



**Better Austin Today  
Political Action Committee**

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## **BETTER AUSTIN TODAY PAC**

City Council May 2008 Election, Candidate Questions

February 7, 2008

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?***

**JKIM: Yes, I would very much like to earn the endorsement of BAT PAC. I believe we need to rebuild the trust between the community and advocacy groups with the city leadership. I have worked hard to be a progressive voice on the council and to stand up for the community. I would be extremely honored and proud to have your support.**

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?***

**JKIM: My vision is of an Austin that is affordable, livable, economically vibrant and diverse. Families should be able to afford homes and quality childcare throughout the city. A small business owner should be able to**

**start and grow a business that thrives and competes with large, national corporations. It is also crucial that we preserve Austin's precious environment.**

**I was able to pass the affordable housing incentives by bringing together leaders from a broad range of community interests. This is a good start but certainly we need to do more. The Green Redevelopment is a prime opportunity to create affordable housing and preserve greenspace. The public also needs a voice in how we proceed, that is why I sent the resolution through boards and commission to ensure that public values were included in the project, including affordable housing.**

**The list of council items that I have been lead sponsor or co-sponsored have been in many areas, including environment, small business, housing, transportation, and land use planning. I will continue to build on my partnerships in these and other areas in my next term.**

**I have also found it most helpful to work closely with community groups that support or oppose policy changes before taking a proposal to the full council for a vote or asking for council support. The affordable housing incentives are case in point. I think council members appreciate when the policy has been fully vetted and tweaked to avoid unintended consequences, to make sure that the public is involved in the process as much as possible before being asked to vote on the item.**

**There are times when I am able to get concessions, and am willing to support a measure. I did not support the initial loan terms for Las Manitas as I thought they were too generous. Since the loan seemed to have support from all the other council members, I worked to increase the amount of the loan that would be repayable in exchange for my support. In hindsight, the council should never have pursued this path.**

**And then there have been times that I have not agreed with my colleagues, and I am willing to be the lone, dissenting voice on the council if necessary to express what I believe is in the best interest of the community at-large. Voting against putting Water Treatment Plant #4 in the Balcones Canyonland Preserve is one example.**

**Another example is the Phase 2 toll roads. After studying the issue, asking many questions and unsuccessfully asking for key changes, I was not able to support the toll package.**

**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?***

**JKIM: Yes**

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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?***

**JKIM: Positive accomplishments would include the affordable housing incentives task force, funding a 3-d modeling project for land use planning and zoning, water conservation measures, increasing street maintenance in the past two council budgets to save millions of dollars in future street reconstruction and passing the bond initiative for major infrastructure and facilities, parks, affordable housing and water quality protection lands.**

**Worst actions would include the first vote on Water Treatment Plant #4 in an environmentally sensitive area, the Las Manitas loan proposal and not doing more to include the public in the city manager search.**

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?***

**JKIM: I supported the measure to have the city attorney hired by and report to the council. I have also supported and will continue to support the hiring of outside counsel if necessary. We did that on the Champions Tract zoning case in the 2222/360 area. There was a valid petition, we got three legal opinions from three separate law firms, and I voted against the zoning request.**

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?***

**JKim: I passed the city's Whistleblower Protection Act to protect whistleblowers who report alleged wrongdoing from retaliation. I have and will continue to consult with and inform our Ethics Officer and if appropriate ask our City Auditor to investigate complaints. I asked for an independent investigation from the Auditor when there were allegations that the big box retail ordinance had been intentionally held up when Lincoln Properties was pursuing permits for the Walmart Supercenter at Northcross Mall.**

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?***

**JKim: A mixed system of at-large and single member districts could improve constituent service and save a lot of time for constituents, to be able to turn to one council member for a particular neighborhood issue instead of having to call or meet with all seven members. I firmly support putting this on the ballot and letting the public decide.**

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?***

**JKIM: Yes. There is enough concern raised by leading computer scientists to support putting in place a paper trail.**

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?***

**JKIM: I firmly believe "Your demographics don't have to be your destiny." The proportional share of households with children has been shrinking for the past 40 years from 38% in 1970 to 22.5% in 2007. We need to create more affordable housing for middle class families with children and affordable quality childcare. That's why I created the Families and Children Taskforce which is working on recommendations for council consideration.**

**Neighborhood planning is not working, and there has to be a better way. People feel frustrated about having to come to council to keep their neighborhood plans intact. We could research best practices in this area and bring stakeholders together to learn from each other and from experts, paid or unpaid. Staff would be made available to do research, provide answers and to provide options for consideration. This worked well with the affordable housing incentives task force.**

**We need to create a better planning process that protects neighborhoods and the quality of life for our residents. In fact, the purpose behind the 3-d modeling tool that I funded is to help level the playing field for the neighborhoods.**

**I believe updating the neighborhood planning process, including training neighborhood representatives on new planning tools, could be completed**

**in a year. We need to look at the pros and cons of form-based code. And we need to educate the city staff on the changes after they pass so they are ready to implement them with as little confusion as possible.**

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.**

**JKIM: A) Notification should be earlier and through different medium – mail, email and even phone calls. Clearly notification did not work in the case of Northcross Mall, and we need to make sure this doesn't keep happening. I have asked that staff create a feature in the AMANDA permit system to allow citizens to sign up for and customize notification of different types of zoning and building applications, actions and decisions.**

**B) I supported the idea of an economic impact study for big box retail, but there was no consensus as to who would provide that information and the legality of asking for it and if it could not lawfully be considered in a zoning decision. I believe that the funding of a nonprofit organization to do this work for the community could be one way.**

**C) We constantly need to educate the community and ourselves on the implications of land use decisions. We need to treat housing as we do other types of infrastructure. We plan for roads, water and sewer with a 20-year horizon, for example, but we don't for housing. We need to have a 20 year plan for housing and the supporting and complementary infrastructure for our city. We also need a better understanding of localized**

flooding issues created by new development and redevelopment so we can guide drainage investments in sync with community-wide planning.

D) We need more staff in the area of traffic impact analysis. We also need to support our staff with on-going training and with technology to increase productivity and reduce mistakes. I was able to add computers at the One-Stop shop for anyone to access the Google Sketch-up map of Austin and to use in neighborhood zoning cases.

E) Our zoning and planning commissioners will now be reporting to a council member, and that is helpful for the council members to ensure there is a balance in philosophy on the commissions. And we have been good at balancing the time for testimony at planning and at council meetings. And of course, including the neighborhoods early in all policy discussions has been a principle I've practiced and realized serves us all better. In the rewrite of the ordinance relating to remodeling permits being used instead of demolition permits, I've asked for the staff to solicit feedback from the national remodelers association and from ANC.

F) We may want to consider requiring a supermajority for upzoning to categories that are above a certain amount of additional density than what is in the neighborhood plan. I think it's an idea worth considering and having a coding system that is easier to understand than what we currently have.

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?***

**JKIM:** I usually adhere to a valid petition on a zoning case but there must be allowable exceptions with regards to health, safety and the environment. Sometimes the proposed zoning provides for a safer and better development than what the owners will do under the current zoning.

Another is clustering development to decrease the impervious cover instead of sprawled development and sprawling infrastructure with more potential leakage points for wastewater in an environmentally sensitive area, for example.

For the VMU question, my understanding of the question is a scenario where a property owner wants VMU designation for the property

and is filing a valid petition to stay in VMU, whereas the neighborhood does not want the property zoned VMU. I think a super majority is legally required in all valid petition cases, whether brought by the owner or the neighborhood.

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?***

**JKIM:** Our economy is strong, Austin is an attractive place to live, and the birth rate and immigration rate are all contributing factors. Traffic congestion to outlying areas makes living in the urban core more attractive.

I've been one of the leading proponents on the council for the following: Affordable housing bonds, community land trust, some sort of affordable housing preservation policy, more marketing of the low income tax credits and incentives for affordable housing on-site or a downtown fee in lieu to be increased over time to fund affordable housing. More shared spaces, more family sized housing in mid-rise developments in mixed use transit corridors. And finally we need a comprehensive transportation system, including rail to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

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

**JKim:** Code enforcement, consistent interpretation of codes (I'm a big advocate of scenario-based training for staff) are a constant priority. The updating of our codes to reflect best practices really should be done by involving stakeholders in a balanced way and to give the staff time to learn and to adjust before the code is changed again. We've made a lot of big changes recently that they have had to adjust to...McMansions, VMU, affordable housing incentives, design standards. And now we are going to start updating the Austin Tomorrow Plan. We need to acknowledge the limits with which people can adjust and the pace at which they can adapt to change. We should work with them, support them and give them the tools,

resources and open lines of communication to help them do their jobs for us all.

## 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?***

**JKim: Again, we need to involve all stakeholders. We need to provide more pedestrian ways, bike ways, and more options for people to move safely around our city. Mixed use will help to reduce the number of vehicle trips people need to run errands, go to work and to play. But any new developments need to be consistent with nearby neighborhood plans. We also need to improve the way we do traffic impact analyses to take in consideration reduced traffic with mixed use versus single use developments. And we should study the effects that mixed use will have on neighborhoods and test our assumptions.**

**Shared spaces like parks and rec centers help to increase the livability, vibrancy and the affordability for our citizens. And we need HOV and managed lanes for express buses to outlying areas while at the same time encouraging those areas to have mixed use, transit-oriented development and employment centers in place. The SH130 corridor planning effort should continue. What happens in Round Rock affects the traffic in Austin!**

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?***

**JKim: Absolutely! It will probably cost upwards of \$200 million. We just acquired a trail for the Hike for A Day project, and a significant conservation easement in the environmentally sensitive Cypress Tract in Hays County with the bond proceeds, and the current cost of land averages \$10,000 per acre. As the price per acre increases, it becomes more expensive for us to acquire. Conservation easements are a way to protect**

**the land affordably while allowing for some limited use like working ranches to continue. Priority should be placed on the headwaters of the most sensitive watersheds.**

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.**

**JKim: A) We first need to have a funding plan (CIP) for water reclamation infrastructure and transmission lines. We don't have that currently.**

**B) Yes, we need more investment in technology advancements for renewable energy. Heliovolt, which the council supported, may hold some promising results for solar energy. We need a smart grid, too, for distributed generation of solar energy. And we need a carbon tax.**

**C) Yes, as long as the analysis was pretty easy and straightforward. Any information that is used in a zoning case can be challenged in a court of law so we need to be careful in how this would be done.**

**D) Yes, as a result of annexation, we need more wastewater capacity in the desired development zone, and that initial investment for services along with our current maintenance needs should be budgeted accordingly.**

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?***

**JKim: Yes, I am committed to opposing participation in a new nuclear plant and coal fired power plant. I have been and will continue to fight against either.**

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?***

**JKim: I support more sharing of information earlier on, accessibility to staff and facilitation and city-supported mediation when appropriate. I also support education on community planning tools used in other parts of the world and regional cooperation among different taxing and regulatory jurisdictions. Education must proceed the creation of a common and shared vision of planning that is widely supported.**

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?***

**JKim: I think earlier meetings with community stakeholders during the drafting process and deliberation process would help. Also we could do a better job of not rushing major policy changes and instead slowing it down to give the community time to absorb it and learn about the specifics and give us feedback. I was successful in doing this with the Green redevelopment by requesting that it go through three city commissions.**

**Also after an agreement is reached, I have worked closely with groups to ensure that there is openness of meetings and easy and timely access to information on policy developments and implementation. And I think it's**

always good to start by asking what kind of public input and what format people would like to see. They often have good ideas on improving the process.

Once we have found successful ways of receiving public input, we should consistently repeat that in future decision making processes.

## **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?***

**JKim: Public safety continues to be a top priority in our annual citizen survey. Staffing and efficiencies in deploying public safety resources can help to control costs, as well as use of technology to help improve response time and decrease “false alarms”. And there are other cost drivers like health insurance that outpace our growth in revenue. We need universal, affordable health care in America. And we also would benefit financially and increase safety if more of our public safety personnel lived inside the city.**

**Although public safety needs to be a priority, we must make sure other services do not fall by the wayside. We should not be put in a position of cutting services or raising taxes because of Public Service contracts. Public safety is extremely important, but so is providing quality healthcare, parks, libraries and after school programs.**

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?***

**JKim: I was on the Social Equity Commission created by the city council in 2000 to develop recommendations to close the growing wage gap. I think the African American quality of life initiatives that have been started, funded and completed are a good start. But there is still a lot more to do. Latinos and African Americans still have disproportional use of force statistics and rates of incarceration as well as higher high-school drop out**

**rates. Programs like Avance and Eastside Story, which I support, help parents to raise better educated, healthier and happier children.**

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?***

**JKim: The health care district is not keeping up with the growing health care and mental health needs in Austin. We need universal health care on a national level and cities are having to shoulder much more of the cost than we can afford. The city could also support nonprofit insurance providers for small businesses. We also need to encourage more preventative care in our clinics to reduce costly emergency room treatments.**

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?***

**JKim: The affordable housing incentives taskforce developed three key principles for housing: Geographic dispersion, deeper affordability and long-term affordability. Doing more of one costs more, so that affects the number of units that we can afford with the bond. The type of housing is also a factor. Mid-rise family sized housing is more affordable to build than single family homes where land is expensive. Given these dynamics and the changing housing market, it is difficult for me to answer this question.**

**I believe we can do more to leverage low income housing tax credits. We need changes at the state level to allow us to use those tax credits in areas west of IH-35, which is very difficult right now because those census tracts don't qualify as "economically distressed." We also need to change the**

**point system to encourage, not discourage mixed-income developments. Research shows that the ideal percentage for affordable housing is 10-13% of all households in an area.**

**I would define modest income housing as 80%-100% MFI and low income as below 60% MFI. We must utilize and create more tools for affordable housing, including using the Homestead preservation act, the market study, which should be completed by the end of 2008, and nexus study to create more affordable housing in East Austin where most gentrification is occurring.**

**I support having a citizen advisory board to ensure that the affordable housing bond funds are spent wisely.**

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.***

**JKim: A) We require a living wage for all companies that are vendors to the City of Austin. I think the city should encourage all employers to pay a living wage.**

**B) They are both important, and in each of the budgets I've passed, we have included a cost of living increase for our social service contracts. But Health and Human Services needs to have the same level of commitment from the City that Public Safety does.**

**C) I added city resources to our small business office to help people start and successfully grow their businesses. We also provide job assistance through WorkSource and other nonprofit partners that we fund. We can also increase our partnerships with local employers to recruit, hire and train people locally. I will continue to support including small business (which is often locally and minority owned) to the criteria in a best-value procurement method, and that will require state legislation.**

## **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.***

**JKim: I have been a leading proponent of small business as the Chair of the Minority/Women Business Enterprise and Small Business Subcommittee of the Council. I worked to make sure that small businesses that were listed as subcontractors on projects would actually get the work they were promised. I worked to add a small business ombudsman to help with permit and regulatory issues in the city. I also added a small business outreach staff person to publicize our resources including free business planning, finance counseling and market research. I am currently working with city staff to create a program to help locally owned businesses expand from one store or service location to multiple locations so more of our retail spaces will be filled with successful, locally owned and unique Austin 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?**

**JKim: I support halting sales tax rebates for retail developments like Domain and voted for the resolution to stop that practice. It puts small businesses at an unfair disadvantage. These types of rebates are simply an unfair perk for businesses that don't need them.**

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?**

**JKim: Trickle down economics is a myth that has been debunked by leading economists. We need to do more to support the working and middle class through our tax policies, health care, education, housing and transportation. We must move back to shared prosperity or we will all suffer.**

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?**

**I have worked to expand the focus of EGRSO to focus more on small business support. The staff is committed to doing so, and although resources are limited, it is worth the investment in terms of jobs and prosperity for our community.**

**We do very few economic development incentives. And when we do they are performance based. The City of Dallas, in comparison has approved over 100 incentive deals, whereas the city of Austin has done about a dozen. If companies want to do business in Austin, they can pay their fair share of taxes to support the quality of life that their employees and all of us deserve to have.**

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?**

**JKim: We should improve our building codes for better sound insulation of residential units. We can offer free sound testing and equipment optimization to reduce the impact on the area neighborhood. I arranged such testing for a recording studio business located next to a live music venue on South Lamar. And we can support live music venues and festivals and radio, music television and programming that supports musicians.**

### ***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 I am the most qualified, the most prepared and I have a positive vision for Austin. I have been an independent voice on the council and will continue to stand up for the community against special interests I have successfully passed progressive and balanced policies for our city. I have a proven voting record that is pro-small business, pro-neighborhood, and pro-environment.***

***I am committed to continue to meet with leaders in the community on a regular basis to discuss city issues, including community forums or one-on-one meetings.***

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.

**I swear and affirm that I filled this questionnaire out myself and without city resources, information or assistance.**

***Jennifer Kim***