



AUSTIN
ENVIRONMENTAL
DEMOCRATS

Mayoral and Council Candidate Questionnaire

2014 City of Austin Municipal Election

Responses Due:

5 pm on July 25, 2014

Send Responses to:

Ted Siff: ted@parkplacepubs.com and

Emily McCann: emilymccann10@gmail.com

Candidate info and Point of Contact:

Candidate Name: Steve Adler

Staffer: Jim Wick

Email: steve@adlerforaustin.com

Phone: 512-633-2251

1) Are you a member of AED? If yes, since approximately when?

Answer: Yes, since January 2014.

2) Name and explain your top three (3) environmental priorities and solutions.

Please include:

- **Examples of where it has been done, if applicable.**
- **How you would implement the solutions in Austin.**

Answer: My three environmental priorities are:

- (1) Expand water reuse and conservation. Austin reuses 3% of its water while San Antonio reuses more than ten times that amount. We should do all we can to avoid spending hundreds of millions of dollars to purchase additional water supplies in Bastrop and Lee Counties and to build or support a related conveyance system or expensive new plants to treat or reclaim water. The mayor must be responsible for rallying the people of Austin (who are angry that their conserving of water has only resulted in higher water bills) to greater levels of conservation, and I believe they will if they understand that it will buy time for rain to fill the lakes and avoid another expensive capital outlay (like the bio mass plant and water treatment plant, both approved in the last eight years).

We can start by expanding the purple pipe network and prioritizing high volume customers, such as the University of Texas. I'll look to bring in new partners and other governmental entities so that we are maximizing our conservation potential. Examining and reforming the business model of the Austin Water Utility will be crucial to achieving our goals, since the current model punishes conservation.

- (2) Help support and empower the environmental community and stakeholders to be an even more proactive and involved force in the future of Austin. One of the mayor's significant powers is the ability to convene. I will institutionalize regular communications, dialogue and direct contact between the environmental and business/development communities. The mayor can help get the environmental community out in front of what could be future battles so that they can be changed, minimized, or shaped ahead of time.

It is time to move on from the old paradigms of the past and look toward more collaboration on projects, understanding that our physical environment is one of the main reasons why people move to Austin and our city continues to grow. We

are at a tipping point, and if we lose what it is that makes Austin special, we may never recover.

- (3) Expand open spaces for watershed protection and conservation, support creation and expansion of parks and civic incorporation of creeks, and aggressively pursue renewable energy alternatives. Great cities throughout the ages (New York, Chicago, London, Paris) have made signature achievements in such preservation and conservation. Again, the mayor should be rallying community will and focus not only generally but also with respect to foundations and the philanthropic community to build and strengthen public/private partnerships and conservancies.

3) Have you actively worked on environmental issues/projects in the past? If so, please describe the issue/project and your role. Please limit your response to no more than your top three (3) projects.

Answer: 1. Killing the ASARCO plant. Working as chief of staff and general counsel for State Senator Eliot Shapleigh, we kept the ASARCO copper smelter in El Paso from re-opening and ultimately got it demolished. This required rallying political and popular organization and pressure and required engagement with the Texas regulatory system.

2. Assisting the Texas Nature Conservancy (TNC) and its rare sabal palm sanctuary. I represented the Texas Nature Conservancy with regard to the taking of property in its Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve on Texas/Mexico border when confronted with the forced acquisition for and the construction of the Border Wall. This was the only place on the border (California, Arizona, Texas) where the government's project was successfully stopped (albeit not permanently). Ultimately, I was able to secure \$1,092,750 for the property when the federal government had initially offered \$114,000.

4) Of the projects listed above, which project are you most proud of working on?

Answer: In helping the Texas Nature Conservancy and maximizing the result and the ultimate financial support for the conservancy, I was able to bring to bear the specialized legal expertise and other skills and talents I have. Rather than getting involved in a shallow way with many different activities and causes, I have tried to focus on situations and opportunities where I can do a deep dive and bring the greatest measure of value and resource possible that might not be readily available otherwise. I was able to do that here

5) What is your guiding philosophy in balancing growth/development with environmental protection?

Answer:

I do not believe there is an irreconcilable conflict between growth/development and environmental protection. Irresponsible, unmanaged, and costly (subsidized) growth should be condemned by all. The special and unique environmental features in Austin are integral to our soul and spirit and help make us what we are and give many of us the reason we want to live here. These assets and this mindset drive our quality of life and our civic values and heritage. If our environment and special features, treasures and attributes are ever compromised, we risk never being able to regain, replace, or recover. Such a loss would be beyond devastating. The balance between growth and development must build on those shared values and that common ground. Austin will continue to grow in part because we're in the southwest part of the country, and because we have the University of Texas and the State Capitol. But there are ways to manage that growth and preserve what makes Austin special.

6) What is your stance regarding urban rail?

Answer: I can't imagine an Austin in 25 or 30 years that doesn't have an integrated rail, transit and transportation system. However, when I look at how the process has rolled out, I am not filled with confidence. We must be able to better lead a deliberative process so that the end result has more a widespread perception of legitimacy and where underlying facts do not appear to be reasonably in dispute. I am anxious to see what the council considers in early August, how and what they deliberate and the message they send to our city. But ultimately, we cannot build our way out of traffic congestion and we need to focus more closely on executing the long term plan about how and where we live and travel.

7) What is your stance on the building of SH 45 SW?

Answer: I oppose SH 45 SW. It does too little and costs too much, and there are significant environmental risks involved with the project.

8) What committees of council and/or regional planning organizations would you like to serve on if elected and why?

Answer: Future regional planning in Central Texas should entail the joining or much greater interface between the COG and the MPO. We must start institutionalizing cooperation and planning between Austin, San Antonio, and communities in between. The mayor's focus is best spent on such longer term visions and directions with council members filling the existing positions on existing regional planning organizations.

It may be that we best maximize the opportunity to reinvent city governance culture that 10/1 presents by rethinking how council can be more thoughtful and deliberative, more pro-active and more long-term in perspective. It could be that the council committee structure changes and none or only some of the current committees remain (and where the charge for all of them changes). And, it could be that the mayor serves on none of the committees.

9) Did you vote in the Democratic Party primary this spring?

Answer: Yes