

1. Do you think Austin should change to a districts-based form of government? Why or why not? And should that issue be put on the November ballot?

I don't believe the current system of representation is broken, but I do believe it's possible the citizens could be better served by a mixed system incorporating some single-member districts and some at-large seats. A mixed system would ensure that every citizen would have more than just one representative, while still offering the opportunity for more responsive, more accountable, and possibly more diverse representation. The devil is always in the details, though, so I can't say for sure whether I would be in favor or opposed to changing our current system until I know what alternative is on the table. At this point I support the Mayor's position that we wait until after the 2010 census, when we have more current demographic information, to revisit the issue.

2. Under what circumstances, if any, should the city offer incentives to employers?

Incentives should be used rarely and only when they provide a clear, direct economic benefit to current local employers and residents. Any economic development strategy - including tax incentives, waivers, or rebates - which fails to generate job opportunities for a broad range of low and middle-income Austin residents and which fails to create new local tax revenue sufficient to pay for the cost of the growth it has facilitated is a failed strategy, in my book. I also generally oppose incentives for retail projects in order to ensure that local, regional and national retailers are competing on a level playing field. In all circumstances, 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 met before any City-granted economic benefit is received.

3. What would be your one top budget priority?

My top budget priority will be to ensure, on an ongoing basis, that the taxpayers of Austin are receiving a good overall return for their investment in City government. That means working every day - not just at budget time - to deliver efficient and reliable basic services, to root out and eliminate waste in every function of every department, and to maintain a low tax rate. I also believe that Council Members and top City Management should post office expenses online as a matter of policy, and that City Hall should be working now to create a system for posting City revenues and expenses online, in rapid fashion, if not in real time, for citizens to view. In terms of spending priorities, I want to invest more wisely in the City's partnerships with local non-profit organizations to eliminate the impact poverty has on our community's safety and well-being.

4. Should the city focus more on developing affordable housing downtown or in outlying areas?

The City should be focused on achieving more affordable housing in **both** the downtown area **and** in outlying areas. While the fundamental value system of our community dictates that we work to ensure that downtown housing is accessible to people at all income levels, we know broader and deeper affordability in outlying areas is easier to achieve because land prices and construction costs are lower. We also know downtown living isn't a desire for all citizens. The City Council needs to focus now on ensuring the judicious use of voter-approved bond funding for affordable housing, on facilitating the development of the Community Land Trust, and on creating additional mechanisms that encourage the participation of the private sector in the development of affordable housing. The City should also strengthen its relationships with key local non-profit organizations already working successfully in this arena.