



DANA Pre Forum Questionnaire:

1. Do you agree with the initial recommendations of ROMA's Downtown Austin Plan (DAP)? If not – what would you change/add? If you do agree, how would you maintain adherence to its initial recommendations?

I agree with many of the recommendations. I especially support the focus on enhancing public safety support and improving sidewalks and bike lanes (and thus the walkability and bikeability of downtown). I also support promoting green building, promoting diversity in the downtown population, and paying greater attention to historic and cultural preservation. If I were elected to City Council, I would want to be certain, however, that the final plan does not lead us in the direction of modifications to the Capitol view corridors.

2. Are there anything you would change about the “density bonus” policy recently adopted by the City Council to address housing affordability?

I think it’s a good start and want to see it work, or not, before suggesting that any modifications should be made.

3. What’s the most critical component to success in effective and broadly used public transit in Austin? What part will you play, if elected, in making that success a reality?

Most of all, we need to do a much better job of linking all of our land-use decisions with long-range transportation planning. If we are to build a truly transit-oriented community where it is not necessary to get in a car to do everything, we have to include transportation planning in zoning and neighborhood planning discussions in a broader, more meaningful way. I recognize that every commuter will ultimately make his or her own choice, but I believe our overarching priority should be to create a robust, multi-modal transportation network that discourages single-occupant vehicles. If I’m elected, I will be strong and consistent advocate for real transit solutions.

4. Many recommendations in the DAP involve working collaboratively with the County and State Governments as well as UT and other entities regarding their significant involvement downtown. Do you have any experience you would like to

share where you were able to bring opposing stakeholders to an acceptable compromise?

As both a chief executive and a board member in the public, private and non-profit sectors, my entire career has been built around bringing diverse interests together in the interest of finding building consensus and making progress. One example would be that I was appointed by Ann Richards to launch AmeriCorps statewide. Federal legislation required the effort to be bi-partisan, and I took that seriously to ensure we created an AmeriCorps program that worked for people regardless of their political affiliation. When George W. Bush was elected as governor in 1994, I leveraged the relationships I had established with Republicans who I had involved in our earliest efforts. I was able not only to put policy over politics and remain focused on building and maintaining the strongest and best funded AmeriCorps program in the nation, but I was also able to ensure our AmeriCorps efforts met goals of the Bush administration, too. That ensured the long-term survival of the Texas AmeriCorps program, but also ended up having further reaching implications when Governor Bush became President Bush. In the private sector I used similar tactics when managing the transition of the small local company I founded in 1999 to become part of a larger California-based company. The sale of the company made sense to investors, but certainly had important implications for me and my local team that also had to be addressed. I also have extensive experience working with UT – as a student I was elected student body president and led many efforts that required compromise. For example, I was involved in the first UT/Capital Metro contract negotiation, but I’ve also remained involved with UT, most recently serving on the UT Commission on 125 charged with agreeing on a series of recommendations related to how the University could best serve Texas over the next 25 years.

5. Several concerns have been raised by opposing groups about the noise ordinance as it's currently written. If allowed to personally re-write it, what specific changes would you make?

I would never “personally re-write” an ordinance like this one, but instead would seek out the involvement of the stakeholder groups in an attempt to achieve a balanced solution that works. In general, I am for strict enforcement of the current ordinances governing noise. In extreme circumstances, where there are specific situations that have proven to be persistently problematic, I would also be open to exploring public investment in technologies that could help deliver solutions.

6. The mayor’s Austin Climate Protection Plan (ACPP) is an ambitious embrace of green energy and construction practices. Are there any specific policies you would want to go further on or perhaps scale back?

I support the Austin Climate Protection Plan, and specifically the effort to find a fair, reasonable way to upgrade residential energy efficiency in Austin on a large scale, both in terms of retrofits and future development, because I believe that our overall community values put a strong emphasis on protecting the environment. Green building also makes long-term economic sense, as it keeps future costs down for residents. In terms of “scaling back” I would leave the door open to waiving certain requirements of the ACCP as it relates to residential energy efficiency in order to accommodate affordability (another key community value) if the need is clear, compelling and plainly in the interest of the community-at-large.

7. In your view, what is the source of chronic homelessness in Austin? What is the best way for the city to respond that addresses both sources and symptoms?

There are a number of causes of homelessness. Obviously, mental illness and substance abuse can lead to homelessness, but it may also be something as simple as a person living paycheck-to-paycheck (as too many in Austin do) who gets laid off and can't afford to pay the bills anymore. To address the problem of homelessness, I would explore expanding rehabilitative housing and other services to help people get back on their feet. The sooner a person in this situation gets help, the less likely the risk of chronic homelessness. We've also got to do more to leverage the ability of our local nonprofits to successfully address these challenges. If elected, I will build on my extensive experience in the nonprofit sector to improve the way the City does business with basic needs providers. I will also work hard to create new resources to address the problem of homelessness by bringing private sector partners to the table, as well as actively pursuing additional sources of federal funding that should become available with the upcoming change in White House administrations.

8. The downtown neighborhood is the shared environment where Austinites come to live, work and play. What is the biggest contribution to the quality of life for all of those downtown stakeholders that we can expect in the next few years? What will be your contribution to that quality of life improvement if elected to council?

One key to protecting the quality of life in downtown Austin, not just for downtown residents but for the whole community, is delivering a robust urban public transit system of some kind that begins to address the worsening traffic congestion we are experiencing in our central business district. The bottom line is that our current bus system simply isn't getting the job done downtown. I support the concept of a downtown circulator of some kind, whether fixed rail or rubber tire, although I am not yet sold on any specific concept or financing plan. I do also believe, though, that the parking shortage downtown is a big part of the CBD traffic problem, and (recognizing that some commuters will simply never stop using their cars) would support a large-scale parking solution of some kind in conjunction with an urban transit circulator system.

9. Historic preservation in downtown can be challenging – frequently the historic buildings are low-density in parts of the central business district or close-in areas identified for high-density development. How do we as a city maintain the character of important districts and still achieve desired density?

I'm an unapologetic advocate for historical preservation, because I think it is fundamental to protecting our community's essential character. My policy priority would be to focus on achieving maximum density in future development and redevelopment of non-historic structures.

10. What changes or additional support to the cultural arts on the part of the city would you endorse if elected to council?

I believe fundamentally in the arts not only as a spiritual vehicle for our community but also as a key economic development strategy. I'm for increasing public funding for the arts as much as possible, and I am also a proponent of the recommendations of the Create Austin Cultural Plan.

11. Next year will bring the 100th birthday of Wooldridge Square Park, the first city park in Austin. Do you have any ideas about how the park could be revitalized?

I'd like to learn what the Downtown Austin Alliance, the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association, and /or the Austin Parks Foundation believe should be done, but if I were Park Czar, I would plant more trees around the periphery of the square, undertake a major renovation of the bandstand, and work to create an environment that would be generally more inviting and would be better connected to the Austin History Center, perhaps through outdoor exhibit space. It's a gem of a park and is dramatically underutilized.

12. As downtown building stock continues to increase, the central fire station located in a historic building and with a parking lot that takes up much of Brush Square has been identified as a potential future issue for the AFD. While the city has already recognized the need to one day expand or relocate, new site options downtown are few – what is your preferred solution to this issue?

I would like to see the central fire station move from Brush Square, but I don't have a preferred location for the relocation. I do think it is obviously in everyone's interest to have a fully functioning fire station inside the CBD (and, by the way, I also believe we need be investing more right now in fire protection in downtown Austin, because every indication is that AFD is essentially unprepared to deal with high-rise fires in the CBD).

13. Affordable housing is frequently advocated for downtown in response to the recent announcements or construction starts of luxury buildings. Do you believe a.) that city

involvement to create affordable housing in upscale parts of the city is best because it maintains a desirable economically diverse neighborhood or b.) that limited available affordable housing funds should be used in close-in transit oriented developments because the efficacy and number of families helped is greater?

I think both of those goals can be accomplished in promoting affordable housing, and I don't think they have to be at odds with each other. I strongly believe this is everyone's Austin, and I think everyone should have the option to live in the neighborhood of their choosing. Downtown must not become a place where only the very wealthy can afford to live. I support ROMA's recommendation in the Downtown Austin Plan to make downtown a demographically and economically inclusive district that is open to individuals and families of all backgrounds. I also believe it's important to densify in and around regional urban nodes, whether it be building affordable housing downtown or in transit oriented developments further from the core of the city.

14. What is your boldest vision for the city? ...Something that may not be achieved during your term on the dais, but which you want to lay the groundwork for? At its best, what could this city be?

My boldest vision for our future – the vision I will pursue whether as a member of the City Council or as a citizen activist – is that Austin be a clean, safe and prosperous community where everyone's voice is heard; where, at the very least, all citizens can always meet their basic needs; and where everyone's entrepreneurial pursuits can come to fruition, whether in the public, private, or non-profit sector.

15. What qualifications or positions distinguish you most from the other candidates for this office?

My background is different from most City officials – in a good way. I have thrived on student politics at the University of Texas, served Governors Richards and Bush by launching AmeriCorps in Texas, worked as a corporate peon, earned a Harvard MBA, founded an Internet startup, run a local community foundation, and been a tireless supporter of all kinds of nonprofit organizations in town, sometimes as a grassroots volunteer and other times as a donor or board member. Based on that broad range of experience, 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 decided specifically to challenge the incumbent in Place 3, because of her reputation for inaccessibility. I see accessibility as the most important aspect of a Council member's job. The best way to change the perception that City Hall is closed off

from everyday citizens is to prove that perception wrong through action. I will make my calendar public and work to see that online resources are more readily available so that anyone interested in following City action can do so. I believe that I can do a better job than the incumbent, and if you give me a chance, I will.

Thank you for these questions, and I ask for your support.