

2024 AIA-Austin City Mayor & Council Candidate Questionnaire

PROVIDED BY AIA AUSTIN

Candidate Name: CARMEN D. LLANES PULIDO

Office Sought: Mayor of Austin

ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE:

This questionnaire was prepared by the AIA Austin Advocacy Board, which aims to improve the quality of the built environment by promoting excellence in design, planning, and public policy. Its goal is to inform the public where council members and mayors stand on topics important to the city's future growth. Please fill out this questionnaire and provide any written responses as needed. There is no ranking system or response by the committee. The information provided will be compiled as filled out and shared with the public on the committee's webpage (<https://aiaaustin.org/committees/advocacy/>).

PLEASE PROVIDE IN AN 'X' IN THE COLUMN THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR VIEW FOR THAT TOPIC. SPACE FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN THE LAST COLUMN. THERE IS NO LIMIT TO RESPONSE, ADJUST CELL SIZE FOR LENGTH

TOPIC	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Additional Comments / Explanation:
#1: GROWTH						
Austin should address its rapid growth by allowing a diversity of multi-unit and "missing middle" housing types in all neighborhoods.			√			I am a strong supporter of diversity of housing types, but with qualifiers. I do not typically support blanket zoning or absolute prescriptions of upzoning on all neighborhoods. I think existing missing middle should be preserved where feasible and duplicated, and I would like to see more of it paired with subsidies and affordability requirements as well as more tree preservation and green space requirements to incentivize smaller building footprints.
Austin should prioritize infrastructure investments based on the adopted Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan - Growth Map. Imagine Austin needs to be updated to reflect the significant growth and economic changes that have occurred over the past ten years.		√				I agree that Imagine Austin should be updated. We must ensure that the process is inclusive and that we approach it with an equity lens focused on true affordability and antidisplacement.
Austin should coordinate and integrate equitable access to community resources (public facilities, healthcare, healthy food, frequent/accessible transit) into all short- and long-term growth policies.	√					This is at the heart of community planning. I have a track record of not only advocating for these things but working with communities to implement them in neighborhoods all over Austin.
The city should revisit its small area planning methods and use it as a tool for developing Imagine Austin's "complete communities."	√					Neighborhood planning can guide massive amounts of infill development while taking key planning needs into consideration, such as ingress/egress, safety, access to resources mentioned in the above question, and more. It hasn't been a perfect process in the past but it can be improved and extended to the growing areas in Austin that desperately need to plan growth well (especially North and South).
#2: AFFORDABILITY						
Austin should prioritize the preservation and creation of small, local businesses in its economic development efforts.	√					This is one of my priorities, especially because pro-small business voices have been lacking in the anti-displacement conversations about code changes and development initiatives. As mayor I will champion affordability programs for local businesses.
Austin should preserve and create market-rate and income restricted affordable housing, as defined in the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint, through partnerships between the private development community and public funding.	√					This will be essential and affordability levels need to be deep and mixed (multi-level). The ASHB is a clear indicator of where we are not delivering in terms of units, and it's the lower levels where people are facing the most economic pressure.
Affordable housing should be provided in all areas of the city and not be restricted to certain locations.	√					This is one of the reasons it is so important to identify community development opportunities on both privately and publicly owned land in the city, where new affordable housing can be developed.
Austin should continue to advocate for infill housing density, and support ordinances that make developing on smaller lots easier for Austinites.			√			These policies are helpful when guardrails for affordability, infrastructure, environmental protection, and safety are included. Without any regulations against short term rentals or to ensure that the previously stated items are covered, these policies at best provide a winfall to some property owners without community benefit of affordability, and at worst they can actually drive prices up and deteriorate our quality of life.
#3: DENSITY						
Austin should prioritize mixed use (residential & commercial) development along transit corridors & hubs.		√				Agreed and this is visible in many neighborhood plans and has been successful in recent development
Austin should evaluate existing Neighborhood Plans to ensure consistency with Imagine Austin's "complete communities."		√				It would be helpful to see how much has been implemented from neighborhood plans, and how much new zoning capacity has been occupied. Planning the future land use of an area is only one aspect of attracting and retaining the businesses, property owners, and tenants that make an area flourish.
Austin should invest in infrastructure that encourages development within the city limits rather than the ETJ.		√				Agreed! We have a lot to do to shore up infrastructure and basic services within our own limits and the areas recently annexed.
Austin's Density Bonus Program could be more effective and better utilized.		√				My uncle co-authored the Downtown Density Bonus and we can see how successful it's been and where we have learned some lessons about where community benefit could be better leveraged. I'd like to see density bonuses paired more often with other subsidies to increase affordability and other types of community benefits.

Austin should rethink its approach to Neighborhood Plans to ensure that all parts of the City adhere to principles of environmental protection, social equity and economic opportunity.		√				Yes, and let's have a public, transparent, and inclusive discussion to define those principles and apply them with a culturally humble approach in which we learn from history to duplicate what has worked and adapt what could be done better.
#4: ZONING & REGULATIONS						
Austin should prioritize the preservation of neighborhood character over the creation of market-rate and income-restricted affordable housing units.				√		I would strike a balance, by first asking that we define "character." Affordability includes more than simple price of units for rent or sale. It includes quality of life and access to goods, services, and infrastructure that ensure a high quality of life. This is essential to balance with quantitative numbers about units and price, because it has a lot to do with the equity or inequity of housing outcomes for various populations.
Austin should continue to create density within 1/2 mile of core transit corridors to support of multi-modal transportation.		√				Yes, with appropriate planning and timely implementation of new transit services.
#5: PUBLIC REALM						
Austin can improve the quality of life and health outcomes of its residents with the provision of high-quality public spaces and placemaking in support of increased residential density.			√			The more density we allow, the more critical it is to incorporate additional green public space and commercial amenities.
Austin should provide public funding and/or public/private funding to create better pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees, seating, and integrated stormwater management systems.	√					I believe we've made incredible progress in increasing bicycle infrastructure and would like to see it much more integrated with green infrastructure efforts because the two can be highly complimentary.
Austin should provide accessible and pedestrian-friendly public spaces (streets, plazas, parks) when evaluating its underutilized public resources, such as surplus land and underutilized buildings.		√				Yes, in balance with affordable housing and commercial space.
Austin should create additional development incentives that encourage projects with more public benefits, such as pedestrian-friendly streets, plazas, courtyards, & parks.		√				Prioritize green over gray; natural spaces over concrete. Concrete is one of the top three contributing materials to greenhouse gas emissions and a major contributor to the heat island effect.
#6: ENVIRONMENT						
Austin should incentivize water conservation practices, such as rainwater collection and reuse, a/c condensate harvesting and reuse, and low-irrigation use landscapes, through financial incentives and rebate programs.	√					This is our number one environmental challenge in the years ahead. Thanks to tireless advocate and city leaders. Austin has become a leader in water quality and conservation, keeping high quality levels despite our massive growth in population. As Texas grows and more water is tapped in the Hill Country upstream from us, conservation and reuse measures are more important than ever to ensure our sustainability as a city.
Austin should continue to advocate for and enforce local tree protection and preservation ordinances in order to preserve one of the great natural assets in our community.	√					These elements become even more important as we grow and as climate change intensifies. We must be cautious about land development code changes that dramatically increase development and profit potential but for existing trees and impervious cover limits.
Austin should incentivize and help fund renewable energy (solar and wind) and resource recovery (recycling and composting) for both commercial and residential customers.	√					This is not only helpful to residents in lowering utility costs; it's actually essential for reducing the load on our power grid and increasing reliability under more and more strain from extreme weather and population growth.
Austin should provide incentives for homeowners and developers to install green roof systems because of their many environmental benefits, including stormwater reduction, habitat creation and heat island reduction.		√				Let's make "green" broad in definition, because there are caveats with actual vegetation-based green roofs and the structural issues they can create if not well designed and maintained.
#7: MOBILITY						
Austin should prioritize implementation of the Green Infrastructure Resolution calling for street trees in rights-of-way to encourage non-SOV modes of transportation.		√				This is one of the tactics we can use to mitigate heat. It aligns with the CoA Heat Playbook and could potentially be funded in part by previously approved and unissued mobility bond funds, as well as federal funding from the EPA for urban canopy improvements.
Austin should support local and regional investments in multi-modal transit system that reduces the need for vehicular travel.		√				As mayor I will prioritize commuter transit, after-hours and other diverse worker-friendly service schedules, and on-demand transit for diverse transit users.
Austin should integrate transit & land use planning to effectively support access to transit.		√				Yes with a caveat: Transit cannot simply be used as an excuse to upzone an area without guaranteeing increased transit services and true affordability for existing and future transit riders. I am concerned about potential displacement and loss of ability to negotiate community benefits under the ETOD upzoning and DB90 density bonus programs and would like to restructure them for more accountability and mixed income housing.
Austin should pair transit stations & hubs with walkable communities.	√					Yes, this is in line with best practice and our existing Austin Strategic Mobility Plan.