

**Austin Board of REALTORS®  
City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

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**Office sought: City Council, Place 3**

**Question 1. Give a brief biographical sketch of yourself.**

I am 41 years old and have lived in Austin for more than 18 years, working in the public, private and nonprofit sector. I served as the Executive Director of the Austin Entrepreneurs Foundation, and as CEO of Charitygift, an Internet company I founded in 1999 and sold to a publicly traded company in 2005. My career in public service includes four years in the Governor's Office (1992 – 1996) as the founding Executive Director of the Texas Commission on Volunteerism & Community Service, during which time I launched and managed the AmeriCorps program statewide. Under my leadership Texas was awarded more money than any other state (\$55 million). I also worked as a fundraising coordinator on the successful 1990 Ann Richards gubernatorial campaign and have also previously worked for City Year, Teach for America, and Procter & Gamble. I am a Plan II Honors graduate of the University of Texas, where I was elected to serve as student body president. I later earned an MBA from Harvard Business School. I have always been an active community volunteer and have served on the boards of the Association of Women in Technology – Austin, Austin Clean Energy Initiative, Austin Entrepreneurs Foundation, Central Texas Better Business Bureau, Foundation for Women's Resources Committee of the Board, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Austin, OneStar Foundation, PeopleFund, Sigma Delta Tau Sorority's Texas Education Foundation, TexChange, Texas Hillel Foundation, UT Commission on 125, and the Volunteer Center (now Hands on Central Texas). My partner, Kayla Shell, an attorney and Dell executive, and I live in the Clarksville neighborhood and are the proud parents of a toddler son named Ethan.

**Question 2. What will you do as an elected official to protect private property rights?**

It is essential to protect private property rights, so if I am elected I pledge to do just that. There are times when there is a tension between protecting property rights and meeting community-wide needs, but the rights of property owners must be protected. Exceptions should not even be considered without broad community input and a clear and compelling community benefit demonstrated.

**Question 3. What will you do as a City Councilmember to keep housing affordable in Austin?**

The City's best immediate strategies for delivering meaningful housing affordability involve the judicious use of the 2006 voter-approved affordable housing bonds, and other mechanisms for channeling funds into the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. I believe the City should also do more to encourage private sector investment in affordable housing, and to strengthen its relationship with the leading local nonprofits working successfully in this arena, such as People Fund (which launched

the Community Land Trust) and Foundation Communities, both of which I am proud to have been involved with over the last several years as a volunteer.. Regarding other affordability strategies, I believe we should explore targeted tax relief for original residents, and also seek ways to influence the state legislature with respect to its over-reliance on property taxes, which is contributing directly to our affordable housing problems. We should also explore additional local homestead exemption options offered in other Texas cities.

**Question 4. What are your views on Austin’s current property tax burden and do you have a position on how much the City of Austin should tax its residents for services?**

I would like to see a decrease in the overall property tax burden on Austin residents. If elected, I would seek ways to reign in the City’s portion of the overall property tax burden by seeking out efficiencies in City spending and service delivery. I would also seek ways to influence the state legislature with respect to its over-reliance on property taxes, which is contributing directly to our affordable housing challenges. My position on City taxes is that they should be no higher than absolutely necessary.

**Question 5. What will you do as an elected official to keep taxes, fees and utility rates low for homeowners?**

As mentioned above, the property tax burden is the most pressing concern for homeowners, and I would do whatever I could to lower the City’s portion of that tax burden without compromising the quality of necessary services. The same goes for fees and utility rates - where we can, we should, lower or even eliminate them without compromising needed service.

**Question 6. What is your position on residential energy efficiency and Point of Sale Ordinances?**

While I believe that improved residential (and commercial) energy efficiency is good on many levels - including long-term cost-containment for homeowners - and I would like to see the City do more to promote it, I am opposed to mandating extensive and potentially costly point-of-sale residential energy efficiency retrofits without full buy-in from the community. This as an issue of great concern, and I will make it a top to seek out a consensus solution that balances the obvious long-term benefits of energy efficiency with a real-world perspective on what is achievable for homeowners already struggling with affordability.

**Question 7. Do you have a position on the future of the electric utility?**

I am for maintaining permanent municipal ownership of Austin Energy. This benefits the citizens in numerous ways, not the least of which is the significant transfer of funds the City receives from the electric utility each year (about \$90 million last year). That said, I will be vigilant about rate setting and expense management. Our electric utility should be well-run as a business and not be used as a “cash cow” for city administration. I am in favor of expanding Austin Energy’s commitment to renewable energy sources, and my decision-making on the City Council would always prioritize the generation and distribution of renewable energy over coal or nuclear. Accordingly, I was against the City’s involvement in the expansion of the South Texas Project and supported the Council’s decision not to pursue it.

**Question 8. Do you believe that the building and development fee structure at the City of Austin is fair? Why or why not?**

I don't have direct experience with the City's building and development fee structure so I can't say yet whether or not I believe it is fair. If elected to the City Council next month, I will seek out the input of leaders in the development industry and groups like the Austin Board of Realtors and other professional organizations, as well input from City management and leaders in the City's watershed protection / development review department, to fully understand the concerns and the fee structure. I have heard consistent complaints about Austin's development review process over the years, and if elected will make it a top priority to facilitate improvements.

Thanks for the opportunity to answer these questions. I invite you to learn more about my candidacy for Austin City Council Place 3 at my website, [www.randishade.com](http://www.randishade.com).