



RECA Questionnaire to Candidates for Places 1, 3, and 4 for the Austin City Council May 10, 2008 election

Please complete and return your answers to the questions below and fax back to RECA at 320-4152 no later than April 7, 2008. Please use additional pages for your responses, if needed.

CANDIDATE NAME: **Randi Shade**

1. Please mark the appropriate response below:

Yes, I wish to participate in the April 17th Forum

Yes, I will join all candidates for lunch at 1:00 p.m.

2. Austinites everywhere express frustration with the lack of mobility around our city and region. Transportation and congestion rank as #1 on every survey of the most important issues facing Austinites. Given that, which projects do you see as our most immediate priorities in responding to citizen concerns, and how would you pay for them?

Austin's traffic crisis is real and getting worse, and the only way out of the problem is to use every tool at our disposal, including more and better roads, expanded and improved bus service, regional and local passenger rail service, a downtown circulator system, improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and tactical approaches like carpooling, park & rides, HOV lanes and exploring flex-time strategies for major local employers. We also have to do more to link land-use decisions with 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. Regarding funding, we must work together with the County and State, and through CAMPO, to explore options for funding mass transit and to make sure we're getting our City's fair share of federal dollars. Given the reality that toll roads are part of the transportation equation, we must also make sure that every dollar spent on tolls in Austin stays in Austin.

3. The CAMPO Transit Working Group is currently studying proposals for inner city rail, including a proposal for a modern, ultra-light rail, urban circulator which could link Downtown to the airport, Capital Complex, UT, and out to Mueller.

a) Where do you rank inner city rail on our priority list of transportation projects?

I would rank an urban rail solution near the top of my transportation priority list. Connecting downtown to the airport, Texas Capitol Complex, UT, Mueller, and other emerging dense residential areas would allow us to better serve both residents and visitors to Austin. Especially as we continue to focus on densifying downtown Austin, we need to

make sure that traffic congestion and a lack of available parking in the central city doesn't become even more of a deterrent to ongoing downtown growth than it already is.

b) If it is determined that a comprehensive inner city rail proposal would cost in excess of \$300 million and if it is determined that an increase in taxes would be required to pay for such a proposal, would you favor moving ahead?

While I strongly support an urban rail solution, I can't say whether or not I (or, more importantly, whether the voters) would support one at this price point without seeing a complete "pro forma" on the system. Generally speaking, I do believe that there is support among Austin citizens for financing an urban rail system with an increase in taxes, but I think it's critically important for them, and for policy-makers, to have clarity about the cost, the benefit, and design of that system.

4. Last year Mayor Will Wynn initiated the passage of the City of Austin's Climate Protection Plan, which includes energy efficiency standards for retrofits and future development. In addition, the City of Austin is working tirelessly on developing policy to provide affordable homes for citizens and affordable space for local businesses. Since energy efficiency and green building inevitably increases the up-front costs for construction of homes, offices, and other new development, how would you balance climate protection and green building goals with the need to provide affordable housing and other types of development?

I support Mayor Wynn's efforts to include energy efficiency standards in retrofits and future development, because I believe that Austin's 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. I would, however, leave the door open to waiving certain regulations and requirements to accommodate affordability if the need is clear, compelling and plainly in the interest of the community-at-large.

5. The City's Charter Review Committee has recommended single-member districts to the Austin City Council for inclusion on the November 4, 2008 ballot. What is your position on single-member districts? If you support them, what form do you recommend for voters to consider?

It's possible that we could be better served by a mixed system of representation 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 possibly more diverse representation than the current system affords. 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 work toward creating a plan to put in front of Austin voters in 2010.

6. In 2004, the city of Austin approved an \$11.5 million tax sharing agreement to attract the Home Depot Call Center. In 2005, the city of Austin approved a \$54 million tax sharing agreement for Samsung. The Home Depot and Samsung now employ hundreds of Austin

residents. Describe your position on the use of performance-based tax sharing agreements and other public incentives to create jobs in Austin?

We have to exercise caution in deciding when to enter into these agreements, but yes, the City should be in the business of encouraging sustainable economic development that benefits people at every income level in our community. I'm in favor of targeted, strategic use of City incentives to encourage this kind of economic growth, as long as the public benefits clearly outweigh the public costs. Incentives, whether for big or small businesses, should be used when they provide clear, direct economic benefit to current local residents. To ensure taxpayers benefit as promised, there must also be more transparency to ensure job creation, salaries, and other performance requirements are met before any City-granted economic benefit is received.

7. 'Stop Domain Subsidies' circulated a petition that will be offered as a Charter Amendment on the November 4, 2008 ballot. The Charter Amendment will:

- Prohibit the City from honoring its current Chapter 380 agreements at the Domain and potentially Robert Mueller, which may result in lawsuits and/or agreement default, negatively impacting the city's bond rating;
- Prohibit Chapter 380 agreements in the future, if the proposed project has any form of retail in it; and
- Disallow City utilities from participating in public/private partnerships.

What is your position on the 'Stop Domain Subsidies' Charter Amendment?

I'm against it. While I am skeptical about the Domain incentives because of the retail component, I don't support terminating them via a City Charter change. While I respect the right of the citizens to organize and petition, City Charter amendments are extremely difficult to undo, and - as your question illustrates - sometimes have consequences that may have been unimagined by the drafters. It seems that passing this proposed charter amendment could have several unintended consequences, and even hurt small businesses.

Founded in 1991, the Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA) addresses issues affecting the general business and real estate community in Central Texas. With more than 2,000 members, the non-profit organization reflects those investing in Austin's vibrant economy, including architects, attorneys, developers, engineers, financial institutions, real estate brokers, and landscape companies. As a founding member of the Hill Country Conservancy, RECA was the first to pledge more than \$500,000 to open space preservation in Central Texas. In the last 10 years, RECA has contributed \$1.2 million to worthy organizations in Central Texas.