wide. And, I know that it will be incumbent upon me to continue doing the outreach I am doing as a candidate when I am in office. Just an aside, but I am not shooting for adequate community representation, I am shooting for something much better. In other words, I will work for an A not the mere passing grade of C this question suggests.

29. Please answer a. below if you are a current Council Member and b. if you are not.
- Do you have time to make regular efforts to stay in touch with the community including neighborhoods throughout the city? Do you have time and how do you manage soliciting input from affected neighborhoods regarding issues before Council?
 - Will you make regular efforts to stay in touch with the community including neighborhoods throughout the city and how? Will you solicit input from affected neighborhoods regarding issues before Council? If so, describe the process you would use to involve impacted citizens.

Yes. The responsibility of engaging citizens at City Hall falls on Council members. The Council sets the tone for the way the City's staff involves

citizens, as well. I will actively seek the input of citizens and neighborhood groups rather than simply relying on them to visit me. I will continue attending meetings, town halls and community forums after I am elected - not just while I am campaigning. I will make it a standard operating procedure for my office to contact those who will be impacted by issues on the City's agenda. Again, I will seek people out to get their input rather than simply waiting for them contact me, and I will not be a Council member known for being difficult to reach. I will be available and accessible, and I will make my meeting schedule public so people will see from my actions how seriously I take this commitment.

Open Governance

30. How will you work to ensure that all materials citizens need to participate in city processes will be made available on-line with plenty of time for citizens to review, research, and respond prior to the meetings where the information will be considered. How will you empower city staff to place such info on-line? How may citizens participate more in city meetings without being physically present?

I am strongly committed to the idea that the City can do a much 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.

Working with AISD

31. How do you propose for the City Council to work with AISD to protect our aquifer, build better buildings, and preserve/enhance existing neighborhood schools?

The City Council and city staff needs to be working closely with the AISD Board of Trustees and the management of the school district on an ongoing basis to ensure that the district honors the strictest standards contained in the City's land development code and, more broadly, Austin's community values when it comes to building practices and growth planning.

Business Development

32. Will you work to reduce subsidies to large employers? Will you do a total cost-benefit analysis process before providing any subsidies or loans to any businesses? How will you help and support small businesses get started, thrive, and grow?

As I said earlier, it only makes sense for the City to evaluate whether it is getting the appropriate return on its investment. I will be a strong advocate for transparency, including the use of independent auditors, to ensure that job creation, salaries, and/or any other performance requirements are being

met before any City-granted economic benefit is received. As for supporting small businesses, I think many local business owners feel that their biggest challenges aren't going to be solved by new programs, but rather increased focus and attention on the basics such as ensuring the City has reliable and affordable utilities, quick and predictable permitting process, fair and stable regulatory functions, safe neighborhoods, strong infrastructure, and overall economic vitality. Besides focusing on these things, I would strengthen the relationship the City has with Austin Independent Business Alliance to increase support for the IBIZ districts program and its efforts to help connect independent businesses to commercial developers. I would support organizations like BiG and PeopleFund which support local entrepreneurs with special technical assistance and financing needs, as well as supporting our community's many Chambers of Commerce and other business networking groups. I will look for ways the City can enhance its services while reducing utility rates and/or fees for local businesses. And I'd include local nonprofit organizations in the mix as they operate as businesses, too, just with a different tax status.

Environment

33. Within the city limits of Austin are a number of urban creeks and watersheds associated with those creeks. The creeks of Austin are jewels in Austin's crown, but they have been neglected by the amount of impervious cover that is allowed to be put on the ground and the lack of good water quality controls both in neighborhoods and in the commercial areas. Would you be willing to direct the City Manager to investigate how runoff in those watersheds can be cleaned up and the possibility of lowering impervious cover limits on development and redevelopment in the central city areas?

Yes, I strongly support protecting our urban creeks and watersheds.

34. What is your thinking/position on amending the SOS ordinance as Austin develops into the contributing and recharge zones of the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer? What elements would you see as necessary in order to consider amending the ordinance? Have you any background in the areas of pollutant loadings, impervious cover, state of the art water quality controls? Would you be willing to seek the advice and guidance of the scientists in the Watershed Protection Department of the City of Austin in order to obtain the best information available on pollutants, impervious cover, and water quality controls available currently?

If elected to the City Council I will be a consistent advocate for the strict enforcement of the SOS ordinance and will work with the rest of the City Council and the community at large to advance policies that result in the net reduction of pollutants flowing into the Barton Springs watershed. I don't have a specific background in the areas of pollutant loadings, impervious cover, or state of the art water quality controls, but I am willing to seek the advice and guidance of the scientists in the Watershed Protection Department of the City of Austin in order to obtain the best information available. I am

also willing to actively seek advice from other thought leaders and scientists in our community.

Transportation

35. Would you commit to support alternative transit options such as improved bus service, better bike lanes, more sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements? Do you support the proposed trolley system that Mayor Wynn is promoting and if so, how do you envision the city paying for it?

Yes to improved bus service, better bike lanes, more sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements. I support the concept of a downtown circulator of some kind, but am not yet sold on any concept or financing plan.

36. Will you support the changes in the CAMPO 2030 plan as requested in the City's AMATP, thereby limiting roadway expansion in our core area neighborhoods?

Yes.