



Questionnaire for 2011 Austin City Council Candidates

Candidate's Name: Randi Shade

Position Sought: Austin City Council Place 3

What neighborhood do you live in?

Clarksville. I've owned my home since 2001 and was a renter in the neighborhood for 8 years before buying my current home. I have lived in this neighborhood for more than 15 years.

Do you belong to your neighborhood or homeowner's association?

Yes, CCDC and OWANA.

Have you participated in neighborhood planning? If so, how?

Not so much with OWANA and planning, but I've been very active with parks projects, fundraising, tree planting, and home repair for Clarksville CDC.

I. PLANNING AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

1. The assumptions in Austin's comprehensive planning effort, Imagine Austin, predict that the city's population will double by 2050. Do you believe that forecast is inevitable? What problems does that forecast present?

I hesitate to say that that the growth curve forecast is inevitable, but given that Austin's population has roughly doubled every twenty years since the founding of the City and given the fact that virtually every region in the southwest part of our country is expected to continue to experience population growth for the foreseeable future, I am motivated to plan for growth as carefully as possible.

2. Do you believe that the preferred growth scenario as proposed by city staff provides sufficient data to verify whether growth will pay for the infrastructure it requires? What will you do to ensure that growth pays for itself?

I don't think any amount of data will give us that level of guarantee. The best we can do is to make predictions based on the data that we have. We have had an unprecedented amount of both community and professional input in crafting Imagine Austin thus far. It's time to move forward, armed with the data we have, but willing to be flexible as the principles of

the plan become the plan itself. My record will continue to reflect support for growth strategies that maximize the tax base and minimize low density sprawl where roads and utilities must be stretched over long distances to serve fewer people. By in large, the current preferred scenario reflects that intent. Certainly, there will be many adjustments as the plan is fleshed out and eventually implemented.

3. Do you believe that adopted neighborhood plans should be incorporated verbatim into the new comprehensive plan, giving equal weight to the text and the future land use map (FLUM) of the neighborhood plan? In cases where the new comprehensive plan conflicts with existing neighborhood plans, would you require that changes be subject to the neighborhood plan amendment process?

No, I do not think the Comprehensive Planning Process was ever intended to drill down to the level of detail we see in a Future Land Use Map. The Council may consider the Comprehensive Plan as it weighs deliberations on a zoning change or a FLUM change, but it is my expectation that the FLUM and a neighborhood plan in its entirety will remain relevant and that neighborhood plan amendments will be processed as they are now.

4. How would you ensure that the Imagine Austin plan is implemented?

The first step of course, will to see that that a plan is drafted and eventually adopted. At that point, I would expect that the Comprehensive Plan would become a guiding document informing land use and transportation decisions as they come before Council. My sense is that there is a fairly high level of frustration among many of the citizens who serve on the citizen's task force regardless of age, ethnicity, or gender. Members do not always feel heard. I am not on the Council's Transportation and Comprehensive Planning Subcommittee, but I am following the process and approved the task force membership, as well as the process and framework thus far. Visioning activities are very difficult, and can be far too amorphous for most people to get their arms around. While the first phases of the process have been important, it is the development of the actual plan that gives us the best opportunity to ensure that not only is there broad community representation on each of the working group teams charged with writing the various sections of the comprehensive plan.

It will also be important to incorporate recommendations from the work of so many other recent task forces and community groups into the relevant sections of the comprehensive plan (ie., Hispanic Quality of Life, African American Quality of Life, Children and Families, Affordable Housing, Public Safety, Water Front, Live Music, Strategic Mobility, Envision Central Texas, Open Space, Animal Welfare, Central Health, Arts, etc.). Once the plan is developed it will also be important to evaluate the plan's effectiveness and make adjustments as needed. Evaluating the plan on an ongoing basis will ensure that City staff implements the plan as intended and will also enable the Council to continue to work with stakeholders to ensure the plan is revised and/or modified as needed, so that the plan meets the community's needs over the long term.

II. BUDGET

- 1. As the city faces reduced revenues and increased budget demands, what measures can the city take to maintain the quality of services and our community values? What would you cut and what would you refuse to cut? If staff reductions are required, how would you determine which employees, departments, or executives are affected?**

I have always felt the City's highest spending priorities should be achieving and maintaining clean, safe neighborhoods citywide, and providing reliable, affordable utilities to all citizens. If the City can get those things right, the other challenges we face as a community are much easier to meet. We have many wonderful City programs and services that our community depends upon, and I have supported increasing outreach efforts to bring community voices into the budget process to help us better navigate some of the incredibly difficult decisions we've had to make. While we can never hear from everyone in the community, it has been extremely helpful to hear from thousands of citizens who have participated in these efforts through Budget Town Hall Meetings, electronic surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, employee surveys, and other input opportunities especially those that engage people who do not typically participate at City Hall. It is impossible to answer which employees I would be willing to lay off without knowing the circumstances in a particular budget year, but I have and will continue to take into account our City Manager's recommendations and community input in approaching all decisions.

In addition, I have and will continue to explore every possible option for public-private partnerships that enable the tax dollar to go further. Examples I've been directly involved with launching during my first term include: the Waller Creek Conservancy, Future Forest Fund, Youth Sports, Flipped On Christmas, and the Pecan Street Project. It is also important to look for ways to stretch current budget expenses and look for ways to drive costs down in other areas of the budget. For example, I led an effort to re-bid the City's social services contracts for the first time in more than 15 years to prioritize basic needs and successfully advocated for increased parks maintenance citywide.

- 2. What are your criteria to support any proposed electric and water rate increases?**

As we work to encourage water and energy conservation, we face the same challenges as all utilities operating with a business model based on consumption rather than conservation. The challenges associated with migrating to a new business model are different for the water utility which faces incredibly high infrastructure costs versus the electric utility for which energy costs are the primary driver. For both of our utilities there is a high level of regulation, citizen debate, cost of service studies to keep in mind, but the most important considerations are planning ahead for reasonable, gradual rate increases that maintain the system's financial stability and necessary asset upkeep while delivering reliable and high quality drinking water and energy.

- 3. Do the city's public safety contracts put an undue burden on the city budget? What do you think are the most important factors in the upcoming police "Meet and Confer" process?**

Public safety is critical to our community's health and well being. It ranks at the top of the

list of most important services in every citizen survey we do. People don't use 911 every day, but on the day they do, the expectation is that it works and works well. Public safety professions are specialized and it is important for the City to hire well, develop talent, support training and equipment needs, and hold those doing the work accountable. I work hard with all three of the public safety employee associations and do my best to ensure their needs are met, so that in turn, our community's public safety needs are met. In the next Meet and Confer process it is my hope that there be an increased focus on the promotions process to ensure the best of the best are promoted rather than letting seniority and exam score drive decisions.

- 4. Despite the poor economy and the current deficits for federal, state, and local budgets, the city is proceeding with several large capital improvement projects, such as Water Treatment Plant 4, extensive new underground wastewater lines, and Waller Creek Tunnel Project. Do you think the City Council is being fiscally responsible, and what you would do to control the costs of these capital improvement projects?**

Yes. I believe each of these projects to be sensible and have weighed-in frequently on ways to better control costs and/or leverage other sources of funding to support progress.

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Will you vote against subsidies to large employers? Will you require a total cost-benefit analysis before voting on any subsidies or loans to any businesses?**

I look at economic development agreements on a case by case basis and decide on my vote based on the merits of the project. A cost-benefit analysis is required before the Council votes on an agreement. In 2009, I co-sponsored a resolution requiring a stakeholder process for choosing, and then implementing, a new economic development analysis tool that was adopted to ensure the community and the Council had as much information as possible before making these important decisions. This resolution also required more time for back-up information to be available to the public and added time for public discussion. I have been and will continue to be a strong advocate for using independent auditors to ensure that job creation, salaries, and/or any other performance requirements are met before any City-granted economic benefit is awarded.

- 2. Should the City of Austin subsidize small businesses, especially those involved in music and entertainment? What forms of support do you think are appropriate for local businesses?**

I believe in the work of our Economic Growth and Redevelopment and Small and Minority Business Resources Departments. Small, local businesses make up more than 80% of the employee base in our community, and I have been very active in supporting the success of small businesses in Austin as a former small business owner myself and as a member of the Council's Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprise and Small Business Committee. I have seen first-hand how challenging and rewarding it can be for small local

businesses to work in, with and for the City. Music and entertainment make up just part of one industry, but their success is critical to making Austin Austin. I wouldn't discriminate against any business based on its industry. I would look at the cost-benefit analysis discussed in the previous question to determine which businesses the City chooses for economic development agreements.

3. Should the City of Austin be financially involved in developing an 800+ room hotel to promote the convention business?

I support the concept of another Austin Convention Hotel, but without knowing the particulars of a proposal, I can't speak to the City's financial involvement.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

1. Do you support improved bus service, better bike lanes, more sidewalks, and other pedestrian improvements?

Yes I do and my record demonstrates that support. I want to explore ways the City could do more to help Cap Metro in its mission for better bus service. I have frequently voted for better sidewalks, supported the City's Master Bicycle Plan, supported the expansions of the Lady Bird Lake trail and negotiated for the very highest level of pass through, and interconnectivity on projects in front of the City Council during my tenure as a Council Member.

2. Please comment on the policies or projects that you think would best address Austin's transportation needs.

I have deep concerns about how we are going to move an increasing population in and out of downtown, as well as how we can better address the traffic challenges on our major roads and highways. Improving connectivity and increasing our transportation system's capacity will support economic development and reinvestment while also supporting our community's goals for the environment and public health and safety. There is no one silver bullet, however, and the City is one player among many in this region. We need a mixture of transportation modalities. I supported the recent transportation bond proposal for that reason, but also to ensure we had projects in the pipeline until a more comprehensive approach could be offered. I have been pleased to see the creation of a Transportation Department during my tenure on the Council and support the Strategic Mobility Planning effort currently underway. It is my hope that this effort be better coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan going forward.

3. Do you support the urban rail system proposed by Mayor Leffingwell?

While I can foresee a time when an urban rail system could make sense for our region, I

have not yet seen a detailed route proposal or a business and operations plan ready for a ballot. I have been concerned that ridership on the Red Line has been below estimates and that Cap Metro has been subsidizing that line by cutting other services. If there isn't a plan to demonstrate that rail can pay for itself and that people will ride it, I won't be in a position to support the proposal. The short answer: I support developing a clear business plan for rail and then letting voters decide.

- 4. The city presently requires developers to provide a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) only for very large projects (more than 2000 car trips per day). TIAs have no expiration date, and the analysis does not include adjacent neighborhoods. What would you do to ensure that the City Council and land use commissions receive traffic analyses that accurately reflect the impact of a proposed project?**

I am open to exploring ways to better address the concerns above, but would not support placing TIA burdens on small projects that are owned by, or that house small businesses.

V. ZONING

- 1. Describe a contested land use case or other neighborhood issue where you supported the neighborhood position at a City Council meeting or other hearing.**

I have supported neighborhood positions on numerous zoning cases and cosponsored an ordinance giving neighborhood planning teams standing in the appeals process. I recently voted to support a neighborhood appeal of an NCCD case on Ave. B in Hyde Park, and have frequently supported neighbors in opposition to CS-1 zoning in their neighborhoods. I have a strong record for supporting valid petitions, including on West Avenue during my very first months on the Council. I voted against a highly contentious up-zoning case near Casis elementary school during the West Austin Neighborhood planning process and supported the neighborhood's desires for the shopping center nearby, too. And, my office was active in ensuring that a recently proposed development on Davis Street come into compliance with current regulations.

- 2. In cases where a neighborhood opposes up-zoning to convert residential use to a commercial use, and where adequate commercially zoned property is already available, will you commit to vote against such up-zoning?**

I will not pre-commit to voting for or against a zoning case. The situation described in this question, however, would have to come with compelling, clear, and broad community benefits for me to support an up-zoning, and neighborhood support or opposition would weigh heavily in my deliberation.

- 3. Do you agree with the recent City Council vote to approve a Planned Unit Development (PUD) at 801 Barton Springs Road, within the Waterfront Overlay, despite the staff and**

Planning Commission recommendations against the PUD? Will you support the reinstatement of a clear method for increasing development entitlements commensurate with community benefits, as outlined in the 1986 city code?

I stand by my support of the PUD in question, and do not support returning to the land use code of 1986. I would rather support moving forward with a vision for the lake area that can be embraced by all of Austin, and I am eager to receive and review the recommendations of the Water Front Overlay Advisory Board.

4. Do you support the existing compatibility standards that provide buffers between commercial and residential properties? Under what circumstances, if any, do you think compatibility standards should be waived? How could compatibility be improved?

I support zoning that protects home owners from being encroached upon by commercial uses. When applicants come before the Council with a zoning case – even a PUD – that seeks a waiver to an existing compatibility boundary, I consider the burden of proof to be high and to be on the applicant requesting the change. Each case is unique, and each case often pits competing community values against each other. When making decisions I consider the impact of proximity to residential property, and I also consider the use in question as it relates to other values at play such as neighborhood integrity and vitality, job creation, tax base, and affordability. I also think about the overall reasonableness of the proposed use of the site in question. Compatibility matters. It does not dominate my every land use decision, although it is very much on my mind as I weigh each case.

VI. COMMUNITY VALUES

1. Do you believe that affordable housing should be distributed throughout the city? What steps would you take to assure the best return on investment for the limited public funds available for affordable housing while also accomplishing the priority of fair and equitable geographic distribution?

I support the City's affordable housing initiatives and, like the ANC, I am a proponent for geographically diverse affordable housing options especially those suited for families with children. I have co-sponsored Council Resolutions to prioritize housing for the lowest income citizens in our community (those who make below 30% of the Median Family Income); to endorse the Permanent Supportive Housing strategy; and to move forward with creating a Leadership Council with members outside of city government to examine and recommend financing strategies for achieving our goal of creating 350 permanent supportive housing units throughout our community. Aside from supporting the City's affordable housing efforts, I have helped secure private, state and federal funding to support affordable housing initiatives in many parts of the City, and I was a strong proponent of the City's GoRepair! program and would like to expand it. The GoRepair! program been a fantastic way to extend the reach of the Urban League, American Youthworks, AAIM (now called iACT), Meals on Wheels, and other organizations dedicated to helping people stay in their homes by offering critical upgrades, weatherization, roof repair and maintenance, and other

repair work that helps low-income homeowners. These efforts help keep people in their homes while also helping neighborhoods become safer, cleaner and less isolated.

There are significant challenges ahead, but at the top of the list is a lack of clarity about which tools are best suited for which types of people the City is hoping to help through its programs. Not all of our community's lowest income residents need on-site support services, but some do. Some people may need on-site support services in conjunction with housing for a short-time, but others may need on-site support services for a life-time. We need to do a better job dividing and conquering. Rather than trying to solve all the housing challenges with a broad, catch-all initiative, I'd prefer we focus our efforts, seeking the necessary resources to support each segment of the population we are trying to serve in the way that makes the most sense for that segment of the population.

2. Do you support the Citywide Strategic Priority to encourage families with children to live in the urban core? How would you implement it?

Yes. I live in the Clarksville Neighborhood and appreciate greatly the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of my neighborhood. I appreciate it whether I am attending services at the Sweet Home Baptist Church, attending a meeting at Mathews Elementary School, or just simply enjoying the playground at Mary Baylor Park or a stroll to Nau's Pharmacy for a snack. I would love to see every neighborhood in Austin have such diversity and access to good schools, neighborhood amenities, and the benefits of living close-in, but I also realize that much of the fabric of Clarksville's earlier history was lost when Mopac was extended, wiping out a huge swath of the neighborhood. We all feel a lot of pressure associated with change and gentrification today, but really our City has been transitioning from being a "sleepy college town" to one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country for several decades now. During that time it has been incredibly difficult to balance the benefits of increased property values, economic opportunities and community progress with the challenges of maintaining affordability especially for long-term residents. In order to bring and keep families in the urban core we need to provide the amenities families want such as high quality parks, libraries and a strong public safety system; and we need to do whatever we can to support the school district so families refrain from choosing alternatives to our public schools. We also must be more mindful of how our land use policies impact the variety availability and affordability of family-friendly housing options for renters and homeowners alike.

3. Do you support the equitable distribution of the property tax burden among residential and commercial properties?

Yes.

Will you seek to correct the underassessment of commercial properties by the Travis Central Appraisal District?

Yes.

Will you support a homestead exemption for city taxpayers?

I will explore it.

VII. ENVIRONMENT

- 1. The Master Plan Phase 1 Watershed Report estimates that Austin needs \$800 million in capital funding and an ongoing \$2-5 million per year to address serious problems of flooding, erosion, and water quality degradation in 17 watersheds. What would you do to help ensure these waterways are cleaned up, and what changes would you support to limit the degradation of our creeks and lakes? Will you commit to instructing the City Manager to assess the drinking supply watersheds that were deferred to Phase II of the Master Plan?**

The Master Plan Phase 1 was adopted in the summer of 2001. By the time you add up the current cost of our flood control projects, flood hazard mitigation, stream stabilization, water quality management (devices to treat storm water) and storm drain repair replacement the price is probably closer to a billion dollars. At any given moment, the city's Watershed Protection Program has funding for 4 to 5% of the projects in their pipeline. That's the bad news. The good news is that this City is getting more skilled at asking private development interests to pick-up the tab for some of this water quality work. For example, the South Shore PUD contains detailed notes in the PUD document requiring the restoration and re-vegetation of a creek bed that is currently little more than a trash funnel into Lady Bird Lake. In addition, this development will be capturing and treating many acres of run-off from the area around it. Is this growth paying for itself? It is certainly paying for that creek repair. The Phase II watersheds have already been reviewed from a water quality protection standpoint. I think the more pressing need is better erosion control, especially as many of these "non-urban" creeks are in our emerging eastern growth areas.

- 2. Do you think the penalties in the city's tree protection ordinances are sufficient to deter violations and to preserve our urban forest? If not, what measures would you take to help ensure the preservation of mature trees?**

I recently voted, along with the rest of Council, on the adoption of a more comprehensive set of ordinances to protect our urban tree canopy. At present, those guidelines have not yet made it through the rules process, and we have not yet seen the impact of them on our current tree preservation efforts. We worked hard on this ordinance along with many stakeholders and I would like to see the results in action before I start a new round of negotiations. Maintaining our urban tree canopy is not just an aesthetic or even emotional issue, it is also a key strategy for achieving improved overall energy efficiency. Besides the ordinance, I have also been working hard during my term to facilitate private donations that enhance the City's ability not only to plant new trees, but also to maintain them over time.

- 3. Do you support the energy and water conservation policies of the City of Austin utilities? How would you change them?**

I would change them. I have been waiting for some months now to adopt a new set of water conservation goals: the much anticipated 140 GPD Plan. This plan, once adopted should put us on a path to reduce our water use considerably by the year 2020. In addition, I have urged the Austin Water Utility to be more proactive in engaging the private sector in water saving strategies. We have enormous opportunities and challenges ahead of us in energy policy. Since my election to Council, I have been instrumental in the launch of the Pecan Street Project which is now testing new smart grid technology in homes at Mueller, have worked with my peers on residential energy saving ordinances, have been a strong proponent of the home repair programs to help low-income home owners retrofit their homes to reduce water and energy waste (reducing bills while helping our conservation efforts), and have voted in favor of the new Austin Energy Generation Plan: a plan that places Austin in the top five most aggressive plans in North America. I was also able to help balance the concerns of affordability and job creation with the Generation Plan. This is only the beginning of our energy policy discussions. Austin is fortunate to own its own electric and water utilities and the careful stewardship of the finances and conservation policies associated with these operations will be high priority for me in a second term.

4. The City Council has approved at least \$350 million for construction of Water Treatment Plant 4, yet the engineering and environmental studies have not been completed. How well do you think the city has vetted this project, and what would you do to ensure that this infrastructure investment is not a financial or environmental disaster?

After many months of discussion and deliberation with engineers, planning staff and infrastructure professionals, as well as interested citizens, this project has been and continues to be vetted pretty thoroughly. I spent much of 2009 seeking input and even called for a Town Hall specifically to focus on this important decision. More than 500 people were in attendance and proponents and opponents were given the opportunity to present their case. Ultimately, I voted with those in favor of construction of the plant and since then I have tried to focus on doing what I can to ensure the project is built on time and on budget, with great attention to environmental and crew safety, as well as minimal inconvenience to neighbors impacted by construction. Early in the process we bid the project in such a way that the cost of delays and/or over runs would be absorbed by the primary engineering firm hired. We then hired an additional engineering firm to oversee quality control.

That said, Council oversight must not slip. At the request of neighbors in the Spicewood Springs area, I asked the Austin Water Utility to stop and look at redesign options for one of the shaft sites serving the plant. As a result of that effort, we were able to repurpose the Spicewood shaft and significantly (by 90%) reduce the amount of rubble laden dump trucks crossing through the neighborhood. I have continued working with these neighbors to develop a MOU with the primary engineering firm to address additional concerns, and have been working with the Transportation and Parks Departments to address other issues of importance. This is an example of how important it is to remain engaged throughout the duration of the project. I will continue to bring that level of scrutiny the project, as well.

VIII. CITY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

1. Do you feel that the current City Council adequately represents the diverse interests of the entire population of 750,000? What changes to the city charter would you support within the next year to change the way we elect the City Council or otherwise restructure city government?

The subject of single member districts is very complicated and speaks to the very essence of how citizens of Austin are represented at City Hall. I expect the Mayor to form a charter review committee soon, and it sounds like ChangeAustin.org has already launched a petition drive to promote discussion on its proposal. I am opposed to the bill proposed by Senator Wentworth that would mandate a change in Austin's form of local representation; I feel strongly that such a change should be a vote of Austin citizens and not the State Legislature.

I have more questions than answers regarding the proposals currently being circulated, including Mayor Leffingwell's. Minority populations in Austin do not live in concentrated areas, something especially true for the African-American community, so it seems nearly impossible to draw districts that would guarantee African-American representation. Furthermore, if the assumption is that African-Americans and Hispanics would fare better in district races than in city-wide races, then I would be concerned about the perception that in a hybrid system, district seats are less powerful than city-wide seats. We would not want to have a situation where Council Members from minority communities are "downgraded to less powerful seats." According to the criteria set by the Supreme Court, a legal challenge to fair representation must prove: historical under-representation, a compact population, proof that the minority group votes as a block, and proof that minority candidates are being defeated because white voters vote as a block. Any new system for representation would have pass muster at the Department of Justice, and I am not sure any of the proposals I've seen circulating right now would.

Most of all, I want to better understand what specific problems the community wants to address with respect to our current system. It seems critical to first vet the options for addressing each of those problems individually before coming to the table with a pre-conceived proposal. For example, most cities see a spike in local elections after a change from one system to another is made, but then return to low turnout levels. Voter turnout in Austin could increase automatically and sustainably just by shifting city elections to November. Likewise, if the problem to be addressed is the financial burden of running a city-wide race, we need to be cognizant of the fact that running in a district with 150,000+ people is still a very expensive undertaking unless you rely on voter turnout remaining at the currently low levels. Similarly, if the problem to be addressed is geographic accountability then the community needs to actively debate the trade-offs of possibly losing guaranteed African American representation and also becoming a city government more focused on district initiatives than those that are city-wide. We need to play out the scenarios of having a city government with the majority of the Council accountable to only 10 – 15% of the population and therefore NOT accountable to the other 85 – 90%. Our current system is far from perfect, but I never take a vote now without thinking about the community as a whole versus thinking about working for one geographic area over another. Again, I look forward to the discussion and hope for active and engaged debate with local citizens driving the

results they hope to achieve.

- 2. Do you support the creation of a representative citizens' group to recommend a structure and district boundaries for the election of council members from geographic districts?**

Yes.

If the City Council proposes a charter amendment for single-member districts, will you sponsor a simultaneous amendment establishing an independent body to oversee periodic redistricting?

Yes.

- 3. What would you do to help ensure that Council business is conducted in public view and that you have adequate information prior to making decisions? Will you commit to making your own calendar public?**

Yes. I was the first Council Member to post my calendar online, and did so within the first months of being sworn-in.

*****END OF QUESTIONNAIRE*****

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME