

Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) 2008 City Council Candidates Forum

Questionnaire Responses – Place 1

Question	Allen Demling	Lee Leffingwell	Jason Meeker
Growth Management			
1. Do you believe the City of Austin should have a comprehensive growth management plan?	Yes, we need to make sure we are adequately planning for future growth so our children don't have to keep dealing with the problems we are currently facing, ie congestion, rising housing costs, environmental concerns, etc. It allows us to get ahead of the problems- something that Austin has had trouble doing.	Yes. I have advocated for a policy of protecting existing neighborhoods and accommodating future growth downtown and along major transportation corridors. However, some neighborhoods have already incorporated density in their plans, and this previous planning should be respected in future planning.	Yes. I am very surprised to learn that Austin doesn't have one. Actually, let me re-phrase that. I am surprised to learn that there have been times in the past where Austin citizens have worked to develop one, and their work has not been implemented. One of my proposals that would help in this planning would be the creation of an Austin Department of Neighborhoods. Such entities exist in cities like Portland, Seattle, and Louisville. In addition to working to preserve neighborhoods, a new Department of Neighborhoods would bring government closer to the residents of Austin by engaging them in civic participation; helping them become empowered to make positive contributions to their communities; involving more of Austin's underrepresented residents, and including communities of color and immigrants, in civic discourse, processes, and opportunities. Wouldn't that be a great way to tackle many of the problems we've recently faced, and get a working plan in place? I realize that the ANC has been doing great work for years. I am impressed by the ANC, and I want to be a force on the council to get the city to develop and implement a comprehensive plan.
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, and I promise to make sure public input is received throughout the entire process.	I will support any effort to expand and improve our growth management options that reflects the input of local neighborhoods, the ANC, and other stakeholders.	Absolutely. Part of my criticism of the current council is the fact that this crucial need is not being met. I am critical that one year of citizen input is being solicited by Lee Leffingwell to redevelop the city's website, yet something as crucial as a new, viable and realistic growth management policy is not being tackled.

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<p>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?</p>	<p>By making sure that experts in growth management are the ones we are basing our information off of, and not developers of other special interests. Sometimes this can be hard to distinguish. We need to research effective city planning and management for comparable cities our size. We can learn from those mistakes and apply the same principles to ensure that we succeed.</p>	<p>See above. Adequate staff support should be provided to enable the planning process to succeed. Continued oversight of the plan could be ensured by establishing a Task Force representative of stakeholders.</p>	<p>Austin doesn't need to reinvent the wheel to do this. We must have the will to do it and then follow the best practices for developing sound public policy. We have great tools at hand, such as our local universities. We have citizens willing to participate. Other cities have tackled this problem. Let us learn from their mistakes and successes. I believe a public information campaign would be a great tool to make sure the greater public knows that their participation is needed. Utilizing groups like Neighborhood Associations is a start, but not the only solution.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>I am opposed to many of the subsidies that our city has given away to developers that can afford to build without them. I believe we need to review how we decide to provide subsidies, however I do believe there are some developments that greatly benefit our city (not just the wealthy) that deserve some help.</p>	<p>Yes. I sponsored and Council passed a revision to previous city economic policy to ensure that development agreements are positive revenue generators, that performance is verified using a transparent process including verification by a third party, and that incentives are not applicable to mixed use projects that include retail.</p>	<p>Yes. Giveaways are indefensible. I have been very critical of the defunct Las Manitas deal and the Domain. Those are very bad examples of subsidies, and not a responsible way to govern. Public dollars can be invested, but never given away to corporations that are not the least bit impoverished.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>I think there are many alternatives to the growth forecast. If we keep building condos downtown, and pushing out the live music and artistic community, people are no longer going to think of Austin as a great place to live, and they will stop moving here. Also, if housing continues to get more expensive, as has happened to southern California, New York and Chicago, the people will leave for smaller, less expensive cities. But regardless of this, we should make sure we plan a sustainable, livable city no matter what the population. The way we do this is by creating neighborhoods where people can walk to shopping locations, bike to work and enjoy natural, open park spaces.</p>	<p>I believe it would be imprudent not to plan for growth that is based on historical projections. These growth rates have been unaffected by policy or by major events such as the Great Depression and World Wars. Availability of natural resources and sustainability must be integral to future growth management plans.</p>	<p>It's like an approaching hurricane of people, isn't it? I am not sure there is an alternative. In fact, I think we should plan for the worst and hope for the best. With that assumption that the figures are right and maybe even undercounting our future population, we should work that much harder to make sure Austin is 2050 is sustainable. Like conserving water. Such as developing and implementing green sources of energy. It's well past time to be ready for the storm.</p>

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Neighborhood Planning			
<p>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?</p>	<p>The top three objectives of neighborhood planning in my opinion are: walkable neighborhoods, affordable housing and natural parks and recreational areas. I do not believe that our neighborhoods are walkable, affordable or that there are enough park centers. We need to increase the number of small local shops that neighborhoods find useful (ie markets, drug stores, restaurants, etc). We need to make sure that our residents are not getting pushed out of their neighborhoods due to rising property values by using affordable housing incentives, tax relief for long-term residents that cannot afford property taxes. We also need to make sure we are using our open spaces for parks and recreational usage.</p>	<p>Neighborhood planning objectives should include capacity analysis based on utility infrastructure, existing density as compared to comparable neighborhoods, and availability of community amenities such as parks, libraries, and community centers. I would propose that staff provide this analysis and establish goals prior to initiating the planning process.</p>	<p>There are many more than three, but my top three are mobility, preservation and safety. They are not being met. My idea to create an Austin Department of Neighborhoods is a step in the right direction.</p>
<p>7. Has neighborhood planning alleviated any of the contention surrounding certain zoning and development issues since its inception?</p>	<p>No, there is still much contention because city council often grants waivers and variances that go against the neighborhood plan. In addition, grandfathered developments have been allowed to develop outside of adopted zoning ordinances. We need to make it much harder to receive variances, and close the grandfather loopholes.</p>	<p>There is still considerable contention in the planning process concerning both the FLUM and zoning within the boundaries. The establishment of goals based on analysis of capacity, etc (see above) will help in resolving some degree of contention. I believe this process worked very well for the UNO plan.</p>	<p>It's helped, but it's not enough. I do not think such planning adequately measures the impact of certain commercial developments that are allowed to exist within or adjacent to neighborhoods. Impact is the key. What traffic is created, or light pollution or noise pollution? Those factors aren't adequately addressed in my opinion, and they must be as we make our city denser. Our thinking doesn't have to be dense as we do it. I also think the process hasn't been very inclusive. If I had a dollar for every person I've met who did not know any about his or her neighborhood plan/association, I'd be incredibly wealthy.</p>
<p>8. Will you make the specific community-identified needs included in neighborhood plans a priority starting point for future bond packages?</p>	<p>I would need to determine this on a case-by-case basis. Unfortunately I am not intimately familiar with each neighborhood plan, and don't have the proper time at this moment to become so. I can say that if elected I would review these plans with the communities and determine the best way to bond money to satisfy them.</p>	<p>Yes. Community needs such as infrastructure, mobility, and preservation must be a primary consideration in prioritizing future bond packages.</p>	<p>It's possible, but then are we asking the whole city to absorb the cost for one neighborhoods special plans? Is that fair? I'd have to look at this closer.</p>

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9. Do you think the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) should be the only enforceable component of neighborhood planning?	I think there are probably going to be times when situations arise that the FLUM may not have taken into consideration, which would require additional inputs.	The FLUM and applicable zoning ordinances should not be in conflict, and along with utility infrastructure capacity and mobility should be included in the planning process.	No. Here's mine: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/downloads/bh_flum.pdf I am critical of our current neighborhood planning. Impact of development is not a factor. It must be. I again point to my idea to create an Austin Department of Neighborhoods, such as the ones in cities like Portland, Seattle, and Louisville.
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?	As mentioned earlier, I believe that neighborhoods should always participate in discussions that affect their areas.	Yes.	I would push the city manager and city staff to do that. We can't lock people or stakeholders out anymore. The lawsuits can't continue.
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?	If such an analysis exists, then there is no reason not to provide it to neighborhood planning areas. The neighborhoods need to know what is going on in their areas before decisions are made so that they have the proper time to respond.	Yes.	I think that would be helpful. But I am adamant that the greater public is unaware of the current policy, the processes underway to change our city, and the ways our city could sustain growth.
Zoning			
12. Under what circumstances would you <u>not</u> support a valid petition of the community or a recommendation of a neighborhood plan team in a zoning case?	If I felt the original zoning case was for the greater good of Austin, and the neighborhood petition was detrimental to our city. If a petition is filed, then I would make sure that the entire council understands that the particular case is contested and we need to take every possible measure to verify that the proposed case is for the greater good of Austin.	Valid petitions have great weight in considering zoning decisions, but must be balanced with neighborhood planning team recommendations and other community priorities. Cases in certain restricted instances (such as historic zoning) require special consideration.	Having been in a battle recently involving arcane/out-of-date zoning, I am not willing to say no to anything at this time.

Question	Allen Demling	Lee Leffingwell	Jason Meeker
<p>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?</p>	<p>I am not sure what this question is referring to specifically.</p>	<p>Good planning should always incorporate accepted compatibility, with special consideration given to transition areas.</p>	<p>I believe you are asking mainly about the McMansion Ordinance. In my opinion, our existing zoning and this one is flawed. There is not provision to measure impact. But as this relates to homes and how they fit in a neighborhood or on the very street they are on, there must be discretion to allow for a variance, but I think must be a high standard for allowing any variance. We elect people with minds to hold office. There must be discretion. Otherwise, we could write software to make these decisions.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>I cannot make a blanket statement about this issue right now. I personally believe that VMU's are a good thing when implemented correctly. This means making sure they are only on arterial roadways (not interior neighborhood roads), they contain stores that are useful for the neighborhood they are in, and they meet the character of the neighborhood. VMU's are a good thing because they create a more walkable neighborhood, you no longer have to drive to go to the grocery store or for other shopping, and they also allow for residential and commercial usage in the same footprint.</p>	<p>Yes, although Council must always retain its discretionary authority to accommodate situations that may involve conflict among established community objectives.</p>	<p>No, I will work to improve the VMU ordinance to address impact. A new Department of Neighborhoods would work to make sure economic development and neighborhoods sustainability co-exist.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Yes, if that information is available, or easily available. As I have said, making sure that neighborhoods have all the same information as the city council on matters affecting them is important in gaining trust and opening respectful dialog.</p>	<p>This information is critical to all stakeholders to make realistic planning recommendations.</p>	<p>Yes. One of the foundations of my candidacy is calling for more inclusion and responsiveness from the council and from the city. Haste makes waste, and usually ends up causing anger and division and lawsuits.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Again, it would be irresponsible of me to make a blanket statement on this issue at this time. You can rest assured that I would not make any decisions that go against neighborhood concerns lightly. I most certainly do not support up-zoning in the interior of neighborhoods, as has happened in the past.</p>	<p>See #13, 14, and 15 above.</p>	<p>My Department of Neighborhoods will help me (if I am elected) and future councils make decisions. But the opinion of the stakeholders within a neighborhood, whom will be affected daily by the impact of any development should be taken into account.</p>

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Community Values			
<p>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?</p>	<p>Absolutely. This is one area where it is very important we protect this land and use it as park/recreational land. We cannot allow developers to take this valuable land away from us.</p>	<p>I have already committed publicly to oppose any variances to the Waterfront Overlay. I have already sponsored a resolution to re-draft the 1999 version of the overlay. This work is underway.</p>	<p>I cannot believe we had to save Lady Bird/Town Lake recently from this kind of development. Yes, I will work very hard to protect the Lake Bird Lake Corridor from ridiculously irresponsible development. My opponent takes money from Armbrust & Brown (Richard Suttle’s law firm) so I am sure he will not be able to say what I can, or be relied upon to support the community’s clear desire to protect Austin’s irreplaceable jewel.</p>
<p>18. Are you committed to making affordable housing on city-owned property a priority use?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Yes. The city has worked hard enough to create \$800,000 condos on city land. Let’s work on affordable housing. I was very upset when the city did not take advantage of an opportunity to build more affordable housing in East Austin, but instead voted to put a new animal shelter on city land, and in a location where people could have lived.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Affordable housing is a very important issue to me as property values are rising and our long-term citizens are being forced out. We can use the increase tax money coming from new residents on neighborhoods to help keep taxes low for those people that have lived in those neighborhoods for a long time. We need to tailor the affordability level to the specific historical makeup of the neighborhoods in question.</p>	<p>Meaningful, long-term citywide affordable housing solutions can best be achieved through the judicious use of voter-approved affordable housing bond money. Housing for rentals at 60% MFI and home purchase at 80% MFI should be supported.</p>	<p>Who else is going to get this ball rolling? We need to address moderate income households, low income households and very low income households. Part of the way to ensure it is to foster the growth of the idea. There isn’t enough political support behind this. I propose that as your new council person, I will work hard to raise the level of public discussion to take on this challenge now. (See also Department of Neighborhoods, which works to include affordable housing into neighborhoods, and to seize such opportunities.)</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Absolutely. Keeping our historic neighborhoods and homes around for future generations is very important to me.</p>	<p>I have a solid record of supporting historic preservation, and was recognized last year by the Heritage Society with an award for my work in this area.</p>	<p>Yes. I believe preserving the character of our city includes preserving local historic districts.</p>

Question	Allen Demling	Lee Leffingwell	Jason Meeker
<p>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?</p>	<p>Yes, maintaining our character and unique culture has always been a message I have brought during my campaign. This includes neighborhood character. I believe that if someone wants to move into a neighborhood, they should adapt to the neighborhood, the neighborhood should not adapt to them.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>I am a strong proponent of protecting the integrity and character of Austin’s neighborhoods. I would be in favor of improving the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards where it is needed.</p>
<p>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”?</p>	<p>To me this is a question of “who was there first”? If a music venue moves into an established neighborhood, they must respect the people that live there. That means no loud music during hours where residents may be trying to sleep or enjoy quiet. There is also a flipside: if residents move into areas where live music venues exist, those residents must accept the fact that there is the potential for live music until 2am. This is becoming a major issue downtown with the recent condo boom. To prevent this from becoming worse we need to expand the entertainment district to include Red River and 7th Street.</p>	<p>There should be different standards for the entertainment district so that Austin can continue to flourish as a “Live Music Capital” but noise in surrounding neighborhoods must be addressed as well. Council has established a Task Force to address both issues, and I look forward to supporting a recommendation that respects both priorities.</p>	<p>This is a very complicated issue that must be solved, since we have gained so much as a city in embracing its musical heritage. We’re unique in this regard. Much can be done with acoustical engineering to contain sound and to direct it. And I don’t mean just in the clubs. I also mean in the buildings near clubs, or currently under construction, and also near neighborhoods. Here are some opinions I have: • Levels of “bass” tones are the ones that travel the farthest and are most disruptive. Those should be kept within acceptable limits. • Outdoor concerts should not occur late at night. On a related note, it’s disappointing to have to quiet down clubs playing live music, which enhance the culture and character of our city, yet we tolerate automobiles rolling around on city streets and through neighborhoods with incredible decibels of bass thumping for blocks. I would work with groups like Troy Dillinger’s Year of Austin Music to address this issue. I am also a guitarist, so I can appreciate what it takes to master an instrument and earn a living playing one.</p>
Code Enforcement/Permitting			
<p>23. What improvements should be made in the current code enforcement process to sufficiently deter improper and non-compliant construction?</p>	<p>We need stronger penalties and more active enforcement. We can’t wait for people to report violations.</p>	<p>Although several inspectors have been added in the last two budgets, we still lack the personnel needed to do an adequate job on proactive inspections. I will continue to support adding inspectors, and will also support prosecution of violations to the maximum extent allowed by state law, with special attention paid to repeat offenders.</p>	<p>From what I understand, there are not enough employees available to enforce our current codes. Hiring people would be an improvement. Offering neighborhood associations regular training on spotting code violations in residential and commercial areas, and how to report them would also help.</p>

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<p>24. How will you ensure that permitted project plans are designed and implemented to fully comply with all applicable codes and ordinances?</p>	<p>Stronger enforcement and stiffer penalties.</p>	<p>Occupancy permits should not be issued unless and until completed construction is compliant with approved plans.</p>	<p>This is an enforcement issue. Again, from what I understand, there are not enough employees available to enforce our current codes. Hiring people would be an improvement, or calling for citizen participation to alert Code Enforcement.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Yes, it takes a couple of hours to tear down a tree, but years for one to grow. We need to make the fines for removal of protected trees greater. Our environment is something we absolutely must protect.</p>	<p>The urban forest is a very important component of our Climate Protection Plan, and makes an invaluable contribution to the aesthetic of our City. Over a year ago, I convened the citizens Tree Task Force to address tree removal and trimming issues. We have made progress in modifying Austin Energy trimming procedures and criteria, evaluating alternatives to tree trimming and removal, and in conducting a citywide tree survey to create an information base. Several new ordinances recommended by the group have already been enacted, and others are forthcoming. Penalties and mitigation for un-authorized tree removal should be enhanced. This is a high priority issue for me and will continue to be if I am re-elected.</p>	<p>Having been part of a lawsuit that sought to protect trees, I can say that Austin must make preserving trees a top priority. Fines or penalties do not replace a tree that is 30, 40, or more years old. I think the fines should be raised to such a level as to make improving design to incorporate the mature tree or trees to be the preferred solution.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>No, that is ridiculous. We have to use common sense to close up loop holes like this.</p>	<p>No. I have recently sponsored a resolution directing the City Manager to re-write the code with revised strict definitions for remodel permits.</p>	<p>This is going on throughout my neighborhood, and in ones all over Austin. Tearing down to the foundation is not a remodel. The code needs to be improved so that such rebuilding is fully compliant.</p>

Question	Allen Demling	Lee Leffingwell	Jason Meeker
City Government Structure and Representational Effectiveness			
<p>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?</p>	<p>I favor the hybrid system with six single member districts, two or four at large seats and a mayor. This provides each district with a representative that is directly accountable to their area, while at the same time having at large members who must focus on the greater good of the whole city. This way we can hopefully cut back on some of the problems that arise from single member districts, such as “ward” politics, “pork barrel” projects, etc.</p>	<p>I personally favor a combination of single member districts and at large positions on City Council. With over 750,000 residents, I believe it challenging to adequately address the broad spectrum of constituent concerns under the present system. I will vote to place a mixed system on the ballot as a charter amendment for voter approval.</p>	<p>I would prefer a hybrid of at-large and single-member, but the level of public discussion has not been seriously undertaken to improve our government. In addition, I think the at-large system has various strengths and weaknesses today, just as it always has. There are some changes that can be made to improve our local government and its responsiveness. One is to add more council members. I believe the council could be enlarged to reflect population increases we’ve experienced. I also propose the creation of a new office called the Office of Public Advocate. This would not be exactly like the Office of Public Advocate in New York City. That officeholder is second-in-line to the mayor. In our instance, the City of Austin’s Office of Public Advocate would be an elected position. The officeholder would be an ombudsman, or go-between for the citizens and the city government. The council members would still answer to citizens, of course, and respond to their requests. In addition to council members, the Public Advocate would answer complaints about problems with city government, investigate ineffective agencies and programs, and propose solutions that would make government more efficient, and help communities gain better access to government. In many ways, the Office of Public Advocate would be a “council monitor” like the Office of Police Monitor.</p>
<p>28. Do you believe that the current City Council election process (at-large) fosters adequate community representation?</p>	<p>I think there are some communities, on the east side in particular, which are not adequately represented. This is why projects such as power plants, landfills, MHMR facilities, etc are predominantly placed on the east side.</p>	<p>I think community representation could improve under a different system. See above.</p>	<p>No. Now that our city is geographically immense and the range of problems and opportunities so vast, it’s impossible for our government to continue with its current structure and adequately represent the people.</p>

Question	Allen Demling	Lee Leffingwell	Jason Meeker
<p>29. Please answer a. below if you are a current Council Member and b. if you are not.</p> <p>a. 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?</p> <p>b. 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.</p>	<p>Yes, I would agree to meet with representatives from the ANC on a regular basis so that they can share their concerns directly to me. By meeting with ANC I can also inform them of issue scheduled to come before council, and they can then distribute that information among their member groups.</p>	<p>I have and will continue to meet with neighborhood representatives throughout the city, and consider myself to be among the most accessible members of the City Council in this respect. I recently conducted a series of 6 town hall meetings at locations around the city to garner community input on open government issues. If the question is asking whether I believe regular communication between neighborhood groups citywide and the City Council could improve under a different system, the answer is yes.</p>	<p>Absolutely. Besides my personal efforts, my proposal to create of a new Office of Public Advocate will improve communication. But that’s not enough. I would personally work to find new, proactive ways to solicit citizen input. Conducting online polls would be a good tool. Working with the media to get the word out is another. I also enjoy going out and speaking to groups, and listening closely to questions. Communication is key, and input must be gained in more ways than just personal office appointments with council members or the “citizen communication” portion of city council meetings.</p>
Open Governance			
<p>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?</p>	<p>We can do this while we are doing the city website redesign. We need citizen input as early as possible so that they can be confident that our government is taking their opinions into account. Doing this will ensure citizens have time to talk to the council members and express their views.</p>	<p>I believe that my initiative to provide more open government online by redesign of the City’s web site will make city government more responsive and interactive. This design will be formulated based on community input (see #29 above). The AMANDA system to provide real-time information on development projects has already been implemented, and is able to provide notification as soon as plans are filed with the city. AMANDA also provides changes and reviewer comments in real time. The City is working to implement electronic notification of interested parties for all development projects and zoning changes.</p>	<p>Our website must be improved and made easier. I write a lot of web content, so I see how our content can be improved. Simply adding Google or a solution from companies like Interwoven or Vignette could help. City staff should be empowered, but we should require signatures or some sort of control to see who added or change the info and when. Citizens may participate by submitting comments online. We should make such comments visible to the public. We should also consider having some council meetings “on the road.” Why can’t the council come to the people?</p>

Question	Allen Demling	Lee Leffingwell	Jason Meeker
Working with AISD			
<p>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?</p>	<p>By simply expressing to them that this is the will of the people and it is in the best interest of the city.</p>	<p>We currently have an interlocal agreement with AISD for aquifer protection, which limits impervious cover in the BSZ. Without this agreement, the City would have no purview over AISD projects, as they (AISD) are an independent government entity. Last year, I worked with Bouldin area residents and wrote a personal letter to Dr. Forgione and the school board asking to maintain Becker Elementary as an operating neighborhood school. I will continue to urge AISD to keep inner city schools, as they are essential to preserving our inner city neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Schools are a long-term investment. The city should work with AISD, which has more limited resources, and provide its (the city's) resources to identify, study, recommend and implement programs/enhancements. Our schools are one of our most vital pieces of our society and infrastructure. This is a top priority. Protecting the aquifer is too, of course. I'd have to learn more about how AISD may be threatening the aquifer.</p>
Business Development			
<p>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?</p>	<p>I will work to make sure we are not subsidizing any national chains. If we need to subsidize anything, it is locally owned businesses. Money spent in a local business is then reinvested in the local economy. It makes fiscal sense to promote local business over large national retailers.</p>	<p>I have already sponsored a Council resolution to restrict Chapter 380 rebates, make them transparent, and require them to be cost positive based on a cost benefit performance analysis. The City has several programs to help small businesses, and I will continue to support and enhance these programs. It is also essential to ensure that adequate services such as public safety and functioning basic infrastructure provide a stable environment that is conducive to success.</p>	<p>Small businesses deserve a more responsive city government, not one that is an obstacle. Addressing this need partly falls into the Office of Public Advocate, but since that still needs to be created, I will work to help small businesses. Large businesses will do fine with their bevy of lawyers and lobbyists. Any subsidy must be an investment that pays the City back economically and culturally, when possible.</p>
Environment			
<p>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?</p>	<p>I would be willing to direct the city manager to investigate those things. That is what the city manager should be doing if he is working for the good of our citizens. Our natural resources are something that we absolutely must protect. We need to make sure development does not harm these resources. We can do this with zoning, with incentives, with requirements such as using parking garages instead of lots, etc. It is more work to turn a developed piece of land back into a natural area, than to protect it in the first place.</p>	<p>The Environmental Board has already recommended such a study for the 14 urban creeks, which will build upon the 2001 Watershed study. I have advised City staff that I will be sponsoring this update as soon as the construction phase erosion study is completed.</p>	<p>Yes. Part of the solution may be found in large developments with enormous parking lots that are mostly empty. We need to reclaim that space for the public good and to help our environment.</p>

Question	Allen Demling	Lee Leffingwell	Jason Meeker
<p>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?</p>	<p>I am absolutely opposed to the redevelopment ordinance. I would not amend the ordinance to negatively affect it. I do not have any professional background in the areas noted above, and I would absolutely ask the advice of experts in those fields, that would be the only responsible thing to do.</p>	<p>I have worked very closely with the Watershed Protection Department for 8 years as a Council Member and Environmental Board Member, and will continue to do so. I personally am well versed in water quality issues. The BSZ (within the City’s jurisdiction) is currently about 20% undeveloped (not including about 30% that is permanently dedicated open space). Of that 20%, about 16% is subject to SOS, with the remaining 4% potentially grandfathered. We should be working hard to provide water quality controls for the 50% of the BSZ that is already developed – much of it prior to enactment of water quality regulations – and that is polluting the aquifer right now.</p>	<p>I think we need to look outside Austin for ideas. I think we need to curtail development over the aquifer. Lee Leffingwell harmed the SOS ordinance in allowing redevelopment, but not limiting or reducing such development. Austin should continue to purchase more acreage in the Drinking Water Protection Zone and continue to restrict development in environmentally sensitive areas. I don’t know how much it may cost to buy sufficient land to protect the Barton Springs Zone, but I do know this: The land isn’t getting any cheaper. And the cost to replace the aquifer is unimaginable. I will appoint people to the appropriate boards and commissions who will recognize and act on the importance of protecting our environment and especially our drinking water.</p>
Transportation			
<p>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?</p>	<p>I would absolutely support alternative transit options, this has been a major part of my platform for quite some time. I have not yet made up my mind on the trolley system. There are pros (quick, convenient) and cons (expensive, dangerous). I would need to study the matter further to make an informed decision.</p>	<p>I support enhancement of alternative transit options as you describe above. I also support some type of downtown circulator system, and support a rail-based system if it can be financed with voter approved GO bonds. I do not support financing plans that use ABIA funds, great street funds, or TIFs. I also do not support city operation (as opposed to Capital Metro operation) of a rail transit system.</p>	<p>I’ve ridden transit systems like this in Portland, Oregon, and they are fantastic and many people use them. I have ideas about improving bus service. I support all the alternatives you’ve listed. I have to look closer at Mayor Wynn’s idea. (How does he propose to pay for it?) But I agree that the cost we as a society may need to bear now may be a bargain in the future when compared to building new roads or coping with global warming.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>I do not support expanding roadways in core areas of neighborhoods unless it is done to add bicycle facilities. Increase interior roadways increases the amount of cut through and this is detrimental to the neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>I am in favor of limiting roadway expansion in our core area neighborhoods.</p>