

**North Central Austin Neighborhoods
Mayor and City Council
Candidate Forum**

April 13, 2009

Allandale • Brentwood • Crestview
Highland • North Shoal Creek • Wooten

On March 12, a questionnaire was distributed to all the Mayoral and City Council candidates in the May 9 Austin municipal election. Presented here are the answers from all the candidates that responded.

The questions were produced by a volunteer committee, with representatives from each of the participating neighborhood associations. The committee obtained suggestions from each neighborhood association and identified areas of common concern. The questions posed represent broad consensus on priority issues for North Central Austin.

Most questions were chosen with comprehensive planning in mind. We purposely selected long-term issues that will define what our neighborhoods are like for the next generation. We tried to avoid questions of broader concern that may have been addressed in other candidate forums.

The committee thanks all the participating neighborhood associations for their extraordinary cooperation and support for this event. The committee also thanks everybody who contributed suggestions for our questionnaire.

The candidates in this election are:

- Mayor** David A. Buttross – <http://www.mayoraustin.com/>
 Josiah James Ingalls – <http://www.josiahingalls.com/>
 Lee Leffingwell – <http://www.austinleadership.com/>
 Brewster McCracken – <http://www.brewstermccracken.com/>
 Carole Keeton Strayhorn – <http://www.caroleforaustin.com/>
- Place 1** Perla Cavazos – <http://www.voteperla.com/>
 Chris Riley – <http://www.chrisforaustin.com/>
- Place 2** Mike Martinez – <http://www.martinezforaustin.com/>
 Jose Quintero – <http://www.joequintero.com/>
- Place 5** Bill Spelman – <http://www.billspelman.org/>
- Place 6** Sheryl Cole – <http://www.KeepSherylCole.com/>
 Samuel Osemene – <http://www.osemenesam.com/>

1. Neighborhood Planning

One reason many people have soured on neighborhood planning is that after years of work, identified priorities don't get followed or funded. Examples include zoning changes, or transportation improvements like sidewalks, bike lanes or trails.

How would you more tightly integrate the Neighborhood and Comprehensive Planning processes with the City budget process?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

I would make it a priority to ensure that the City budget does reflect the Neighborhood plan and the Comprehensive plan, as long as doing so does not neglect other public needs and services.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

I believe we need to look to the Comprehensive Planning process itself to find a good answer to this question. That is, one of the questions that must be asked and answered is how to deliver funding for the priorities established both by the Comprehensive Plan and by Neighborhood Plans, and how to ensure that our plans have "teeth" on an ongoing basis. One step I would like to see us take, once our Comprehensive Plan is complete, would be to have City staff analyze all future development cases in the context of the new Plan (i.e. how does each case as proposed meet or violate the specific provisions of the Comprehensive Plan?), and I'd also like to see City staff – or perhaps the City Auditor's office – conduct a regular, ongoing analysis of major City decisions and actions in the context of the Plan. I enthusiastically support moving forward with a new Comprehensive Planning process, and am hopeful that this process will help us identify meaningful solutions to a host of challenges we continue to face as a growing, changing community. Many of the issues of concern to our citizens – transportation, public safety, social services, environmental protection, neighborhood planning, historic preservation – are closely connected to each other; a new Comprehensive Planning process should – and must – help us illuminate those connections and inform future decisions that work to the benefit of the whole.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

I want to implement the Comprehensive Plan through the 2012 bond election by funding quality of life investments in Austin neighborhoods: neighborhood sidewalk, small neighborhood parks, trails and bike paths, and youth soccer and athletic fields and swimming pools.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

This will be no easy feat, but it is vital to the successful creation of a comprehensive plan. I believe my background on the Planning Commission, working at the State Legislature, and my training at the LBJ School of Public Affairs has well-prepared me with the “big- picture” frame of reference and the relationship building skills to be successful in helping to integrate these processes.

As the fundamental first step of the comprehensive planning process, the existing neighborhood plans should establish the foundation of the comprehensive plan. However, I would like to initiate discussions with the public as to how best to move forward with integrating these plans – including having the public’s participation in determining what kind of consultant for the plan would best suit the needs of Austin. I am very excited to embark on this challenge with the public. I believe neighborhood plans and the comprehensive plan should establish the framework for our city-wide priorities and goals, and the budget should be aligned with these community goals. Since the comprehensive plan is a long range planning tool, our budget process should also be adjusted to reflect long range spending on community priorities with realistic 2 to 5 year benchmarks on implementation.

At city hall, the city manager’s office and our city departments, we need to make sure “the right hand is talking to the left hand”. From my background at the Legislature I became familiar with the practice of all proposals requiring a full financial vetting to determine the fiscal note of those projects.

I’d also like to say that I very much identify with the issue you raise. Like many of our City processes, there is much room for improvement. Having served on two local boards, the Planning Commission and the Women’s Commission, I believe that community involvement is fundamental to ensuring a transparent and effective process. The City needs to be honest with our neighborhoods about the extent to which the City is willing to honor and fund the values of our community. Citizens have every right to expect that when they are asked to volunteer their expertise to assist the City, their proposals should be respected.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

This is a frustrating problem, and we can do better about addressing it. The City approves a Capital Improvement Project budget every year, and neighborhood plans should provide a road map for expenditures on CIP projects like sidewalks or trails. The City has taken some steps in that direction, and we need to continue those efforts. Representatives from the relevant departments should be involved in the neighborhood planning process, and should adjust their CIP recommendations based on decisions made during that process.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

One area of improvement that I believe should be incorporated into the planning and budget process is to truly determine and factor in the cost of potential development, and determine if the infrastructure is capable of handling such development before allowing it to move forward. Zoning and growth have a tremendous impact on our General Fund for services, and those factors should be a consideration for Council when planning and contemplating zoning issues.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

The details of the Comprehensive Plan process are currently undetermined and are in need of significant community attention. One major step toward integrating planning with the city budget could be accomplished by designating the bulk of the next bond package for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Over the longer term, expanding public information and involvement in the budgeting process would help integrate planning and funding. A few ideas to achieve this include improving public communication and participation during the budget process, disclosing the specific impacts of budget cuts, creating a unified economic development budget to determine what resources were available on a yearly basis, and developing performance measures for city services. Each of these should help neighborhoods more closely monitor and impact city spending in their area. I have also proposed creating a city-funded neighborhood-matching program, which I cover, in the final question of this survey.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

One of the things that I'm mindful of this budget cycle is how constrained our city budget is already so I am looking for more solutions that allow the neighborhoods to actively partner with the city in making improvements. One model that I am interested in is the City of Seattle's Neighborhood Matching Fund, which is a competitive grant program that allows a neighborhood to work with the city and pool resources including volunteer hours, professional services, tools, etc to be matched up to \$100,000 by the City of Seattle. All the projects must have a community benefit, but can be neighborhood initiated rather than waiting in line for the City resources to be allocated. I also believe that we are going to see a bond initiative in the next bond election for transportation, but I'm working towards a comprehensive multi-modal package with neighborhood sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and transit.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

I strongly believe in neighborhood planning.. I support a neighborhood plan as the first step in developing a comprehensive plan. I will partner with the Austin Neighborhood Council in designing a comprehensive plan. My fear with the comprehensive plan as being proposed is that the Committee will be dominated by lobbyist . We are still healing from the Wal-Mart debacle and we must not reward those that flushed this plan down our throat. If we are serious about a comprehensive plan, we must partner with the ANC. The City Council does not listen to the people and we must not trust the current composition of the body to give us a comprehensive plan. I'm a candidate for Place 6 because Council Member Cole does not represent your interest at the City Hall. When the issue was between the people and Wal-Mart, she chose Wal-Mart. If we follow my idea, the city will save money.

2. Neighborhood Planning (continued)

What role do you expect neighborhood plans to play in the comprehensive planning process? What steps should be taken to protect the interests of neighborhoods that do not have a plan?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

I think that the neighborhood plan must be the foundation for the comprehensive plan. The City needs to take the time and effort to bring the people of those neighborhoods which do not have a neighborhood plan together to create their own neighborhood plan instead of the City making a neighborhood plan for them.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

Neighborhood plans should be respected in the Comprehensive Planning process, but I believe it's reasonable to believe that the Comprehensive Plan could necessitate some modifications. In those cases, I believe that each proposed modification should be presented to the neighborhood for approval. I think extra effort must be made to involve neighbors in the Comprehensive Plan process who have not yet been through a Neighborhood Plan process.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

For neighborhoods that have neighborhood plans, we should implement the quality of life improvements identified in these plans in the 2012 bond election. For neighborhoods that don't yet, we will need to spend the next three years through the comprehensive plan process identifying the quality of life investments that these neighborhoods want, also for inclusion in the 2012 bond election.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

As I mentioned above, as the fundamental first step of the comprehensive planning process, we will need to gather all of the existing plans to establish the framework and initiate discussions with the public as to how best move forward with integrating these plans. This would include having the very active participation of the public and neighborhoods – those with plans and without plans – in determining what kind of consultant for the plan would best suit the needs of Austin.

For neighborhoods that do not have a plan, we will need a variety of resources to protect their interests. We will need increased outreach in terms of regional forums and support to these communities from both City staff and neighborhood leaders who have embarked on the process. It can not be assumed at this time what individual neighborhoods may need to address their unique concerns. But, as a former member of a neighborhood that did not have an association until recently and is still in the forming stages, let alone a neighborhood plan, if I am elected, these neighborhoods will certainly have my empathy and leadership to include them in the process.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

The existing neighborhood plans provide a foundation for the comprehensive planning to come. The comprehensive plan should identify citywide goals and expectations that can guide future neighborhood planning efforts, both in areas that don't yet have a plan and in areas that need to update their plans. In an area without a neighborhood plan, the Zoning and Platting Commission should look to the affected neighborhoods for guidance on any zoning case, and should encourage discussions toward agreed visions for the areas involved.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

The comprehensive planning process must and will be a "bottom up" process. Hired consultants should not drive or dictate what occurs in our City's neighborhoods. There should be a citizen driven and led process that ultimately is handed to planners and consultants to draft and codify into our overall comprehensive plan.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Neighborhood plans lay a foundation for the Comprehensive Plan in their area. The Comprehensive Plan could focus additional resources to help residents in neighborhoods without plans develop more specific area proposals.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

After hearing the Oak Hill neighborhood plan I know the amount of time and work involved in creating a neighborhood plan and I want to make sure we incorporate the existing plans in the comprehensive plan. However, the comprehensive plan will be a more elevated view and I hope it will lay out goals and visions that can be used to guide the interests of neighborhoods without a plan.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

The neighborhood plan must be a model for comprehensive plan. The best way to put it is that the neighborhood plan must be the birth mother of the comprehensive plan. When elected to the City Council, I will go from neighborhood to neighborhood encouraging them to draft their own plan. I proposed having a Neighborhood Plan Convention hosted by the city. We must encourage every neighborhood to send delegates to this convention. I strongly believe in the people.

3. Neighborhood Planning (continued)

Mixed use districts and corridors will impact all neighborhoods bordering them, yet currently the planning for one side of the street excludes neighborhoods on the other side of the street.

How can planning of transit corridors and mixed use districts be fixed so that all adjacent neighborhoods are able to participate in a single coherent process?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

Two steps can be taken to accomplish this. First, we should change our zoning laws to include all bordering neighborhoods in the process of re-zoning any piece of property. Secondly we need to add the same rights and privileges into the comprehensive plan for the City.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

Here again, I think the answer lies in our Comprehensive Planning process. The point of this process is to view our challenges in the broadest possible context, and step away from a myopic street-by-street, neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach to planning.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

We can do this through the comprehensive plan process. The original planning of transit corridors and mixed use districts included representatives from Livable City and the Austin Neighborhoods Council, and we used Capital Metro's transit plans as a guide for establishing Core Transit Corridors. The final plan was supported by Livable City's and ANC's representatives. That said, it is appropriate and a best practice to reexamine plans in light of evolving circumstances.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

This is another great example of an issue that can best be addressed through strong public participation in a comprehensive planning process where neighborhoods would work with their adjoining neighbors to develop reasonable recommendations that reflect the values of both communities.

As a short-term stop-gap, for neighborhoods currently embarking on their planning process, one resource is the appropriate ANC sector representative for both neighborhoods.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

The comprehensive plan process should establish guidelines and mechanisms for planning that goes beyond the individual neighborhood, and it'll be especially important to address planning for corridors that border separate neighborhoods. Those corridors should be discussed and deliberated in detail, and that visioning process will require looking at both sides of the street.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

Whenever and wherever core transit corridors are designated, all effected neighbors should be involved in the process regardless of neighborhood boundaries. Additionally, all neighbors should have equal ability to opt-out of the VMU overlay if there is belief and consensus that further dense development would not be compatible with existing neighborhood's plans and values.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Problems such as this are part of the reason for Comprehensive Planning. Having districts, corridors, and neighborhoods plan together is difficult in Austin's piecemeal approach. The city needs to commit to planning by putting staff time and resources toward resolving these complex issues. The city could also support planning by better supporting neighborhood organizations and providing professional help in the case of large projects such as was done with the Concordia redevelopment. Local businesses, AISD, Capitol Metro, and the Travis County Healthcare District should also be involved in corridor planning.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

One of the concerns with the neighborhood plans is that the neighborhoods are planned in isolation from each other, sometimes with conflicting goals, and I hope that this is something that comprehensive planning will address. Although we have adopted the VMU ordinance, we have not really looked at all the elements at play in our transit corridors including the issue of connectivity from one development to another or even connectivity to neighborhoods. We may need to look at our core transit corridors as a separate planning area, with all affected neighborhoods at the table, rather than the using the current neighborhood planning process. I would like to see a collaborative process with our Neighborhood Connectivity Division, Transportation Department, Cap Metro, and other modes of urban transit, as we need all of their input. I am open to ideas on how adjacent neighborhoods could participate in a single process and hope we will address this in our Comprehensive Plan.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

This is about public participation and transparency. This is one of the reasons I support neighborhood plan over a comprehensive plan. A neighborhood plan will reduce this type of problem.

4. Neighborhood Planning (continued)

The Highland neighborhood supports transit-oriented mixed use redevelopment at Highland Mall, similar to what was done at Concordia. Yet recently it was rumored that a soccer stadium was under consideration for the Highland Mall property.

What is your vision for redevelopment of Highland Mall?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

I did not know that Highland Mall was going to be re-developed, but if we are going to re-develop the Highland Mall property I feel that what ever development happens on the Highland Mall property should represent the needs and interests of the surrounding community.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

As far as I know, discussions about a soccer stadium are exactly as you describe them – rumors. There are no current plans that I'm aware of for that or any other "vision" for mall redevelopment. If and when proposals are submitted, neighborhood input must be a vital part of any redevelopment plan. If I'm elected mayor, it will be.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

I believe Highland Mall's redevelopment should be guided by a public process and should be a mixed use village center along the lines of the vision created by Jim Duncan in his work for RG4N. I do not believe a regional sports stadium is the best use for this location.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

I don't think it's fair to say what I would envision for the redevelopment of Highland Mall, but rather I feel it's more appropriate to explore what could be envisioned by neighbors, small business owners and other Austinites through a comprehensive planning process.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

I would envision some process allowing for public input, comparable to the public input that resulted in an improvement in plans for the Triangle. I'm glad to know the neighborhood supports transit-oriented mixed use redevelopment, which seems especially appropriate for that site. There are many models around the country of defunct malls that have been redeveloped into very green, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use districts, and I hope to see a comparable plan for Highland Mall.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

There are currently many discussions about development throughout the City, and Highland Mall is no different. At some point, I believe there will be a complete redevelopment of the Highland Mall area, and will incorporate all of our values related to appropriate mixed-use development. If an item such as a soccer stadium is part of the proposed development (which I believe could be a benefit to a smart mixed-use development), it will be fully and publicly vetted through our land development process and all citizens will have ample opportunities to provide feedback and input.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Highland Mall is a great opportunity to create hundreds of new homes and mixed-use redevelopment that is accessible by transit. Experience from other communities shows that Transit Oriented Developments can successfully support and enhance existing neighborhood plans. Some TODs have reconnected people to jobs, built neighborhood parks, and rebuilt small businesses districts that have been gone for years. The key is to identify and respect community values and understand that TODs have different roles in different communities, which take time to get right. Respecting existing plans and communities is crucial and I pledge to do that.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

I have heard that there is a group interested in a professional soccer stadium, but I would like to see more of a TOD style development with potentially even a public-private partnership with the City of Austin. We could locate some municipal services, affordable housing, a park space, and retail at this location and develop a more robust train stop. Highland Mall is important to the minority community .

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

I strongly support local businesses. I will support encouraging more local businesses in the area instead of the current plan of having a Wal-Mart at the location. We have to understand this area is also a residential area. Any economic development must consider the cost benefit analysis to the community and existing businesses. I will not support any city project that would adversely affect the community and local businesses. I will always vote with the community on this issue.

5. Land Use and Zoning

Commercial Design Standards was an attempt to go from vehicle-friendly to pedestrian-friendly development, yet we are still seeing suburban-style projects, the Office Depot on Anderson Lane being an example.

Do you think the Commercial Design Standards ordinance is strong enough?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

No, I do not think the Commercial Design Standards ordinance is strong enough.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

I support Commercial Design Standards, but in some instances I believe they are too strong and inappropriate. I envision revisiting these in the intermediate term. I believe the first priority should be enactment of RSDS (residential side design standards).

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

No. Through the citizen review process, we have already reached initiative consensus on a range of amendments to prevent a repeat of what happened with Office Depot on Anderson Lane.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

It's been nearly two years since the Commercial Design Standards passed. I believe we need to take a closer look at the commercial design standards and re-evaluate whether they are addressing the intended purpose. I have heard from both the developer community and neighborhoods that the standards are not meeting their needs. Some neighborhoods have suggested incorporating neighborhood design standards. I would be open to discussing the benefits of this proposal and re-engaging the public on how we can improve commercial design standards.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

I think everyone involved with the Commercial Design Standards knew they would require some tweaking, ideally within a year of implementation. We are well past a year since the Design Standards were adopted, and there is no doubt that they need some adjustment to fulfill the expectations that gave rise to the standards.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

Commercial design standards are specifically tailored for denser urban core areas of major metropolitan areas. While growth over time will expand the use and compliance with Commercial Design Standards, I believe that the current ordinance is fair and adequate enough. In cases such as the Anderson/Burnet area where density does exist and redevelopment is occurring, we should do all that we can to encourage and include pedestrian and new urban design standards. A one size fits all approach is not a prudent course of action for ordinances such as this, and I will continue to advocate for better design standards on a case by case basis when and where the ordinance does not apply.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Austin's patchwork of plans, ordinances, PUDs and zoning has led to a difficult planning environment for developers and neighborhoods. In the Commercial Design Standards, roadway and development type, and a number of exemptions greatly affect applicability of the ordinance. As with most compromises or political agreements, the Commercial Design Standards do not answer every problem they were hoped to address. Redevelopment, especially in this down economy, will take time. The question should be whether the Design Standards achieve their goals. They should be regularly reviewed to see whether they meet clear performance measures and be amended as community standards evolve.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

We have to make sure that we look at both the community benefit of design standards and potentially other community benefits that a project might bring. This project is the first LEED certified Office Depot in the nation and I am not sure if the project would have been able to achieve a high level of energy efficiency and build to commercial design standards within a realistic budget. I know that change takes time and I hope that more commercial projects will see the benefit of more pedestrian friendly development and the existing ordinance is strong enough.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

No. If the Ordinance is strong enough, I don't think we would have all these problems. Austin City Council calls it Smart Growth but I call it DUMB GROWTH. This is economic gentrification. My opponent has given her corporate lobbyist and friends the go-ahead to destroy our way of life. We must wake up and stop this madness. When elected to the City Council, I will toughen the Ordinance by letting the neighborhood association decide what it wants in the neighborhood. This is what I called government by the consent of the governed.

6. Code Enforcement

Code enforcement has improved in recent years, but Austin still lags behind other cities its size for number of staff. Many North Central Austin residents still have concerns.

What steps would you take to further improve code enforcement?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

I would increase the number of Inspectors the City employs in order to improve code enforcement.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

I believe that code enforcement, which is a part of Solid Waste Services, should increase the number of inspectors as soon as our budget situation permits it.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

The city's website efforts should be aligned with improvements to government efficiency so that citizens can file code complaints online and track the progress of their code complaint through the city's website. Further, citizens should be able to sign up for RSS feeds to alert them when a code complaint and a site plan have been filed in their neighborhood.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

Austin recently increased code enforcement staff throughout city sectors. I'd like to evaluate code enforcement progress after 6 months. Additionally, I believe it's important for code enforcement employees to attend neighborhood meetings and listen to the most pressing code enforcement issues facing each neighborhood and be proactive in citing offenders.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

An improved city website, with more user-friendly project information pages, would go a long way toward progress on code enforcement; it would enhance citizens' ability to monitor projects and report violations. We also need more code enforcement staff, though I am not sure we'll be in a position to add staff within the next year or so.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

I believe one of the first and biggest steps in improving code enforcement is to change our land development code to a form based code (such as in commercial design standards) in order to make it as easily understood as possible. This would benefit staff and citizens alike in understanding and ensuring that all parts of the LDC are being followed. We should also do all we can to provide the necessary personnel and resources to our code enforcement teams to adequately provide this service. I will remain committed to increasing funding and personnel in these areas to ensure that our community is being fully served.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Austin's patchwork of plans, ordinances, PUDs and zoning has led to a difficult planning environment for developers and neighborhoods. In the Commercial Design Standards, roadway and development type, and a number of exemptions greatly affect applicability of the ordinance. As with most compromises or political agreements, the Commercial Design Standards do not answer every problem they were hoped to address. Redevelopment, especially in this down economy, will take time. The question should be whether the Design Standards achieve their goals. They should be regularly reviewed to see whether they meet clear performance measures and be amended as community standards evolve.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

I think that we need to reassess how Code Enforcement is managed by the Solid Waste Service department and if we need to devote more full time employees to code enforcement, how we can allocate for their salaries. There are definite benefits if the department is left at Solid Waste Services as they are a revenue fund and generate money for city, but we may need to reassess the efficacy of this partnership.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

I will propose hiring more staff and enforcing the law.

7. Traffic and Transportation

Cut-through traffic is an ever-growing problem, one with safety implications for the families and children who regularly mix with cars on residential streets.

What's your long-term strategy for traffic mitigation in North Central Austin?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

The first two things that need to be done are to make all the toll roads free so those roads can be properly utilized, and to start planning and working towards making I-35 have an upper deck and a lower deck from one end of the City limits to the other end of the City limits.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

I believe the future of transportation in Austin – not just for easing crisis-level traffic congestion in North Central Austin, but citywide – must involve making significant new investments in roads, mass transit, bike lanes, and sidewalks. We especially need to pursue a viable rail system and dramatically improved bus system, and to make bicycling and walking viable forms of commuting. Accordingly, my platform includes a proposal to hold a transportation-only bond election by 2010 to help fund exactly these kinds of investments, as well as a proposal to hold an election as soon as possible – ideally also by 2010 – to authorize the expansion of our rail system. I also believe in pursuing tactical transportation solutions like more HOV lanes, improved signalization wherever possible, better traffic incident management, promoting carpooling and telecommuting, and encouraging the growth of programs like Austin Car Share, which I was proud to sponsor as a Council member.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

We need more sidewalks, neighborhood parks and bike paths – this will protect families and children from car traffic and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods. I am proposing to fund this through the 2012 bond election.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

Clearly, we need to address transportation as part of a long-range comprehensive plan and review neighborhood plans for direction from neighborhoods. While the specifics of the solutions to Austin's transportation challenges and public safety can not be listed briefly, we do need:

- street improvement,
- additional sidewalks,
- and multi-modal options including pedestrian, bicycle, bus, park and ride's and rail.

And, we absolutely need the voices of neighborhoods at the table to help guide this process.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

We need to work with residents in each neighborhood to develop recommendations for the CAMPO 2035 plan, which will be adopted around June 2010. We also need to make sure that there is ample infrastructure – sidewalks, trails, crosswalks, bike lanes – for families and children in each neighborhood to feel safe whether they in a car or not.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

Re-development and new design is the single largest tool available to traffic mitigation. North Central Austin will only continue to become a more attractive urban core area of our City and I will advocate for better design and quality development in this area of the city to maximize on the opportunities that naturally occur with redevelopment. We should also embark upon a transportation (only) bond package as soon as possible to complete our inadequate and aging road and sidewalk infrastructure to provide a safer and more pedestrian friendly experience.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Our region's transportation strategy has failed. Despite spending billions for new toll roads, congestion continues to increase leading to unsafe traffic on residential streets. I believe there is a better approach. We need to refocus our transportation dollars on smaller less expensive more immediate projects with the goals of reducing congestion, street maintenance and the need to drive. This could mean a number of improvements such as sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic calming, intersection improvements, new technology and many other solutions.

It took years to build our way into this terrible traffic mess and it will take years to correct it.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

Although they have suffered a setback, I am a believer that the CapMetro red line will bring more than the projected ridership into Downtown and off the roads. In addition, I believe that Bus Rapid Transit that may be funded by the stimulus money will also become a viable transit solution. We can't really build more road capacity so I believe that we really need to encourage transit oriented development, get people to support transit, and build multi-modal transportation solutions.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

This is as a result of what Council Member Cole calls smart growth. I will propose having speed bumps and other measures to deter drivers from speeding and using residential areas as a short-cut.

8. Traffic and Transportation (continued)

Planning Commission in its review of the City's FY 2008-2009 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) got it right: prioritize spending to implement neighborhood plans, focus City resources in mixed use districts so people don't have to drive, and add sidewalks

When can North Central Austin expect ADA-compliant sidewalks along streets like Burnet, Lamar, Anderson, Guadalupe and Airport?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

This is not just a problem for North Central Austin but it is a problem City wide. It is not right or fair to focus our resources solely in North Austin to fix this problem, but instead we should focus our resources on fixing the problem city wide as fast as possible.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

I agree with the Planning Commission, and believe the NCA area should be included as soon as possible. I simply don't know the answer to "when" – other than as soon as our budget situation permits.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

This is at the core of my vision for the 2012 quality of life bond election.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

I do agree that the city is greatly derelict in its responsibility to make sidewalks ADA compliant. For example, as I drive through East MLK every day, I notice utility poles in the center of sidewalks for miles. I know this is the case throughout the city. It is unfortunately unclear when the city will make the investment to make sidewalks ADA compliant. In a recent conversation with Jennifer McPhail with ADAPT, I learned that there is some progress in bringing city sidewalks into compliance, but we must keep the pressure. While the City recently released the Sidewalk plan with a timetable, I would have to learn more from the City regarding these specific areas slated for improvement. The sidewalk plan lays out the timetable for this project but funds are not identified. If elected I would be committed to finding the resources and making improvements. I believe this is an important matter that must be addressed quickly to establish accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This would be a good proposal for a bond election.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

I don't know where those streets fall under the city's current priority matrix, but I would try to make progress within the next year or two on fixing the gaps in the sidewalk infrastructure.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

Please refer to the previous question.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

I do not know when the sidewalks are scheduled for completion along the major arterials in North Central Austin. According to the recently released Sidewalk Master Plan, much of the ADA sidewalk construction has been funded through dwindling 2006 bond dollars. Unfunded ADA sidewalk construction needs are currently estimated at \$120 million. Unfortunately, it will likely take many years to complete the entire system. As a Council member, I will focus on safe routes to school and connectivity and will work to redirect our transportation improvements from highway mega-projects to smaller more immediate impact projects including speeding up completion of sidewalks across the city.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

Although they have suffered a setback, I am a believer that the CapMetro red line will bring more than the projected ridership into Downtown and off the roads. In addition, I believe that Bus Rapid Transit that may be funded by the stimulus money will also become a viable transit solution. We can't really build more road capacity so I believe that we really need to encourage transit oriented development, get people to support transit, and build multi-modal transportation solutions.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

This will be one of my top priorities when I'm elected to the City Council. Hold me to this.

9. Open Space for Mixed Use Districts

The City has rezoned hundreds of acres in North Central Austin for mixed use. We take this very seriously – as go the mixed use districts, so will go our existing neighborhoods. Our mixed use districts have almost no existing public open space within walking distance, and VMU in particular has no hard requirement for publicly accessible plazas, courtyards, outdoor dining, playscapes, pocket parks, greenbelts or other outdoor uses, other than sidewalks, that will make these areas pedestrian- and transit-friendly.

Will you commit to establish a minimum open space requirement for mixed use districts?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

Yes.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

With more information about what those requirements might look like, yes. I have already committed to a general policy goal of providing park space within walking distance of all Austin residents.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

I believe this is an appropriate topic for the comprehensive planning process. Also, the recommendations made for public open space in mixed use developments should be implemented and funded through the 2012 bond election. As a resident of the Triangle, I have come to recognize how critical parks, accessible plazas and public open space is to making increased density work.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

Yes. Increasing open space has been a central part of my campaign. I am especially committed to follow through on recommendations such as these that were set forth by the Children and Families Task force. Of course, we need to examine how we best fund initiatives like these. I am excited by the possibilities of Neighborhood matching partnerships, like those instituted in Seattle which could benefit us in Austin. I am also a strong supporter of a bond election which would fund many priorities for our City. I would like to see many community-supported issues up for bond elections which would presumably be identified by strong public participation in a comprehensive planning process.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

Open space is essential for healthy living, and yes, we need some amount of open space in every mixed-use district. We can promote open space even while allowing for some flexibility; for example, a green roof could serve as open space in some cases, if it is accessible.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

Yes. Having ample open space available to the public is part of Austin's character, and we need to find a way to maximize this space in mixed use developments as well as all over Austin. Also, with future incentive agreements I will work to incorporate open space whenever feasible.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Creating high quality development with open space should be a major goal for the city. I support adding green space and public areas during the ongoing redevelopment occurring in the North Central Austin area. Open space requirements should be determined by the size of the development, location, proximity to existing open space, and a number of other variables. This is something that needs to be considered in the Comprehensive Plan and followed up during implementation.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

Yes, I will commit to establish a minimum open space requirement and am working with City staff right now to evaluate the potential addition of a 2% public open space requirement in addition to the parkland dedication and 2% open space which includes private open space.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

Absolutely.

10. Open Space for Mixed Use Districts (continued)

City code makes provision for urban open space, and the Design Commission's new Urban Design Guidelines demonstrate how to use this space effectively. Unfortunately, City code also allows trade-offs that undermine intent. Examples include 1) Fee-in-lieu for 2% open space on commercial developments over 5 acres; 2) Fee-in-lieu for Parkland Dedication; 3) Impervious cover exemption for VMU developments; 4) Parkland Dedication exemption for VMU developments that implement affordable housing; 5) Subdividing properties to below 5 acres to avoid open space and connectivity requirements.

Will you commit to amend code so developers must contribute a minimum level of functional public outdoor amenities, such as plazas, courtyards, sidewalks and outdoor dining?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

Yes.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

Yes, I agree that some revisions to the code should be considered in order to address the legitimate concerns cited here.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

I will commit to an open public process that includes all stakeholders to achieve consensus on any land use amendments, including these proposed amendments. I strongly believe public open space is critical and is lacking in our urban core, and I am committed to working with the community to increase parks, sidewalks, youth athletic facilities and hike and bike trails through the 2012 bond election. Also, I have already called for amending how PARD defines open space to make clear this open space cannot be the mow strip along a roadway but must be functional parkland.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

Yes.

Chris Riley (Place 1)

Open space is essential for healthy living, and yes, we need some amount of open space in every mixed-use district. We can promote open space even while allowing for some flexibility; for example, a green roof could serve as open space in some cases, if it is accessible.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

As mentioned previously, a "one size fits all" approach to land development and most other issues is not a value that I support. There are many independent factors in each and every case, and they must be fully vetted and publically discussed before any final decision can be made. I will remain committed to supporting community values such as open space, affordable housing, pedestrian friendly plazas and sidewalks, but cannot commit to a blanket approach to this issue.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

The Urban Design Guidelines were created through the work of many people over difficult months and ratified through an extensive process across much of the city. Fee-in-lieu provisions and exemptions were included in part to add flexibility and help achieve additional goals. Any changes need to recognize the work of so many people and the compromise that the guidelines represent. While I share the goals of building a better urban environment, including public space, I cannot commit to unilaterally changing the code. The guidelines should be regularly reviewed to see whether they have achieved their goals as community standards evolve. If not, they should be changed.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

Yes, I will commit to establish a minimum open space requirement and am working with City staff right now to evaluate the potential addition of a 2% public open space requirement in addition to the parkland dedication and 2% open space which includes private open space.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

Absolutely and hold me to it.

11. Pocket Parks, Greenbelts and Trails

Our neighborhoods have identified numerous open space and bike-ped initiatives, several of which were prioritized in neighborhood plans and most of which contribute to the City's alternative transportation strategy. Mixed use districts with high pedestrian traffic in particular will need pocket parks and plazas.

Will you commit to seek bond funding and changes to PARD policies so that City-owned pocket parks, plazas and greenbelts are added in North Central Austin?

David A. Buttross (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Josiah James Ingalls (Mayor)

I would seek bond funding but I would not limit it to just North Central Austin but I would make those funds available to the entire city.

Lee Leffingwell (Mayor)

Yes. Bond money for pocket parks and other green space was included in the 2006 bond package, and should be augmented with additional funds at the next general purpose bond election.

Brewster McCracken (Mayor)

Yes. I have already made both commitments – it is the core of my land use vision in my mayoral campaign.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn (Mayor) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Perla Cavazos (Place 1)

Yes, I support following through on the recommendations of the Families and Children's Task Force. In order that these recommendations are met, we must implement a strong time-table for accomplishment of these goals. Pocket parks are a good idea and I would like to learn more about how we can appropriately assess the fee structure for these parks in our sensitive economic climate. Other ideas include the bonds discussed previously and incentives for developers to incorporate pocket parks into their developments and prioritizing publicly-owned lands for pocket parks (and affordable housing).

Chris Riley (Place 1)

Yes, we have got to do better at providing pocket parks. Based on the work of both the City of Austin Families with Children Task Force and the AISD Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools, I support aiming to have parks within ¼ mile of each home in the urban core (south of 183) and ½ mile in other parts of the city. Since the next bond election is likely still years away, I would look for creative funding opportunities. The North University Neighborhood is about to celebrate the creation of a new pocket park, Sparky Park, funded mainly through neighborhood efforts to allow the placement on the site of a cell phone tower (which is partly shielded from view by a very cool art project). I'm also interested in linear greenways, which can serve transportation functions as well as recreational ones, in the flood plains along creeks.

Mike Martinez (Place 2)

Yes, I have and will continue to remain committed to our pocket park plan to ensure that all Austinites have the open space experience that is valued so much.

Jose Quintero (Place 2) – *Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.*

Bill Spelman (Place 5)

Pocket Parks and public space are goals for neighborhoods across the city. The recent Families and Children Task Force called on the city to set a goal of providing a park or public green space within ¼ mile of all existing and planned housing within the city core. I believe this could best be considered during the Comprehensive Plan and a portion of the new park funding should be included in the Comprehensive Plan Bond Implementation.

I have also proposed creating a city-funded neighborhood-matching program. The program would provide cash grants and services to neighborhoods and community organizations for small neighborhood-based improvement projects such as pocket parks, community gardens, and other amenities. This approach has been successful for years in other cities and it's a good way to leverage city support with community participation to improve neighborhoods in a down economy. The neighborhood's share could be in cash, volunteer labor, or donated services or materials that would equal the city support.

Sheryl Cole (Place 6)

We have seen the first public pocket park in the NUNA neighborhood, Sparky Park, and in my second term, I hope to bring more public-private partnerships with the City and private developers that will create more pocket parks with private sector maintenance.

Samuel Osemene (Place 6)

Absolutely and hold me to it.