

Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) 2008 City Council Candidates Forum

Questionnaire Responses – Places 1 and 4

Question	Chris Riley (Place 1)	Laura Morrison (Place 4)	Eric Rangel (Place 4)
What neighborhood do you live in?	Downtown (Original Austin Neighborhood)	Old West Austin	East Riverside
Do you belong to your neighborhood or homeowner's association?	Yes; I'm a member of both the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA) and the Original Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA).	Yes	No
Have you participated in neighborhood planning? If so, how?	Yes. As a member of the Planning Commission and its Neighborhood Planning Subcommittee, I participated in numerous discussions and deliberations about neighborhood plans and the neighborhood planning process. I have also been involved in various aspects of the Downtown Plan, which is still in progress.	Yes. As far back as 1999.	No
I. Planning and Growth Management			
1. The assumptions in Austin's comprehensive planning effort, Imagine Austin, predict that the city's population will double by 2050. Do you believe that forecast is inevitable? What problems does that forecast present?	I don't believe any particular level of growth over the next 40 years is inevitable. But I think we need to be prepared for growth consistent with past trends in the event that we're successful in keeping Austin an attractive city with a high quality of life. A doubling of the population will present ongoing challenges in many areas, including transportation, water supply and infrastructure, and preservation of open space.	While the forecast that Austin's population will double by 2050 is plausible, it is not inevitable. The policy decisions made on a regular basis at the city effect the future growth of the city. If the presumption that the city's population will continue to double every 20+ years is true, it presents a dilemma for resource management and planning, because the capacity of our natural resources (e.g., water) is not unlimited. The capacity of our natural resources must be weighed in our planning efforts to ensure we are adequately addressing the needs of our residents and moving towards a more sustainable city.	Yes, I don't believe that our infrastructure is ready to handle the projected growth Austin will see

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<p>2. Do you believe that the preferred growth scenario as proposed by city staff provides sufficient data to verify whether growth will pay for the infrastructure it requires? What will you do to ensure that growth pays for itself?</p>	<p>The Preferred Growth Scenario is simply a map presenting a conceptual vision of how Austin should grow in the future. I believe it offers a sound approach for minimizing the public costs associated with growth, but I don't believe the data it provides would be sufficient to verify whether growth will pay for the infrastructure it requires. I'll work to ensure that our city grows in a cost-effective, sustainable way, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; for example, I'll continue to work toward facilitating appropriate mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development along our transit corridors.</p>	<p>No. The data for infrastructure costs analyzing the scenario options are only good to an order of magnitude, and the numbers are all the same order of magnitude. This renders the differences in infrastructure costs among the offered scenarios effectively meaningless. Part of the direction given to staff with the adoption of the comprehensive plan framework and the motion to move forward with the preferred scenario was to conduct cases studies that will look at real life infrastructure costs for new development and infill. This will give us an enhanced understanding of the true costs of growth and enable us to adjust our policies within the construct of the comprehensive plan. I will look to the Impact Fee Advisory Committee for recommendations on adjustment to the impact fees that city assesses, to more realistically reflect the increased cost of providing infrastructure for new development. In addition, the current cost of service study for development review will provide an opportunity to retrieve actual costs.</p>	<p>Yes I believe that the preferred growth scenario provides sufficient data. I also believe by laying down a mass transit system that the citizens of Austin can honestly use and rely on will eventually pay for some of the cost of that growth.</p>
<p>3. Do you believe that adopted neighborhood plans should be incorporated verbatim into the new comprehensive plan, giving equal weight to the text and the future land use map (FLUM) of the neighborhood plan? In cases where the new comprehensive plan conflicts with existing neighborhood plans, would you require that changes be subject to the neighborhood plan amendment</p>	<p>Adopted neighborhood plans, as written, should continue to be important components part of the comprehensive plan. The FLUM within a neighborhood plan is the principal mechanism for designating the intended land use on any given property, but the text of the plan provides important background that should be considered when assessing any changes to the plan or any</p>	<p>The thousands of community hours spent by our residents crafting neighborhood plans need to be respected. Both the language of the plans and the future land use maps should continue to be a critical element integrated into the city's comprehensive plan, guiding and informing the decisions that are made by the City Council and city staff every day.</p>	<p>At this point I am unsure and would need additional time to review my position on this issue. It will be a challenging task to balance both the neighborhoods plans along with the plans of Imagine Austin. Much thought and time will be needed before making a decision that favors both Imagine Austin and the City as a whole. I believe that through compromise and a well thought out</p>

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process?	matters not shown on the FLUM. In cases where the new comprehensive plan conflicts with existing neighborhood plans, I would support neighborhood plan amendments to reconcile the conflicts, with the understanding that neighborhood preferences must be balanced against citywide needs.	In cases where there might be a conflict between the recommendations of the comprehensive plan and an adopted neighborhood plan, I will support a process that requires any changes be subject to the neighborhood plan amendment process to allow for careful consideration by the community and a balancing of the objectives potentially at odds.	plan that the goals of both the neighborhoods and Imagine Austin can be met.
4. How would you ensure that the Imagine Austin plan is implemented?	As a member of the Council’s Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Subcommittee, I will be reviewing progress on the plan to ensure that it includes appropriate implementation measures and strategies. I would expect future capital improvement plans to be aligned with the new plan, and I would also expect the recently established working groups to identify other mechanisms for achieving progress on each of the elements within the Plan Framework.	As we have seen in Austin time and time again, a plan is only as good as the subsequent plan for implementation. I will ensure that the city puts together a complete implementation plan following the adoption of Imagine Austin. Future policies, regulations, and programs need to derive from the policies laid out within the plan. Additionally, the city’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and related bond elections should be based on the plan’s framework for growth to ensure we are building the infrastructure to guide development where Austin needs it and serving our existing residents.	By working tirelessly with neighborhoods and officials, we can ensure that not only is the Imagine Austin plan implemented, but that more importantly its carried out
II. Budget			
1. As the city faces reduced revenues and increased budget demands, what measures can the city take to maintain the quality of services and our community values? What would you cut and what would you refuse to cut? If staff reductions are required, how would you determine which employees, departments, or executives are affected?	The city should continue to engage the public during the budget review process to ensure that the decisions made are consistent with public expectations and community values. I would generally prioritize public safety and social services, and I would look for potential efficiencies to be achieved across all departments. I would not take any item off the table, but I would be leery of any short-term	The city budget reflects the values of our community, which are reflected in the city’s comprehensive plan. The best way we can ensure we are achieving these values is to refine our performance measures and standards by department to comprehensively understand where adjustments can be made. I hope that the city can avoid a situation that will require staff layoffs,	I would first start with the evaluation of my staff and then look outwards from there. I would eliminate the tax breaks that are given to the Historical home owners in West Austin

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	<p>savings that would lead to more serious and costly consequences. I would generally expect city management to make staffing decisions, as contemplated by our charter, subject to the Council's policy determinations made both before and during the budget review process.</p>	<p>which only continues the economic challenges for the city by affecting more Austin families and their well-being. Before I would consider layoffs, I would first look to reduce the budget through furloughs targeted to the highest paid staff members, for example those making over \$100,000 a year, as well as City Council Members.</p>	
<p>2. What are your criteria to support any proposed electric and water rate increases?</p>	<p>Electric and water rates should be based on the cost of service, and should promote efficiency, conservation, and other objectives consistent with the utilities' long-term plans. With respect to electric rates, the Council recently approved affordability goals; specifically, once our new rates are set in the upcoming rate case, we will seek to avoid an increase greater than 2 percent in any given year, and we will strive to keep our rates in the lower 50 percent of utilities statewide.</p>	<p>It is important to keep in mind that utility rates have the largest impact on Austin families with the lowest incomes. Every decision the City Council makes to fund infrastructure for the utilities adds to the debt burdens of the utility and increases the likelihood of rate increases. I voted against Water Treatment Plant #4 and the subsequent rate increases attributable to the plant in part for this reason. The advances we could make through water conservation eliminate the need for the plant, at least for the near future. This same principle applies to Austin Energy. Conservation and improvements in energy efficiency can reduce the need for added infrastructure costs in the future and reduce pressures to increase utility rates. As for the present cost of service study currently underway for Austin Energy, the city must ensure that the assessment is both transparent and fair to provide the community assurances that utility is keeping affordability at the forefront.</p>	<p>I will look into the monopolization of Austin Energy. This is a capitalist society and we need to have options for our citizens. If the Rolling blackouts didn't remind us of the energy problems that we as a city face, then nothing will.</p>

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<p>3. Do the city's public safety contracts put an undue burden on the city budget? What do you think are the most important factors in the upcoming police "Meet and Confer" process?</p>	<p>Our public safety contracts are costly, but I don't believe they impose an undue burden; public safety is perhaps the most important service our city provides. I don't know what factors will be most important in the Meet and Confer processes, but I expect there will be significant discussions about hiring processes, pay levels, overtime, and the funding of retirement plans.</p>	<p>Public safety is and always should be a fundamental priority for Austin. It does represent the lion's share of our General Fund budget and we must keep in mind that fund is shared by other departments, such as Parks and Recreation and Health and Human Services. Pay increases discussed in the next 'meet and confer' process need to be based on what is sustainable for the city budget and not negatively impact the budgets of other city departments.</p>	<p>I don't think that the city's public safety contracts put an undue burden on the city budget. I do believe that the one of the factors concerning this upcoming police "Meet and Confer" process will be that ALL Officers must be living within the Austin City limits during their time as an officer.</p>
<p>4. Despite the poor economy and the current deficits for federal, state, and local budgets, the city is proceeding with several large capital improvement projects, such as Water Treatment Plant 4, extensive new underground wastewater lines, and Waller Creek Tunnel Project. Do you think the City Council is being fiscally responsible, and what you would do to control the costs of these capital improvement projects?</p>	<p>I have repeatedly voted against Water Treatment Plant 4, but in general I do think the Council is being fiscally responsible in its handling of capital projects. The recession has reduced construction costs of Public Works projects by about 30 percent, and moving forward with construction during the recession provides jobs when Austin workers need them. I support controlling costs through lessons learned in past projects; for example, through the use of incentives for early completion and penalties for delays and overruns.</p>	<p>Financial responsibility coupled with social responsibility is a key tenet of effective leadership. Water Treatment Plan #4 is an example of major infrastructure project that is not right for Austin. I voted against WTP #4 not only for environmental reasons but also due to the fiscal burden it will place on Austin's families.</p> <p>As a citizen, I was one of the few voices offering testimony with concerns about the Waller Creek Tax Increment Finance District which decreases the revenue to the General Fund. I urged the Council to pursue other financial mechanisms that would have the nearby property owners, estimated to see an increase of \$3.2 billion in increased property value resulting from the tunnel, share in the project cost via a Public Improvement District (PID). As a Council Member, I monitor the financial situation for the tunnel closely and continue to promote my position that a PID would better achieve the community's goals.</p>	<p>With all growth comes cost, it is inevitable. The question is not "whether we need to spend the money?" the question is "are we spending it correctly?". Transparency is the only way to make sure that exists.</p>

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III. Economic Development			
<p>1. Will you vote against subsidies to large employers? Will you require a total cost-benefit analysis before voting on any subsidies or loans to any businesses?</p>	<p>I would vote against any subsidy that imposes a net cost on Austin taxpayers. We now require a total cost-benefit analysis before voting on any corporate incentives.</p>	<p>Any tax dollar spent by the City of Austin needs to be in the interest and well-being of all Austinites and represent our community's values. Near the beginning of my term on Council, I made it a priority to open up the economic incentives process for public review. I sponsored a resolution to make all relevant information, including an enhanced cost-benefit analysis, available to the public two weeks before a potential Council vote. Additionally, the process requires that the Council hold a public hearing a week before any potential decision to allow the public time to review the information and provide input. The cost-benefit analysis inserted into the process provides the Council with additional information on whether or not the subsidy will bring the economic benefit to the city. I have supported approval of economic incentive packages that have received broad support from the community, including a regional sales center for Facebook and the new headquarters for Hanger Orthopedic. In making these decisions, past and in the future, I look to a positive financial analysis, as well as plans for local recruitment, living and higher wages, and programs for tuition reimbursement.</p> <p>I believe it is important to factor in non-qualitative community values. I sponsored a resolution that provides consideration of whether or not a company offers domestic partner benefits to its employees. If the city is</p>	<p>I will not vote against subsidies for large employers. However, I will require a total cost- analysis before voting.</p>

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		<p>attracting jobs to our city, they need to be available to all of Austin's families.</p>	
<p>2. Should the City of Austin subsidize small businesses, especially those involved in music and entertainment? What forms of support do you think are appropriate for local businesses?</p>	<p>The City provides small businesses with valuable assistance, such as the award-winning "Meet the Lender" series, through its Small Business Development Program. While I generally don't favor outright subsidies, I do support carefully targeted assistance programs, such as small business internships for workers certified through a grant-funded program that provides job-readiness training to the long-term unemployed.</p>	<p>Yes. I believe that small, local businesses are the backbone of Austin's economy. I have a close working relationship with the Austin Independent Business Alliance (AIBA) and have been a vocal advocate for providing them with resources similar to a chamber of commerce to promote Austin's local businesses and retailers.</p> <p>There are many targeted opportunities to assist our small businesses which I look forward to continuing to grow. I have partnered with the city's Small and Minority Business Resources Department in designing and presenting programs for small businesses. We offered seminars on expanding health coverage options for small business employees. Currently, we are offering seminars for day care operators on new requirements from the updated building code along with information from community lenders who can assist with financing plans if needed. The creative industries including music, visual arts, digital media and entertainment are especially important as they represent Austin's culture and quality of life and provide the city with expanded opportunities to attract tourists. I am working with creative industry leaders to establish an ambassador program that recognizes local artists as small, local businesses of their own to help expand their consumer bases and gain</p>	<p>Yes, I feel that all businesses should at least be given the same opportunities as large businesses.</p>

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<p>3. Should the City of Austin be financially involved in developing an 800+ room hotel to promote the convention business?</p>	<p>Another large downtown hotel would be very helpful to our local economy, since it would put us in a better position to compete for larger conventions and other events. Cities are often involved in helping develop convention hotels; but I'm hopeful that a project will materialize here without the city's financial involvement, especially since our involvement with the existing Hilton downtown entails contractual restrictions on our ability to support the development of another similar hotel.</p>	<p>experience on an international scale. The convention and tourism industry is important for the strength of our local economy. Tourists and visitors feed our local businesses, fill our hotel rooms, and support our arts and historic resources. Should the city invest in another convention center hotel? At this point, I do not know. I will need to see the analysis to see if there is enough benefit to outweigh the costs of the investment. Should such a proposal come to the city, I will ensure that the public is involved in the vetting process to make certain it is a good investment for the city.</p>	<p>yes</p>
IV. Transportation			
<p>1. Do you support improved bus service, better bike lanes, more sidewalks, and other pedestrian improvements? Please comment on the policies or projects that you think would best address Austin's transportation needs.</p>	<p>Yes, I support improvements for all modes of travel. As a Council Member, I've been working on implementation of projects funded through the \$90 million November 2010 transportation bond election, as well as plans for another transportation bond election expected in November 2012. As a Capital Metro Board member and Chair of its Operations & Planning Committee, I've been working to promote bus and other transit services, including two planned Bus Rapid Transit lines. And as a CAMPO Transportation Policy Board member, I've been working to promote progress and coordination on transportation projects throughout our 5-county region. The aim for all these efforts is similar: the development of a robust, multi-modal transportation network that provides safe and convenient travel options for</p>	<p>Yes to all of the above. A comprehensive, multi-modal transportation system tied in with proper land use planning is the best way to address the city's continuing traffic and congestion problems. Building roads cannot, alone, solve the problem, nor is there room in the central city to expand roadways. The focus for long-term congestion relief needs to be on alternative modes of transportation, which includes bike lanes, sidewalks and improved mass transit. Single-occupancy vehicles pollute the environment and hurt overall public health.</p>	<p>Yes. I think we need to think bigger. Look at mass transit (i.e subway, rail, etc) is the only way to prepare for growth.</p>

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2. Do you support the urban rail system proposed by Mayor Leffingwell?	<p>all Austinites.</p> <p>Yes. We still have a number of issues to resolve: in particular, who would operate the system, how would its ongoing operation be funded, and how would it cross the river. But I'm hopeful that those questions can be answered in time to bring the proposal to the voters in November 2012.</p>	<p>I support the creation of an urban rail system that ties into a broader multi-modal transportation structure that focuses on long-term solutions to our traffic and congestion problems. More work needs to be done on the current proposal before it is ready to go to the voters, including developing a fiscally sound financing plan. The city also needs to address the expected impacts of rising property values around transit stations to avoid gentrification that forces families out of their homes.</p>	<p>Yes. When looking at other major cities and how they dealt with growth. Urban rail/ Subway were the right and only decision for them. I believe it's inevitable that some form of rail will have to be done. If we are ahead of the curve, the cost will be dramatically less in the long run.</p>
3. The city presently requires developers to provide a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) only for very large projects (more than 2000 car trips per day). TIAs have no expiration date, and the analysis does not include adjacent neighborhoods. What would you do to ensure that the City Council and land use commissions receive traffic analyses that accurately reflect the impact of a proposed project?	<p>I would look to the Urban Transportation Commission for recommendations regarding potential improvements to Traffic Impact Analyses.</p>	<p>I agree that TIAs do not adequately provide a realistic assessment of the traffic impacts of new and re-development. The most well-known situation of this was what occurred with the Walmart at Northcross Mall and the out-of-date traffic figures used to analyze the impact of big box stores in urban areas. The Council needs to ask the Planning Commission and the Urban Transportation Commission to look at state and national best practices and work with the various stakeholders to recommend improvements to the standards.</p>	<p>I do believe that TIAs should have an expiration date, and the analysis should include adjacent neighborhoods.</p>
V. Zoning			
1. Describe a contested land use case or other neighborhood issue where you supported the neighborhood position at a City Council meeting or other hearing.	<p>I have supported neighborhood positions at many Council meetings. At my very first Council meeting, on July 23, 2009, I sided with the Highland and Wooten Park neighborhoods in opposing CS-1 zoning that would have allowed a nightclub at Anderson Lane and 183, near single family homes. I was on</p>	<p>I voted against the Planned Unit Development (PUD) known as "Park PUD" at 801 Barton Springs Road, which supported the neighborhood position. I believe the project is inconsistent with both the adopted neighborhood plan and the Waterfront Overlay. I was also troubled by the precedent this project</p>	<p><left blank></p>

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	<p>the losing side of the 4-3 vote. After the vote, the President of the Wooten Park Neighborhood Association wrote me to say, “your vote last night showed that neighborhoods are important to the City Council.” That was not an isolated case. After another vote at that same meeting, representatives from the Westcreek neighborhood in southwest Austin wrote to thank me for supporting their neighborhood in a contested zoning case (item 126). I also sided with neighborhood residents who were seeking to apply McMansion standards to a site on Red Bird Lane in south Austin (item 125).</p>	<p>sets for the use of PUD zoning, as it does not meet the minimum criteria or standards set forth in city code.</p>	
<p>2. In cases where a neighborhood opposes up-zoning to convert residential use to a commercial use, and where adequate commercially zoned property is already available, will you commit to vote against such up-zoning?</p>	<p>I would need to consider each case on its own merits. I have previously voted against upzoning residential uses to commercial uses when the neighborhoods were opposed; for example, I have consistently sided with the Judge’s Hill neighborhood in their efforts to resist commercial encroachment along the edges of their neighborhood.</p>	<p>Prior to voting, I take into account all the relevant information, which includes the language from the neighborhood plan and the positions of the adjacent residents. I have a strong record supporting neighborhoods in their efforts to avoid commercial creep into residential areas. In the situation described above, I would need to learn all the details before arriving at my position.</p>	<p>In most cases I would vote against such situations. Although we as a city need to continue growth, we need not to forget about the individuals and families that make up Austin. I will fight hard to make sure that right of home owners are not be pushed aside for "positive" growth. Any growth that doesn’t work with the community is not growth worth having</p>
<p>3. Do you agree with the recent City Council vote to approve a Planned Unit Development (PUD) at 801 Barton Springs Road, within the Waterfront Overlay, despite the staff and Planning Commission recommendations against the PUD? Will you support the reinstatement of a clear method for increasing development entitlements commensurate with community benefits, as outlined in the 1986 city</p>	<p>I did support the PUD at 801 Barton Springs Road; I believed that we needed to balance the neighborhood’s position against city-wide interests, including the city’s interest in allowing additional density near transit stops. I’m not familiar with the 1986 city code, but I would support a clear method for increasing development entitlements commensurate with community benefits.</p>	<p>No, I do not agree with the decision made on this case. As I mentioned in the answer to the first zoning question, I voted against this PUD proposal and was the lone dissenting voice on Council. I believe that any significant increase in entitlements needs to be carefully weighed with the relevant community benefits. This is especially crucial with respect to the Waterfront Overlay, our most significant protection for</p>	<p>Yes, I do. When I believe the situation calls for the betterment of the city, I will always choose the city. However I will support the reinstatement of a clear method for increasing development entitlements commensurate with community benefits.</p>

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code?		Lady Bird Lake, and I do support clearly defined bonus density rules and benefits.	
4. Do you support the existing compatibility standards that provide buffers between commercial and residential properties? Under what circumstances, if any, do you think compatibility standards should be waived? How could compatibility be improved?	I do support compatibility standards to provide buffers between commercial and residential properties. I also believe our expectations for compatibility should be different in places where there is a community interest in promoting additional density; for example, in the Central Business District, in West Campus, and around transit hubs. Staff have been developing proposals for adjusted compatibility requirements along the East Riverside Corridor, and I'm interested in examining those proposals closely. I'm hopeful that the corridor planning process will offer opportunities to develop new, better rules -- in the context of a regulating plan or form-based code provisions -- that will ensure neighborhood-friendly transitions between commercial and residential properties while still allowing an appropriate level of development along our transit corridors.	I have a strong record of supporting compatibility standards. When consensus among all stakeholders is reached and there is a reasonable alternative, waiving compatibility standards should be considered. Compatibility standards need to be improved with "neighborhood-side design standards" that will enhance the backs of commercial buildings facing residential neighborhoods.	I believe each situation is different. I would need more time to review information on this.
VI. Community Values			
1. Do you believe that affordable housing should be distributed throughout the city? What steps would you take to assure the best return on investment for the limited public funds available for affordable housing while also accomplishing the priority of fair and equitable geographic distribution?	Yes, I believe that affordable housing should be distributed throughout the city. I would seek to increase opportunities for affordable housing on transit corridors throughout the city, which would reduce costs for residents while minimizing impacts on neighborhoods.	I support the city's adopted housing core values policy that targets reaching deep levels of long-term affordability options dispersed throughout the city. As president of the Austin Neighborhoods Council, I promoted a resolution that supported this policy. To achieve geographic dispersion, the Council must recognize that the subsidy per unit will be higher in areas with higher	I am a huge supporter for affordable housing to be equally distributed throughout the whole city.

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		<p>land values. At the same time, these are areas high in opportunity for families to transition from subsidized housing.</p> <p>It is also important to note here that the decisions made by the City Council play a role in the increasing pressures on affordability for Austin neighborhoods. Speculative rezoning cases that lead to significant increases in entitlements without community benefits can inordinately increase land costs, making it more difficult to provide more affordable housing options in Austin's existing neighborhoods.</p>	
<p>2. Do you support the Citywide Strategic Priority to encourage families with children to live in the urban core? How would you implement it?</p>	<p>Absolutely. We need to continue striving to ensure that Austin remains family-friendly; working, for example, to provide child-friendly open space within easy walking distance for families throughout the central city. I also support the City Council's decision to work with AISD and other school districts to identify ways that we can work together to save costs in an effort to avoid the closure of schools in the central city.</p>	<p>Yes. I sponsored the resolution to formally incorporate families and children as part of the Citywide Strategic Priorities.</p> <p>I have had success in bringing together the city, county, and school district as a member of the Joint Subcommittees to work together on policies, such as the educational impact assessment. The educational impact assessment looks at the potential displacement of Austin families due to redevelopment in the urban core, and the impact it has on neighborhood schools. This will be a formal process in all development permitting decisions.</p> <p>I am also working with stakeholders on the city's policies in regards to urban parks to achieve a goal of having parkland accessible to all of Austin's urban residents within a ¼-mile.</p> <p>We have opportunities under the Imagine Austin comprehensive</p>	<p>Yes, I do. I would give a 5 or 10 year tax break for individuals making x \$'s or less</p>

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		<p>planning effort to develop policies that integrate the goal of encouraging families and children in our urban core, and achieving that is one of the critical requirements of this effort.</p>	
<p>3. Do you support the equitable distribution of the property tax burden among residential and commercial properties? Will you seek to correct the underassessment of commercial properties by the Travis Central Appraisal District? Will you support a homestead exemption for city taxpayers?</p>	<p>Yes, I support the equitable distribution of the property tax burden among residential and commercial properties. I will continue to look for ways to correct the underassessment of commercial properties. I would support a homestead exemption for city taxpayers if it could be implemented without undue adverse consequences, such as a disproportionate shift of the tax burden to renters.</p>	<p>Yes, the equitable distribution of property taxes among residential and commercial properties is critical to the fiscal well-being of the city. There have been several instances in the past few years where appraisals on commercial properties do not align with fair market value. For example, there is a parcel on Cesar Chavez Street that the city considered purchasing for \$15 million, but that is only appraised on the tax rolls as \$3 million. I raised the issue at the time, and the city chose not to proceed with the purchase.</p> <p>I have worked with city staff to provide the appraisal district with important information that can impact TCAD appraisals, including data compiled during the process of real estate transitions by the city, and information on nonstandard entitlements on specific properties. The Council needs to continue to foster this relationship with the appraisal district to share better information and follow up on TCAD appraisals that do not align with the city's independent appraisals.</p> <p>I support a more balanced homestead exemption that will enable long-time, low-income home owners the opportunity to stay in their homes despite rising property values, while at the same time minimizing the impact to the city's general fund.</p>	<p>At this point I am unsure and would need additional time to review my position on this issue.</p>

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VII. Environment			
<p>1. The Master Plan Phase 1 Watershed Report estimates that Austin needs \$800 million in capital funding and an ongoing \$2-5 million per year to address serious problems of flooding, erosion, and water quality degradation in 17 watersheds. What would you do to help ensure these waterways are cleaned up, and what changes would you support to limit the degradation of our creeks and lakes? Will you commit to instructing the City Manager to assess the drinking supply watersheds that were deferred to Phase II of the Master Plan?</p>	<p>I would support continued examination of our drainage fees to ensure that they're adequate. I would also support continuing our successful efforts to seek out federal funding for flood control projects, as well as future bond items to secure strategic purchases of open space. I also support innovative landscaping efforts, like the new Blunn Creek rain gardens and the recent amendments to the commercial landscape ordinance, that support and beautify key drainage areas while promoting water quality. I'm not familiar with the deferment of drinking supply watersheds to Phase II of the Master Plan, but I'd be glad to work with staff to ensure that all our watersheds are assessed timely.</p>	<p>The information from the watershed report needs to be discussed in the context of the comprehensive plan to help guide policies that will minimize the impact development has on the degradation of our watersheds. Additionally, the Council should consider capital funding to include in the city's upcoming bond election to address some of these pressing concerns.</p> <p>The Council recently initiated code amendments aimed at improving stream buffer requirements, protecting headwaters and stream banks, preserving floodplains, and improving storm water controls. These amendments are currently making their way through the boards and commissions process, and I am looking to our environmental stewards for their recommendations on how these changes can help protect our creeks and watersheds, especially those in eastern parts of Austin that have few controls in the code.</p> <p>I will look into the status of Phase II of the Master Plan and see what it will take to move it forward.</p>	<p>At this point I am unsure and would need additional time to review my position on this issue.</p>
<p>2. Do you think the penalties in the city's tree protection ordinances are sufficient to deter violations and to preserve our urban forest? If not, what measures would you take to help ensure the preservation of mature trees?</p>	<p>The City Council passed a heritage tree ordinance within the past year or so, and the city's 4th-quarter rules regarding tree protection were only recently upheld. At this point I'd support allowing some time to see whether the new ordinance and rules are sufficient to deter violations and to preserve our urban forest. I'll look to the Urban Forestry Board for</p>	<p>None of our regulations are perfect. In an ideal world, all trees would be protected. The importance is to achieve balance in our community to best accommodate all of our values. I supported the recent changes to the tree ordinance that enhanced protections for heritage trees, because they were the result of diligent work and compromise from</p>	<p>Sometimes we forget that we live in a state that still implements the death penalty. Criminals are going to commit crimes no matter what punishments we put in place. However, we should not turn a blind eye. The only solution is to keep increasing the severity of the penalties by either fines or community service.</p>

Question	Chris Riley (Place 1)	Laura Morrison (Place 4)	Eric Rangel (Place 4)
	guidance regarding the need for potential changes.	stakeholders on all sides of the issue. I support reviewing the tree ordinance on a regular basis and will work closely with my Urban Forestry Board appointee to work on any changes that need to be made over time to enhance protections for our urban canopy.	
3. Do you support the energy and water conservation policies of the City of Austin utilities? How would you change them?	I do support the energy and water conservation policies of our utilities. With respect to energy, I believe we may need additional mechanisms, like an efficiency rider, to accelerate demand side management programs and ensure that we achieve and surpass the efficiency goals set out in our generation plan. In regard to water, I support continued progress on the recommendations of the Water Conservation Task Force to keep our water consumption below 140 gallons per capita per day.	Absolutely. Conservation is paramount to Austin’s success as a sustainable city. It is important to understand the return on the investment we get from conservation, both financially by reducing the need for additional infrastructure and purchased resources, and environmentally by minimizing our impact on the earth. Our conservation program does need work. The Water Conservation Implementation Taskforce came up with some great recommendations to help Austin achieve its goal of reducing its water demand to 140 GPD. The staff analysis of these recommendations was largely dismissive, saying that it will cost too much to do conservation. I don’t agree with this outcome and believe the recommendations need more review.	Yes, I do and I would look into the monopolization of Austin energy.
4. The City Council has approved at least \$350 million for construction of Water Treatment Plant 4, yet the engineering and environmental studies have not been completed. How well do you think the city has vetted this project, and what would you do to ensure that this infrastructure investment is not a financial or environmental disaster?	I have repeatedly voted against construction of Water Treatment Plant 4. Even after many years of discussion, there are still many unknowns in regard to the environmental implications for the area. I’ll continue to keep a close eye on the project, and I’ll strive to ensure that the associated risks and costs are kept to a minimum.	I consistently voted against Water Treatment Plant 4 items, and voted against the \$350 million for construction. The decision to move forward with financing the project in its entirety prior to the completion of all of the environmental assessments is very problematic, especially in such an environmentally sensitive area with springs and salamanders	Whether we put in place a water treatment plant now or later, we will need it in the future. It seems to me that without the proper data, one cannot make an accurate decision.

Question	Chris Riley (Place 1)	Laura Morrison (Place 4)	Eric Rangel (Place 4)
		<p>potentially at risk. Even the US Fish and Wildlife Service told the city it was too early to talk about conservation agreements.</p> <p>As a member of the Audit and Finance Committee, I will continue to monitor the quarterly reporting for the Austin Water Utility and the progress of the plant from both a financial and environmental standpoint. There are also lawsuits pending against the city that could have an impact on the construction of the plant.</p>	

VIII. City Government Structure

<p>1. Do you feel that the current City Council adequately represents the diverse interests of the entire population of 750,000? What changes to the city charter would you support within the next year to change the way we elect the City Council or otherwise restructure city government?</p>	<p>I think it's very difficult for seven at-large Council members to adequately represent all our constituents; the city is too big, and our staffs are too small, to give every issue the attention it deserves. I would support moving toward a mixed system of at-large and single-member districts.</p>	<p>I believe that a hybrid system (including single member and sector and/or at large positions) would bring the Council closer to the community and result in more effective governing of the city. Such a change has the potential to bring the following benefits: increased accountability of Council Members; better understanding by the Council of the issues facing citizens; lower cost of running a campaign with a follow-on benefit of encouraging a broader range of candidates; enhanced access to Council Members by the citizens; and potentially increased voter turnout.</p> <p>I support a charter amendment that would have a city attorney report directly to Council. Conflicts arise at times between the Council and city management, and it is imperative that the Council has representation. A stark example of this was when the Council directed the city manager to oppose the expansion of the BFI landfill in Northeast Austin. Without</p>	<p>I do not think that our current system accurately reflects our community. That's why I would support Single-Member Districts.</p>
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Question	Chris Riley (Place 1)	Laura Morrison (Place 4)	Eric Rangel (Place 4)
		<p>Council direction, the city attorney chose to enter into a settlement agreement that contradicted the resolution and would allow the landfill to increase capacity. The charter prevented the Council from hiring outside counsel directly to help resolve this situation.</p> <p>Conflicts also arise at time when residents are frustrated by legal decisions being made by the city attorney, and the Council has no opportunity to respond. The Council Members are the ones accountable to the citizens and need to be the decision makes as multiple legal options are considered.</p>	
<p>2. Do you support the creation of a representative citizens' group to recommend a structure and district boundaries for the election of council members from geographic districts? If the City Council proposes a charter amendment for single-member districts, will you sponsor a simultaneous amendment establishing an independent body to oversee periodic redistricting?</p>	<p>Austin voters have rejected single-member districts six times in recent years. I would support a process that maximizes the likelihood that the seventh effort will be successful. I would expect citizens to be involved in determining the structure and boundaries. In regard to details regarding process, structure, districts, and redistricting, I would look to input from the whole community, including attorneys familiar with Department of Justice requirements for preclearance under section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.</p>	<p>This seems like a reasonable proposal, and I will be open to discussing it as we move forward. Public vetting will be critical in ensuring we have a proposal and an ongoing system that accurately reflects the desires of the community.</p>	<p>Yes, I do and yes I will</p>

Question	Chris Riley (Place 1)	Laura Morrison (Place 4)	Eric Rangel (Place 4)
<p>3. What would you do to help ensure that Council business is conducted in public view and that you have adequate information prior to making decisions? Will you commit to making your own calendar public?</p>	<p>I have posted my calendar online since I took office. I also post information regarding resolutions I have sponsored or co-sponsored, appointments I have made, and committees on which I serve. I have supported our recent practice of holding public work sessions during Council meeting weeks, and I am open to other measures aimed at ensuring that Council business is conducted in public view. I have strived for transparency and accessibility, and I will continue to do so.</p>	<p>As a Council Member, I have made it a top priority to have city decisions be made in public view with transparency and adequate time for public review and engagement. It is my fundamental belief that the more perspectives we have reviewing a decision, the better results we will have for our community. I am a proponent of the boards and commissions process and have tried to insert their recommendations and expertise with every opportunity that arises. I worked with the city manager to get the boards involved formally in the budget process, which has been a major improvement to how decisions have been made in the past.</p> <p>My official city calendar has been public since 2008, the first year I took office. It is a direct copy printed from outlook, not a recreation. I will continue in this manner if elected to a second term. Additionally, my Council website includes a listing and link to each of the resolutions I have sponsored.</p>	<p>Honoring the open meeting Act is a priority to me and I would commit to making my own calendar public.</p>