

BETTER AUSTIN TODAY PAC

City Council May 2008 Election, Candidate Questions
Randi Shade, Candidate for Place 3

1. Yes. I want to engage everyone I can in my campaign for City Council. Like the members of BAT PAC, I care deeply about our community and am concerned about the direction it's going. I share BAT PAC's desire to have City Council members who are responsive, effective and accountable. I will do a better job than the incumbent on all three counts. That's why I am running.

2. My vision is that Austin be a clean, safe and prosperous community where everyone's voice is heard; where, at the very least, all citizens can meet their basic needs; and where anyone's entrepreneurial pursuits can come to fruition, whether in the public, private, or nonprofit sector.

We're a community that inspires new ideas and treasures the offbeat and the weird. There is an ebb and flow here that prevents us from getting set in our ways. We don't have the sort of rigid social structures so many other communities have. That's why we attract creative artists, original thinkers, ingenious entrepreneurs and progressive politicians. That's a good thing – unique to Austin. It is something I want to work hard to preserve and enhance.

Too often, however, we see our community divided. We hear about "Old Austin" and "New Austin." We see pro-growth versus no-growth debates. We feel the pain of long standing battles between the east side of town and the west side of town, between neighborhoods and developers, and between businesses and environmental interests. It makes for heated debates, and that's a big part of what makes Austin Austin. But, we need a leader on our City Council who hears the voices and concerns of people from all sides of these arguments, and who translates those perspectives into action and creative solutions.

Achieving agreement on every issue is unrealistic, but knowing how and why our City is responding to changing circumstances is a must, no matter which side of any argument you represent. Empathy and honest communication are critical components for achieving the trust necessary to build lasting coalitions. These are the qualities I will use when working with fellow Council Members, but also when working with citizens and staff. My goal is to be a Council Member who is always accessible and who taps the activism and tenacity of our citizens. I will strive to make our City operate with energy, entrepreneurial spirit, and creativity – just like our local businesses and nonprofits do. This is everybody's Austin, and I will govern with that in mind. You and my colleagues on Council will see it in my actions every day.

3. Yes, when the meetings are related to my responsibilities as a Council member.

4. Positive actions include: finally closing Holly Power Plant; approving the Waller Creek TIF District; dedicating Congress Avenue Bridge in memory of Ann Richards

and Town Lake in memory of Lady Bird Johnson; hiring our new City Manager; hiring our new Police Chief; moving towards implementation of a Zero Waste Initiative; and passing the Austin Climate Protection Plan. Worst actions include: approving the Las Manitas forgivable loan; handling of the community debate over the pet shelter re-location; and the lack of adequate public input in several instances, but especially in the hiring of the new City Manager. In the last case, as you may know, my opponent has also said that the public should have had more input into the City Manager selection process, but had I been on the City Council I would have said so at the beginning of the process, not the end.

5. Without a few more details, I'm not prepared to pledge my support for either initiative, but on a conceptual level I'm favorably inclined towards both. Two big questions that come to mind are: Would the proposed charter amendment require a super majority of council members to terminate the appointment of the City Attorney? And, how would the City reconcile conflicting legal advice from an internal attorney and an external attorney? I do believe that the City Council needs reliably independent legal advice, especially when setting policy, but it also must ensure the City has a well-managed internal legal department to support the many routine functions and enterprises the City undertakes on a daily basis. It may take more than a charter amendment to appropriately address the issues raised by this question.

6. I will uphold all of my sworn obligations as an elected official. If presented with information alleging unlawful conduct by anyone working for the City, I would expect to work with the rest of the Council to direct the City Manager's office or the City Auditor's office, as appropriate, to initiate an internal investigation. Based on the outcome of that investigation, I would take the necessary steps to ensure that the violation is reported to the appropriate authorities and pursued under the law. Specific actions would depend on specifics of the situation (i.e., federal v. state or local, civil v. criminal, etc.).

7. I don't think an at-large system is inappropriate for Austin, but it is possible we could be better served by a mixed system that incorporates both single-member districts and at-large districts. A mixed system would ensure that every citizen has more than just one representative, while still offering the opportunity for more accountable, more accessible and more diverse representation than the current system affords.

8. Yes, I believe citizens should have the right to observe vote counting. I also support precinct totals being posted at the precinct level immediately after counting. I am not prepared to advocate for abandoning the community's significant investment in electronic balloting, but I would favor steps to help ensure the security and reliability of electronic balloting, such as a paper-receipt system.

9. Yes, I support an inclusive community-based process for creating a comprehensive growth management policy. But, I am concerned about launching into an entirely new process in lieu of enhancing the neighborhood planning process

into which so many citizens have already invested their time and energy over the last several years. Too often we've seen our community engage in planning activities only to have a next approach trump the work already completed. I'd rather first look at ways for Austin neighborhoods to translate their work into something more meaningful – something that truly drives public safety and transportation decisions in addition to land use responsibility. Currently, code enforcement is complaint-driven, and Future Land Use Plans are taken only as recommendations. We can and should find ways to better implement the recommendations generated by neighborhood plans, as well as methods for connecting the dots between one neighborhood's plan and the next. I'd like to increase the availability of training, planning, research, and survey tools so that all neighborhoods have equal opportunity for success. I am not yet sure what the cost of these increased resources would be, but with the support of the City Council I would expect we could re-allocate existing resources and identify new sources necessary to properly staff and fund these efforts. I also think there is a strong case to be made about the cost of *not* taking this approach. I would look to Austin Neighborhoods Council, local neighborhood associations, and other interested parties for help in developing this plan, and I would actively seek the involvement of those who have been most successful at various aspects of neighborhood planning across Austin. This will take more than policy and budget changes, it will also require significant organizational culture change that would likely take a couple of years to see implement.

10. I think there are obviously opportunities for improvement in all six categories. Too many people I've spoken with seem to feel "duped" after engaging in the process. They feel their time and energy may have been wasted. They are surprised to learn that their plan makes recommendations, but a newly proposed project that conforms to zoning requirements but not the intent of the neighborhood plan can and is still often pursued. A few ideas I have to address shortcomings are to better utilize email and text messaging as a city-wide communication tool, get the resources needed to improve the neighborhood planning process as described in my answer to question 9, and do greater outreach to educate and include more citizens in the process. I'd like to see the City's website offer more mechanisms for feedback and virtual neighborhood forums. As a matter of policy, I believe that City staff should be instructed to encourage developers (even single family home-owners) to dialogue with their neighbors before entering into the permitting process as part of their permitting application. I would also explore the creation of a user-friendly guide to development regulations and seek distribution support from local realtors during the home and property sales process.

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

As for whether or not Vertical Mixed Use represents a zoning change, I see that as two issues. The first is a legal question and the second an, "Is this right?" question.

The first issue is whether or not, according to the legal definition and intent behind the ordinance, Vertical Mixed Use legally represents a change in zoning. I understand that City staff has not interpreted this overlay that way, although I have not seen their legal arguments. That decision leads to the second issue. If the law is not clear and is open to misinterpretation, then perhaps it needs clarification. City ordinances should meet the needs of a community and should be revisited when those needs are not being met.

12. The causes of gentrification in our community, just as is the case in other communities, include shifting demographics, a growing creative class that favors urban over suburban lifestyle, increasing costs of living (most notably health care and education expenses), transportation challenges, and most of all, our state's increasing reliance on property taxes. Neighborhood Associations can and should play a bigger role in addressing gentrification in their respective neighborhoods. For that to happen, though, the City will have to change its policies in the ways described in earlier questions (9 – 11) to attract more participation and achieve more meaningful results. I would also explore targeted exemptions and tax breaks for original residents, continue to support the efforts of the Community Land Trust, and strengthen the City's partnerships with other nonprofit organizations and businesses tackling housing affordability. I would also seek ways to influence the legislature on this matter; every city in the state is struggling with the impact of property tax increases.

13. We should invest more in code enforcement and facilitate proactive rather than just complaint-driven code enforcement. I strongly support consistent interpretation of the codes, and I strongly support updating our codes to reflect best practices.

14. I see this issue as more of an expected challenge of growth than I do a contradiction in policy. Sprawl growth is undesirable from the perspective of transportation and environmental protection, and also from a cost-to-service perspective. The City's actions alone, however, can not reduce it. That's why regional planning and coordination efforts are so important (specifically with respect to education, healthcare, environment, transportation, and taxing authority). I support growth in the Desired Development Zone and away from the Drinking Water Protection Zone, and I believe that more density within the existing city footprint, especially when transit-oriented, is on the whole a good thing that I hope eventually has a positive impact on sprawl. I don't expect to see that, however, until families can afford to live closer in and enjoy comparable benefits as what they find in the suburbs. It will take more than City policy changes to make that happen.

15. Yes, but how much to spend and where to get new money to do so are much tougher questions to answer. Ensuring clean drinking water in the Aquifer requires a combination of strategies, including education, county land use controls, and land conservation, especially through fee-simple acquisition and purchasing development rights which leaves environmentally sensitive lands in private ownership while ensuring the land stays in natural, undeveloped state. As I understand it, purchasing development rights deals are done under a federal IRS statute and are considerably less expensive. I would also explore using transparent incentives to

promote "green subdivisions" or "conservation developments" that cluster development while leaving a minimum of 50% of the tract in contiguous open space with emphasis on letting land and environmental features of the property dictate which portion gets developed and which portion remains open. It is also critical that we keep up with the latest technological and scientific advances. For example, conserving lands in their natural state in the Contributing Zone seems as important as conserving lands in the Recharge Zone. We must address that, too.

16. I support strict water conservation plans, but I can't say whether success in such a plan would allow us to postpone or cancel plans to build a new water treatment facility. As for gray water, before promoting appropriate policies, I'd want to know what, if any, changes in state law are required and what the science is - that is, what uses are safe and effective?

I believe that Peak Oil is a real problem. As one of the founders of the Austin Renewable Energy Initiative, I am strongly in favor of the development of safe and sustainable energy resources. I believe Austin can be an international leader and avoid building more power plants by aggressively pursuing renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation.

I support having information about the environmental impact of the development process during the review process, and believe we should work to get all regional governing entities to participate in these activities, too.

Our water, wastewater and electric utility service plan should be working in concert with our annexation strategy.

17. Yes, and we must do everything we can to reduce consumption.

18. I'll support policies that make the development review process as transparent as possible. The first question I will ask during any development review process is what efforts have been made by the developer with respect to neighborhood and/or community input and involvement. I believe we can do more with respect to public notice, using email and text notification, and expanding online resources to level the playing field. I also support the notion of a more centralized approach to the review process to ensure transportation, public safety, and environmental impacts are addressed to ensure there are no surprises.

19. The responsibility of engaging people at City Hall falls on Council members. Council also sets the tone with respect to the way City staff involves citizens in its actions. I will actively seek input. You will continue to see me at meetings, town halls and forums of community groups. Frankly, the incumbent's poor reputation for being accessible to the community who elected her to serve is one of the key reasons I decided to challenge her. The job of a Council member is to be readily available to people whether or not it is election time. My goal is to be accessible to everybody - not just those who make a special effort to see me. I will make my calendar public and work to see that online resources become more readily available, so that anyone interested in following City action can do so. I would also

like to explore the creation of a Citizen Ombudsman position to potentially give citizens another avenue for tracking City actions.

20. I plan to focus significant time and energy working to eliminate the impact poverty has on our community's safety and well-being, with a vision of equal opportunity for all Austinites. Too often issues related to poverty are at the bottom of our City's priority list rather than at the top. This has direct consequences on our public safety network in particular. Our public safety personnel are regularly performing tasks much closer to social work than law enforcement and emergency response. Our City contracts with more than 60 health and human service organizations and spends tens of millions of dollars each year, but we've got to do more to create solutions and leverage the strengths of our local nonprofits and help them grow. I plan to build on my experience in the nonprofit sector to improve the way the City does business with basic needs providers. Regarding the share of tax revenue it takes to deliver public safety services, I think it's important to note that over the last several years the budgets of many of the City's enterprises have been spun-out of the General Fund, so taking only General Fund expenditures into consideration does not provide a full picture -- especially when taking the police contract into account as a percentage of funding overall community needs. I want to see how our spending to support health and human services has changed over the last 20 years in conjunction with our growth and in comparison with other cities. Armed with this information I will be better equipped to consider better funding levels for other community priorities, too.

21. Equality of opportunity in every part of the community is imperative to making Austin the best it can be. I would make a point to reach across typical boundaries to ensure that all members of our community have equal access to City Hall. It is wonderful that Austin is consistently recognized for its economic vitality, but until, at a bare minimum, everyone's basic human needs are met, we have very few bragging rights as far as I am concerned. I plan to make this a top area of focus if elected, and will also work hard to create new resources by bringing private sector partners to the table and by working to ensure our City is a better partner with our local nonprofit sector. I will also actively pursue additional sources of federal funding that will likely become available with the upcoming change in White House administrations. Austin must not only get its fair share of those funds, it should hopefully get even more, by competing as successfully on that front as we do on so many others.

22. I don't yet have enough information to make an independent determination about the ability of the Health Care District to provide adequate service to the community without additional funding. Assuming that the premise of the question is accurate, then as a Council member I would work closely with Board members of the TCHD to fully understand their needs and objectives in providing health services to Austinites. If it is clear that the TCHD must raise its tax rate in order to generate sufficient revenue to fund necessary healthcare services I would expect to support it. I would want to make certain; however, there is no redundancy of taxation or healthcare service delivery between the City, the County and the Health Care District.

23. There are simply too many variables to know exactly how many units the bond program will provide. I supported the bond funding, and I supported the creation of the Community Land Trust. Creating mechanisms that encourage private sector investment in addressing our affordable housing challenges is important, as is strengthening the relationship the City has with leading nonprofits working successfully in this arena. We need to create a clear and transparent method for reporting and performance review to ensure we're getting the results we expect from the bond program, which is a first of its kind. Regarding other affordability strategies, we should explore targeted exemptions and tax breaks for original residents and also seek ways to influence the legislature with respect to its over-reliance on property taxes, which is contributing directly to our affordable housing challenges. As for the percent of the bond program that should go to modest and low-income housing, all of it.

24. I support a living wage and would consider asking Austin employers to provide a living wage to employees.

These two priorities are inextricably linked and can *only* be budgeted as equal priorities. See my answer to question 20.

I support job creation strategies that prioritize utilizing the skill sets of our current residents who are either unemployed or underemployed, and I am a strong proponent of workforce development and training programs. I would work closely with the area's leading nonprofits and encourage increased private investment in this aspect of economic development. I have relevant experience in this arena from my days launching and running the AmeriCorps program statewide.

25. I want to keep Austin Austin. Local business success is a huge factor in that notion, as is the entrepreneurial spirit that has driven Dell, National Instruments, Whole Foods and others to become international giants, while Chuy's, Whole Earth Provisions, Alamo Drafthouse and others have become regional successes, and The Hoffbrau, Benold's and Waterloo Records have remained truly local, all surviving through good times and bad. Having run small businesses in Austin in the past, and having had the experience of selling a company I founded to a San Diego-based public company, I will bring a unique perspective to the Council. Where many local business owners are concerned, sometimes the biggest challenges aren't solved by new programs, but rather increased focus and attention on the basics such as ensuring the City has reliable and affordable utilities, quick and predictable permitting process, fair and stable regulatory functions, safe neighborhoods, strong infrastructure, and overall economic vitality. Besides focusing on these things, I would strengthen the relationship the City has with Austin Independent Business Alliance to increase support for the IBIZ districts program and its efforts to help connect independent businesses to commercial developers. I would support organizations like BiG and PeopleFund which support local entrepreneurs with special technical assistance and financing needs. I will look for ways the City can enhance its services while reducing utility rates and/or fees for local businesses. And I'd include local nonprofit organizations in the mix as they operate as businesses, too, just with a different tax status.

26. I support halting subsidies for retail development, but I am uncomfortable using a charter amendment to do it. Charter amendments are extremely difficult to undo, and sometimes have consequences unimagined by the drafters. Based on what I've heard, it seems that passing the proposed charter amendment could have several unintended consequences, or even hurt small businesses. Markets are cyclical, so different tools may make sense in different circumstances. Citizens elect people to serve; presumably, we elect people who ask the right questions and make good decisions. Not every deal is a winner, but the idea of legislating City this kind of policy through community petition does not seem to serve the public's best interest.

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

28. In addition to what I've written in earlier responses, if I am elected to serve on the City Council, I expect to do less traveling outside of Austin to "promote" our city than my opponent has done in recent years. I think the Mayor and fellow citizens may appropriately choose to represent Austin elsewhere in the country, but the members of the City Council should, as a rule, be spending their time at home serving their constituents.

Regarding economic development performance measures, in the same way that our regional community came together in a planning exercise around the Envision Central Texas project, I would propose that the Austin community come together to arrive at a shared vision for the ideal mix of small, medium and large employers and launch an initiative to closely track and report the current condition status of that mix. I support prioritizing technology, clean energy and medical R&D, but believe strongly that we must be able to verify the results of our economic development activity.

I will be a strong advocate for transparency, including the use of an independent auditor to ensure that job creation, salaries, and other performance requirements are being met before any benefit is received. It is important to promote and facilitate sustainable economic growth in the Desired Development Zone, but I would like to evaluate the progress of efforts in the City's relatively new Economic Development and Redevelopment Services department before expanding activities there.

29. With regard to downtown, my feeling is that if residents don't want to hear music, they should consider living elsewhere. With regard to residential neighborhoods outside of downtown, I am for strict enforcement of the current

ordinances governing noise. In extreme circumstances, where there are specific situations at the neighborhood level that have proven to be persistently problematic, I would also be open to exploring public investment in sound proofing technologies.

30. I share many of the concerns raised by BAT PAC, and with or without your formal endorsement, achieving the goals I hope to achieve will require the involvement and support of many of your members. Of course, I am committed to meeting with BAT PAC members on a regular basis, as I am with all citizens and citizen groups.

I deserve your endorsement because I am the strongest candidate in the Place 3 race. I bring to this election a unique combination of passion and hands-on experience, and a strong desire to get things done right. As my longtime friends, colleagues, and clients will tell you:

- I build strong positive relationships that last a lifetime
- I am approachable, accessible, and accountable
- I know when to listen-and-learn, and when to speak-up
- I bring diverse people together to get results

I also believe that I understand the roles of government, business, and the nonprofit sector better than my opponent. I have succeeded in all three environments as both a board member/director and as a chief executive

I have broad community support because in the more than 18 years that I've lived here, I have loved Austin, and it shows. I've always worked hard to actively participate. I have experienced Austin as a student, as a government employee, and as an entrepreneur, in good times and in bad. Regardless of the circumstances, I have consistently engaged in and supported a wide range of causes and organizations throughout our community, dedicating whatever resources I could – sometimes as a grassroots volunteer, and other times as a donor or board member.

If elected to serve you on the City Council, I will continue to work for a better Austin, and I will work hard every day to make you proud of your endorsement. I appreciate your consideration for endorsement.