



Better Austin Today
Political Action Committee
P.O. Box 91041
Austin, Texas 78709-1041
www.BetterAustinToday.org

Robin Cravey

City Council May 2008 Election, Candidate Questions

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The following premise statements highlight some of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY's issues and are followed by the specific questions for the candidates.

General Questions

BETTER AUSTIN TODAY Political Action Committee is a broad based and community wide organization that has come together to further a shared vision for Austin's future. BETTER AUSTIN TODAY recognizes the connectivity of the many important issues facing our community and is committed to working to improve the lives of everyone in our community.

1. Do you want the endorsement of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY and if so why?

Certainly I want to earn the support of the members of Better Austin Today, just as I want to earn the support of all residents of Austin who want to cooperate in pursuing a progressive agenda. I think BAT and I share common goals to protect the environment, neighborhoods, and residents of the city while encouraging, but not subsidizing, healthy growth of the local economy. I need the support of those who share those goals if I am going to win a seat on the Council.

In answering the remaining questions, I am not going to comment on your premise statements, and I will not make any categorical pledges, although that does not necessarily mean that I disagree with your position, or that I don't intend to take the requested actions. I simply am not willing to surrender the responsibility of making decisions as an elected official on a case-by-case basis. If you elect me, you are electing me to exercise my judgment, not to carry out a list of instructions.

To lead you must have a direction. To achieve you must have cooperation.

2. What is your vision for Austin's future, what do you think is unique about Austin and how do you propose to preserve and enhance what is special about Austin and how will you work with the other City Council members to get this accomplished?

Austin will inevitably continue to grow, and it will increasingly be shaped by outside forces that we cannot control, such as the effects of global warming.

Knowing that, we must continue to work hard and smart to preserve the city's natural beauty, protect the environment and our safe and shady neighborhoods, keep neighborhood schools, and re-invigorate the backbone of our local economy – our working class and middle class and small businesses. We need to do all these things without sacrificing the laid-back, friendly, neighborly feeling that makes Austin such a welcoming place to live and do business.

We must engage in an effective city-wide planning process. We are going to have to build higher and closer together in downtown Austin and along our transit corridors. We must require affordable housing to be a part of all new development, and we need to find other, additional ways to provide affordable housing.

We need to build a usable, user-friendly public transit system, make the entire city walkable and bikeable, and develop a truly great system of public parks and trails.

As a Council member I would proceed the same way that I did several years ago when I was Administrative Assistant to two successive Council members – through continuous collaborative relationships with my colleagues that allow frank and ambitious discussions of what the city can do for its citizens.

Now, as then, I would cultivate a respectful relationship with City staff, depending on their judgment and professionalism to communicate with the Council and give us the information and effort necessary to move the City in positive directions.

In many neighborhood zoning cases, the community does not know of the proposed project until very late in the process. Often developers have met with not only city staff but also City Council members to advance their position when the community has not even had a chance to know that the City Council is being lobbied on a zoning case.

3. Would you as a City Council member be willing to post your calendar online so that the community knows when and whom you are meeting with and the purpose of the meeting?

Yes. For the purpose of providing information to the public, I would publish some form of my calendar online.

Our City Council may have over 100 items to consider at each City Council Meeting. Over the course of a year, the Council can act on the community's behalf on thousands of issues.

4. What actions of the current City Council within the last year would you consider to be major positive accomplishments and what actions would you consider to be the worst actions taken by the City

Council?

One major positive accomplishment was the allocation of \$6.2 million for improvements at Barton Springs Pool, which was done as the result of volunteer labor by the Friends of Barton Springs Pool.

Closing down the Holly Street Power Plant is maybe the best example of a positive accomplishment in the last year.

In terms of bad decisions or actions taken, I disagree with the choice of the location for the new Water Treatment plant. I don't think we're doing enough to protect the aquifer, the source of our drinking water, so that's a lack of action. On the choice of the new City Manager, he may turn out to be a heck of a guy, and I hope and expect that he will, but the process should have been an open one allowing meaningful input from the citizens, and it just wasn't.

And then there's the decision to move the City's court system, the Municipal Court, out of downtown and into a former Home Depot building in a location with inadequate public transit. This was a decision that got almost no public discussion or even publicity. A lot of people still don't even know about it, and this is a major decision that was made basically in secret. That should never have happened.

Often the City Council takes actions as recommended by the City Manager and supported by the City Legal department. At times, this legal advice limits the options that the City Council considers in a situation. While that legal advice may be supportive of the City Manager's position, it may not be reflective of all the options available to the City and as such prevents the City Council from acting in the community's best interest.

5. Would you pledge to support changing the city charter to allow the City Council to hire either the City Attorney directly accountable to the council, or give the City Council the ability to hire an outside attorney for recommendations independent of the City Manager?

No. As a lawyer and an activist, I recognize the importance of the parameters set by legal advice. I'll be able to exercise my independent judgment in evaluating advice from the city attorney. I do believe that at times the council needs advice apart from the city attorney, and I will look for mechanisms to accomplish that.

Title 18 requires all public elected officials to act in their capacity as an elected official to initiate an investigation of any violation of the law that is reported to them. Recently there have been many allegations of misconduct of City staff such as with the Convention Center, City Hall Store, Housing Bonds, and the delay in the Big Box retail ordinance.

6. As a City Council member, if information is presented to you concerning a potentially unlawful action by City Staff or the City

Administration, what specific actions will you take to execute your sworn obligations under Title 18?

I would ask for an explanation from the city manager, discuss the issue with other council members, possibly refer it to the city auditor, and if necessary report it to law enforcement authorities.

Our current City Charter dictates a City Council and City Manager form of government with the City Manager reporting to the full Council and with each City Council member elected at large. Our City Council is the only jurisdictional body in Travis County that elects its officials with a total at large system. Nationally most peer cities of Austin's size elect their City Council with some form of geographical districts.

7. Do you believe that Austin's current City Council representational system is appropriate for a city of over 700,000 and please explain your reasons for this position?

I favor a mixed system of representation, with some council members elected at large (city-wide), and some elected from individual districts. This will allow the district – elected council members to have a closer relationship to the voters who elect them. It will also lower the cost of city council election campaigns and make it a realistic possibility for citizens who are not independently wealthy to run for a place on the Austin City Council.

Currently, the City of Austin uses the turnkey services of the Travis County Elections Department for conducting its elections which uses electronic voting machines that many concerned citizens have likened to officials taking a ballot box into a back room to count the votes with no public oversight. Several states (CA, OH, and CO) have had computer experts study the same machines that Travis County uses and have discovered that they "...contain serious design flaws that have led directly to specific vulnerabilities, which attackers could exploit to affect election outcomes," so, as a result, they were decertified in these three states.

8. Do you think that the citizens of Austin have the right to observe the counting of their votes and have oversight in every step of the election process? Would you be willing to go on the record in support of a return to hand-counted paper ballot elections with enhanced security protocols and with precinct totals posted at the precinct level immediately after the counting?

I support a return to paper ballots that are machine readable. This would allow a relatively rapid reporting of results, with a paper trail for hand-counting when verification is needed. I also support enhanced security protocols.

The following questions are grouped by BETTER AUSTIN TODAY's interest area.

Neighborhoods

We often hear that Austin will double in population every 10 to 20 years and that we have to accept that premise and plan accordingly. This assumption influences many decisions of our City Council from transit planning to zoning changes to accommodate increased density. However, others suggest that we need to take a broader approach and assess what is a reasonable growth management strategy for our city.

- 9. Would you as a City Council member support developing an inclusive community-based process to create a comprehensive growth management policy for our community? How would you organize this process, what staffing and funding would you support for the process and what is your estimate of how long such a process would take?**

I will propose a new citywide planning process similar to the Austin Tomorrow process the city conducted in the 1970s. This planning process should be conducted by a distinguished commission of citizens, overseen by the city council, and supported by an expanded city planning staff. I would hope the process could produce an adopted plan in less than three years.

From the plan would then flow a large number of initiatives and decisions, possibly including land development code revisions, bond elections, neighborhood plan reviews, regional agreements, and more.

Neighborhood planning was intended to provide our neighborhoods with a means to create a shared vision for their future within the context of an overall comprehensive plan and the actions needed to accomplish that vision. However, there is much debate as to whether neighborhood planning has met this goal.

- 10. What do you believe has worked and not worked in neighborhood planning with regards to the following issues and what actions you would take as a city Council member to address any shortcomings in this process?**
- A) Notification of all impacted parties to ensure an inclusive process.**
 - B) Providing pertinent demographic, economic and infrastructure information needed to make informed planning decisions.**
 - C) Educating the community of the implications of land use decisions with regard to the impact to the density, character and quality of life of the neighborhood.**

- D) Providing adequate city resources devoted to support and staffing of the planning process.**
- E) Decision-making within the planning process that reflects the community will.**
- F) Council respecting the adopted neighborhood plans in subsequent zoning cases.**

The main shortcoming of the neighborhood planning process has been that there has not been an official up-to-date comprehensive plan to give the neighborhoods a sense of how they fit into the city as a whole. Until the city has clear city-wide goals, neighborhood planning will be fraught with confusion and conflict.

A city-wide planning process would develop in a comprehensive and orderly way the information needed to make informed planning decisions. It would also educate the community on land use.

Decisions in the process should reflect the community will, and the participants should give due respect to the professional judgment of the city staff.

As a councilmember, I will follow a strong presumption that an adopted neighborhood plan is valid and should be followed, both out of respect for the neighborhood and out of a practice of keeping council deliberations at the policy level.

One of the major problems of neighborhoods is the imposition of intrusive developments that are not compatible with maintaining the neighborhood's character. The use of a valid petition to prevent inappropriate zoning changes is an important tool in neighborhood efforts to protect their quality of life.

11. Will you pledge to support a neighborhood's valid petition on zoning cases and if not, why not? Do you consider the City Council adoption of Vertical Mixed Use a zoning change and if not do you support City Staff's position that it requires a super majority of the Council to override a single property owner's valid petition against being opted out of VMU?

No, I will not pledge to always support a valid petition in every case, but I will always give a valid petition great weight in my evaluation of every case. Making such a categorical pledge would essentially allow others to claim to control my vote, which I will not allow anyone to do.

I do not consider adoption of vertical mixed use to be a zoning change, and I do not believe that a supermajority of the council would be required to override a property owner's objection, however, I would certainly listen to the staff's arguments.

One of the biggest problems in many of our lower and middle-income neighborhoods is the rising cost of living and the resultant gentrification that is pushing many long time residents out of our neighborhoods.

12. What do you see as the causes of this problem and what specifically will you do as a City Council member to address this problem?

Gentrification comes from outside land investment as well as increased demand and changing patterns of land use. When policy and fashion favored sprawl, inner city property values stagnated. When policy and fashion rejected sprawl, inner city property values began to soar. I will spearhead a comprehensive program to ensure that as the city grows we will maintain and provide ample housing for the working and middle classes.

The basic regulations that define what can and can not be built in our community are in our Land Development and Building Codes. These regulations are essential for an orderly and community supported development process.

13. With regards to the following code issues what do you believe needs to be changed to ensure a positive successful development process?

- A) Code enforcement**
- B) Consistent interpretation of the codes**
- C) Updating our codes to reflect best practices**

Code enforcement has long been underfunded in Austin. I favor a major beefing up of this department. For a long time, code enforcement has been complaint-driven, meaning that only when someone complains does an inspector go out. Instead, it should be systematic and active, meaning that inspectors cover the city actively looking for code violations. At the same time, our codes should be reviewed to weed out provisions that are not worth the cost of enforcement.

Consistent interpretation must be a matter of discipline in our staff, our boards and commissions, and the council. The example must be set by the city council standing firm for consistency.

I favor a step-by-step approach to updating the codes to reflect best practices.

Environment

The “un-adopted” city policy appears to capture more development within the existing city footprint as a means to reduce sprawl. However, quite often it seems that at the same time we are both encouraging and facilitating sprawl development and also approving redevelopment that needlessly impinges on central city neighborhoods, affordability and other community values.

14. How will you address this contradiction in the City’s actions and provide a consistent growth management policy?

I propose a citywide planning process to adopt a growth management plan. Growth management must be balanced. We must encourage growth in the desired development zone, and we must also discourage sprawl in areas of environmental sensitivity or agricultural production. In the desired development zone, we must pay careful attention to the pattern of development, and the mix of income levels it serves.

Austin has long recognized that Barton Springs Pool and the springs that feed it as major community assets. However, increased development over the Barton Springs zone of the Edwards aquifer continues to threaten this precious water resource.

15. Do you believe that the city should continue to purchase more acreage in the drinking Water Protection Zone, especially in the aquifer recharge zone by establishing a long range funding strategy focused on buying the most important environmentally significant properties? If so, how much do you estimate it will cost to buy sufficient land to protect the Barton Springs Zone?

I do believe the city should continue to purchase more acreage in the drinking water protection zone, and especially the aquifer recharge zone. I can't estimate the cost. I also believe we should increase our regulation of growth in that area. When I served on the Planning Commission I voted against dozens of cases based on their environmental impact. I would be a leader on the council for that position.

While Austin prides itself in being a leader in Green Building practices and has indicated support of a climate change initiative, we often, however, do not take the lead on our own city projects to be environmental advocates.

16. As a City Council member, what is your position on the following issues and what specific innovative programs will you support to ensure that Austin is a leader in environmental stewardship in these areas?

- A) Reducing our water usage by emphasizing water conservation and reducing wastewater usage by effective gray water reuse rather than the construction of a new water treatment plant.**
- B) Do you recognize the problem with Peak Oil projections and its impact on our ability to reduce our "Carbon Footprint" by energy conservation strategies and the related need to develop safe and sustainable energy resources?**
- C) Requiring comprehensive project impact analysis that includes water, energy, air, social and economic factors as part of development review process.**
- D) Coordinating our water, wastewater and electric utility service areas with an annexation strategy as part of our comprehensive planning.**

I support a strong water conservation program and a gray water reuse program that works.

Geologists, engineers, and others have been warning for decades that our ability to find and produce petroleum economically would reach a peak and begin to decline. We may be near the peak.

I propose a reduction of petroleum use through transportation and development policies that favor walking, bicycling, motorbiking, and public transit, as well as a shift to vehicles that use alternative power. I also favor increased reliance on locally produced food and goods, increased energy conservation, and the orderly conversion of our utility to renewable resources.

Our city departments currently review new projects for a variety of impacts. It would be a good idea to rationalize this process and make it consistent and comprehensive.

We should coordinate extension of city utilities and annexation with our comprehensive plan.

As Austin grows, if we do not reduce our demand for energy through conservation and switch to renewable energy supplies, it is suggested that we will need to build a new power plant based on either nuclear or coal technologies.

17. Will you commit to voting against any proposal that would result in Austin constructing or participating in the construction of a new nuclear or coal fired power plant, yes or no?

No, I will not make a blanket commitment. I oppose construction of any new nuclear plant. I would do everything possible to avoid participating in a new coal plant. However, in an orderly transition to sustainable sources, we can't rule out every other contingency.

The current development approval process is structured in favor of developer interests rather than community interests. This is reflected in the compartmentalization of the city review process and the lack of community input into the process at critical decision points. Often projects are approved without any evaluation on a whole range of concerns from the impact on local traffic to the regional impact of additional drainage requirements. The current system encourages conflict, not collaboration, and favors piecemeal approvals that do not serve larger community needs.

18. What will you do to change the current development review process to encourage collaboration and greater respect for neighborhood and other community and regional stakeholder interests?

The current development review process takes too much time and energy. It is also understaffed. I think we need to take several measures: offer meeting space and

facilitation to project-specific stakeholder meetings early in the application process; emphasize the presumption that zoning and codes will be followed as adopted; provide better staff support to boards and commissions; develop a more orderly process for identifying and tracking stakeholders; require notice to stakeholders as part of application completeness review; consider allowing stakeholders to appeal staff decisions the same way applicants can.

Over and over, City decisions appear to be made behind closed doors, with little or no public input, with public involvement only coming in after-the-fact. The result is that the ideas, wisdom and intelligence of the community is relegated to a purely cosmetic or backseat role. Recent examples of this include City Council approval of a 100-year water deal with the LCRA; the hiring of the new city manager; the proposed move of the animal shelter; the authorization of \$6.2 million in Barton Springs pool improvements, the proposed privatization of Seaholm and Green and the redevelopment amendment to the SOS ordinance.

19. As a City Council member what steps would you take to ensure meaningful community participation in important City decisions?

To be meaningful, citizen participation must be well-informed, timely, and constructive. In many cases the challenge is to bring the information to the attention of citizens timely. Also, citizens must remember that the objective is to reach a decision.

I propose the revival of the city council work session. When I worked at city hall, the council met in work session every Wednesday to hear staff reports about work the staff was doing that was not yet ready for the action agenda. This was a good time for council and citizens to learn what was going on in city government without the high pressure of moving through an agenda loaded with action items. It was also a time when council members would announce initiatives they were working on, or were proposing for the next week's agenda.

Revival of the work session would also take some of the time pressure off the Thursday action agenda. It would alleviate the need for citizens to wait at Council meetings all night for their issues to be heard, and would help end Council meetings at a reasonable hour.

Social Equity

The City budget contains cost drivers, such as the Police contract, that take an ever increasing share of our tax revenue leaving less and less funds to address other community needs.

20. What will you do as a City Council Member to pull back the demand on our city budget of the Public Service contracts to allow other priorities of the City to be met?

Public safety contracts will be up for renewal this year, and it will be important to hold costs down in those contracts.

Currently in Austin, African-American and Latino's mean income for a family of four is approximately half of that of Whites and Asian-Americans. This disparity has led to a diminished quality of life in the areas of Health, Education, Affordable housing, Public Safety and environment for a large segment of our community.

21. What specific actions will you take as a City Council member to address this disparity and what effect do you believe your actions will have in addressing this problem?

Different levels of government have different responsibilities relating to this cluster of problems. The primary responsibilities of the City Council in these areas are affordable housing, public safety, and maintaining / recovering clean air and water. I have several strategies to promote affordable housing, which are detailed in other answers in this questionnaire, as are the issues of police and fire protection and efforts to reduce air and water pollution.

I will launch a major effort to ensure that safe and stable housing within the city is available to all. Many people are struggling to get their lives on track or keep them on track, and housing is a key foundation for that.

The newly created Health Care District cannot provide adequate care for our community at the current funding levels and will need significant more resources as the economic disparity continues to grow in our community, forcing even more people to depend on public assistance.

22. What role do you see the City of Austin playing in assuring that the Health Care District is adequately funded while recognizing the difficulty of increasing the tax burden on the lower and middle-income members of our community?

A large cost factor for the Health Care District is the care given to residents of surrounding counties who do not pay taxes here. The City of Austin should work with Travis County, our legislative delegation, and the surrounding counties to pass legislation providing a way for the surrounding counties to pay their fair share of the cost of care.

This is a good example of the inter-action of the different responsibilities of different levels of government. The basic problem underlying the premise of this question is the lack of affordable health insurance and affordable health care in this country. The insurance problem must be solved at the national level. The availability of health care is partly a city responsibility, which must continue to be addressed through our hospitals and clinics. As the question acknowledges, the resources of the city and the Health Care District are not unlimited, but we must continue to fund emergency care while we put pressure on Congress to solve the health care insurance and affordability crisis. Until that

happens there is going to be increasing pressure on local governments to increase taxes to take care of the problems that Congress should be solving but refuses to.

The lack of affordable housing in Austin is a crisis for many residents. The community has recognized this growing problem and has approved a \$55 million bond package for affordable housing. However, serious questions have arisen about the accountability of this bond program and its impact on affordability. It is also recognized that even with appropriate use of these funds, this level of funding will not provide much relief to the affordable housing crisis.

23. How many additional housing units or rehabilitated existing units do you expect the affordable housing bond program to provide? What percent of the \$55 million should go to modest and low-income housing? How do you define modest and low-income housing? What can you do as a City Council member to ensure that the \$55 million in bond funding will actually go to providing more affordable housing and what other specific actions can the City Council take to place more affordable housing in our community?

I hope that the bond program can provide at least 5,000 new or rehabilitated units that are permanently affordable. All of the funds should go to housing for residents under 80% of median family income, distributed according to the proportion of income levels within the city. We must provide housing down to the lowest wage scale in the city, which means providing decent living space to people earning the minimum wage. I will insist that funding go only to agencies and organizations with a proven track record for efficiency. To keep administrative costs down, we should also make a substantial investment in publicly owned housing.

The Council can do much more to create more affordable housing. I will propose that we set out a plan to provide decent housing to everyone in our community within ten years. This will involve a variety of mechanisms, including density bonuses, land trusts, public housing, and others.

This is a prime example of an area where there must be joint action by the public and private sectors, but it is going to have to come about as the result of public policy requiring that new development and re-development always include a reasonable percentage of affordable housing. And affordable housing can be defined as what can be owned or rented by people whose income is less than 80% of the median family income in the Austin area, but another way to define it is that it must be affordable for the teachers, police officers, fire fighters and other public employees of the community. Otherwise, what are we trying to accomplish?

We are told by the City Administration that the City can no longer afford to purchase land for community facilities downtown, yet land the city already owns downtown is being proposed for sale for private development. Moreover, we are told that we must relocate essential city services away from the populations they serve without adequate transportation services. Basic living expenses for our

teachers, nurses, police officers and many other working class residents have not kept pace with the cost of living and so many can no longer afford to live in our city. However, we continue to subsidize big corporations and developers.

24. What city policy changes would you enact to address the following Concerns?

- A) Promotion of living wage scale for all of Austin’s employers**
- B) Putting Health and Human services at the same budget priority as Public Safety**
- C) An economic development strategy that focuses on providing jobs first for current residents that are either unemployed or underemployed.**

I support a living wage scale based on the Universal Living Wage formula that calculates the living wage on local housing costs. The city council endorsed this concept several years ago, and City Manager Toby Futrell has made good progress in moving our city staff and contractors toward that standard. I will propose an ordinance that requires all city workers and all workers for city contractors be paid a living wage.

Our health and human services budget is in flux, due to the creation of the health care district and the possible transition of many city employees to independent health care providers. I believe these services are every bit as important as public safety.

Our economic development should be built on fostering our local businesses. These local businesses are the real employers of our local workforce.

With regard to the private sector, we can make it clear to companies seeking to locate here that we want them to follow the same practices as the City

Business

Small locally owned businesses often outperform their “Big Box” competition, both in outright profitability and the value they bring to consumers, workers, and the community.

25. What specifically can you do as a City Council member to encourage the city administration to better support locally owned businesses? Please describe any programs or initiatives that you would lead in this effort.

As the city develops and redevelops, we should work to ensure that we have an ample supply of affordable retail, office, and light industrial space for small business. We also should always break our contracts for goods and services into the smallest practical dollar

amounts to allow small businesses to bid on them. We should also provide programs to level the playing field for local businesses.

Austin's economic development activities are mainly focused on bringing new big business to our community and often provide subsidies even outside of our City limits. Hundreds of millions of tax payer dollars are either directly spent to subsidize this type of development or tax abatements used that reduce the revenue to the City that is needed to support all the other city functions. Locally owned businesses have been severely impacted and even bankrupted by this practice.

26. Do you support the halting of subsidies for retail development as proposed by the Stop Domain Subsidies initiative? If not, why not?

I support stopping tax rebates to large corporations in general. Austin is a very desirable place to live and work, and we should not have to pay people to come here. Moreover, these types of subsidies violate the principle of fair and equal taxation.

The role of the city government in recruiting efforts should be to provide the highest caliber city services.

While the unemployment rate for the most disadvantaged in our community continues to grow, our job recruitment efforts seem to be focused on mainly higher end businesses with promises that an expanded tax base benefits us all. The current strategy of our economic development relies on the concept of "trickle down economics" to be successful.

27. Why hasn't a larger tax base solved our economic problems and the supposed benefit of recruiting high end businesses "trickle down" to the rest of us?

With the larger tax base come a larger population, greater demands for services of all kinds, and a greatly increased geographical service area, with the resulting need to hire more employees, build more infrastructure, etc. So, the increase in the tax base comes with a cost, which is often under-stated or under-estimated.

These costs are especially prominent in buying right-of-way and building new roadways. Where the federal and state governments used to contribute large amounts to these efforts, they have been cutting back their contributions in recent years. The share of local government in the cost of roadway building is going to continue to increase. That burden, combined with the rising cost of gasoline and diesel fuel, the effects of global warming, and the health effects of air pollution clearly indicate that we must invest in more efficient ways of moving people around, in other words, more mass transit, less dependence on roadways. We can't afford more roads, even with an increased tax base. They're just too expensive.

In some ways the benefit has been realized. When I drove a taxi here in the 1970s, Austin had only two major employers, the university and the state government. Young people graduating from college had to sacrifice their careers to stay here. Now, for many, the city is a good place to start a career.

The city has spent millions on economic development; City Council members have traveled to far off countries to promote Austin. The City has a whole department in City Hall focused on Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services whose main focus is on large, corporate non-local business recruitment. Austin is already recognized as a great city for business with a highly educated and skilled labor pool making us a favored destination city for business development. However, the majority of job growth in Austin is coming from small businesses.

28. What specific changes in our economic development strategies would you make to focus on maintaining our current businesses and establishing clear performance measures that ensure that our business retention and recruitment will be a positive benefit to the community?

As discussed above, we ought to stop paying subsidies to big business to come into our community. We can attract plenty of new businesses to Austin without paying them to come. And, also as mentioned, we need to break requests for bids and proposals into small enough parts so that local businesses have a realistic chance to bid on and win the contracts.

Austin has developed a reputation as the Music Capital of the World and the music business has grown to be a major economic engine for our city. However, Austin's growth is creating problems for the music industry. Downtown new residential units are being built adjacent to longstanding music venues, while the development of many new live music venues outside of the central business district has begun to negatively impact many of our residential neighborhoods.

29. As a City Council member what would you do to resolve this conflict in such a way so as to support both live music and maintaining the quality of life in our neighborhoods?

In well-known entertainment districts, new housing should be built with adequate soundproofing, and prospective buyers should be told about the sound level. Also, housing near entertainment districts should be affordable to musicians and waitstaff. In established neighborhoods, new music venues should install adequate soundproofing. In addition, the city should purchase a large number of decibel meters and assign them to a new code enforcement team.

There must be communication between the businesses and the neighborhoods that are affected by these problems, perhaps mediation. But, if reasonable noise levels are being exceeded, the anti-noise ordinance needs to be enforced.

Closing Question

Austin will face many opportunities and challenges over the next few years. It is critical that our community has effective leadership on the City Council and that leadership reflects the will of the whole community, not just special interests. Nevertheless, any successful candidate needs to have broad support of the community to be elected and to be effective.

30. Why do you think you deserve the endorsement of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY? And if elected will you commit to meeting with representatives of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY on a regular basis to discuss our organization's perspective on important city issues?

I believe that I am the best qualified candidate in the race for place 4 on the council, with some 35 years of civic engagement and leadership. I have worked as a volunteer, activist, commissioner, and leader in civic matters including the environment, neighborhoods, city planning, parks, and schools. I am a creative thinker tempered by common sense and legal training. I love the city, and I am comfortable working with all its diverse people. In addition, as an independent candidate, I can state that I have not pledged my vote to any interest group on any matter that will come before the city council. My door will always be open.

End of questionnaire

Note to incumbent candidates:

If in your capacity as City Council member you have asked city staff to provide any research or assistance in answering any of these questions, please so note in your responses. We would also appreciate being provided with any information provided by the city staff to you so that we may share that information with the other candidates to ensure an equitable questionnaire process.

Thank you for your time in addressing the many important topics of this questionnaire.