

Personal

1. In what part of Austin do you live? How long have you lived here?

Place 1

Perla Cavazos

I currently live in the Central East Austin area and have lived there one year. I lived in far North Austin for eight years in the Copperfield Neighborhood. I have also lived in Central North Austin and South West Austin.

Chris Riley

I live at 14th & San Antonio, in the northwest part of downtown. I was born & raised in Austin, and I moved into this neighborhood in 1990. I have lived at this house since 2002.

City Life

2. What is the city's role in creating jobs?

Especially given the economic downturn, the City needs to make sure we are acting in a strong and proactive manner to make sure Austinites can keep their jobs, create their own jobs and access opportunities for new jobs

drawn to Austin by the City through new and existing industries. These jobs need to reflect the reality of need across a variety of skill, education and economic levels.

In addition, we need to be thinking regionally about how to create jobs and develop our workforce. We should partner to:

- bridge the gap between our current workforce skill-base and the needs of current and future employers,
- foster growth in the industry clusters we already have, like film and technology, as well as bringing new industries to diversify our economy,
- incubate small businesses and provide an atmosphere where they can thrive,
- create a state-of-the art medical school and research facility in Austin that will position Austin as an industry leader in bio-technology and medical research, create jobs, and spin-off health industries.

The city's principal role in job creation is to create a level playing field, with reasonable costs and regulations, so that businesses are able to thrive. The city can also help by supporting small businesses, and working cooperatively with all

businesses on job-creation initiatives that reflect our aspirations as a city. If we aspire to be a center for clean energy, efficient use of energy & water, local food, zero waste, or live music, then we should consider initiatives that support job

creation in those areas.

If elected, I feel strongly that my background on the state level working with elected officials and government departments at all levels of government would be of great benefit in areas like this to help forge productive regional partnerships between the County, the City of Austin, and the State of Texas.

3. What should the city do to address conflicts between music lovers and neighborhood residents? Should the city implement any recommendations of the Live Music Task Force that have not already been implemented?

I support continued public involvement to protect residential neighborhoods from noise pollution while fostering our vibrant music community which heavily contributes to our unique Austin culture and general revenue. And, I feel we can do more to follow through with recommendations in the Live Music Task Force report such as offering loans to retrofit venues, assist with training for sound engineers and working with new developments and clubs to double-pane windows. It is my view that in conjunction with strong public participation in a long-range, comprehensive planning process, we can appropriately address expanding existing entertainment districts without polluting established neighborhoods with noise. Furthermore, we need to do more to ensure new residential developments and the entertainment district they are emerging in create "good neighbor" policies to foster both our entertainment industry and need for density in downtown areas.

The city should provide a forum for clubs and neighborhood residents to work toward resolving any conflicts. I'm looking forward to seeing how well the new sound permit process works. I support the Live Music Task Force's recommendation regarding the creation of a Music Department, and I'd like to see if we could get there within our current budget constraints by reorganizing staff who are carrying out related functions, like those involved in considering sound permits.

4. What role do you think public art plays in the creation of the built environment? Do you consider public art an important part of urban development? If so, what are some ways to include and finance art in development?

I think public art plays an important role in the creation of our built environment and should be considered as an important part of urban development.

There are several ways we can include and finance art in development including:

City-led initiatives to require funds to be placed in an "Austin Art in Public Places" fund where local artists could apply for opportunities to participate. Or the City could require or offer incentives to developers to

include a certain level of art per square foot of new developments. The City should also lead this effort by ensuring our infrastructure includes public art;

Developer-led initiatives which add to the value or "selling points" of a property, like the sunflowers at Mueller;

Citizen-led initiatives like the Crestview Mural where neighbors, tenants and other members of the community join together to create public art.

I'm excited by programs like the neighborhood matching programs in Seattle which help fund projects like these.

As an active participant in Austin's arts community, I know the arts community would be eager to apply for opportunities to contribute to Austin's public arts projects.

Public art can play an important role in the urban environment. It can make development more humane, and enhance the local flavor of our public spaces. I support the Art in Public Places ordinance we have had since 1985, which

provides that at least 2 percent of the budget of a city-funded capital project must be allocated to public art. We can also encourage private-sector efforts, like the artwork around Whole Foods, the murals on many Austin walls, the Lady Cannoneer

statue on Congress, or the doggie rest area on Lady Bird Lake, near the mouth of Shoal Creek.

5. Sixth Street is arguably Austin's best-known brand, a National Registered Historic District, and the gateway between the Waller Creek District and the heart of downtown.

Sixth Street is also primarily a nightlife district - crowded most nights, but quiet during the day. Are those in conflict? How should Sixth Street change?

While these concepts have been in conflict at times, they do not have to be. I am excited by the opportunities to learn from other cities like New Orleans, with the French Quarter, and San Antonio, with the River Walk which have

integrated mixed uses to their Historic Districts to create historic entertainment districts. I applaud the efforts of groups like the 6th Street Alliance which has been planning for the integration of a wider mix of businesses, like retail, downtown.

Of course, the opportunity to grow the area's daytime uses also requires the need for public transportation in the area to bring tourists and local families alike into downtown while mitigating the need for additional parking remedies.

Changes to Sixth Street have been under consideration by many of the groups producing this forum and the City needs to respect and partner with neighbors, businesses and stakeholders to fully realize a strong concept for Sixth Street development.

I strongly believe the best way to address many of these issues is through the long-range, comprehensive planning process. Through this process, we can address how to make Sixth Street cleaner, safer and deal with how to best manage the development on Sixth Street. Also, this process will be a good opportunity to address how we maintain our music scene as rent and "shot bars" increase on Sixth Street.

Sixth Street is a tremendous asset, and it could be even better with a healthier mix of uses that maintained activity at all times of the day. More restaurants/cafes and retail uses, for example, could help enliven the street during the daytime.

6. The Waller Creek revitalization project could dramatically improve a sizable portion of downtown. As it stands today, which aspects of the plan are you for and which are you against?

While I am excited by the potential of the Waller Creek Project to control flooding and bring the land into higher usage while increasing tourism to Austin, I am also mindful of issues of affordability as we re-develop the area.

I'm for the current tunnel design as I understand it; I might have chosen a somewhat different configuration for the outlet facility, but I respect the work that has been done to date. I'm looking forward to the Waller Creek District Master Plan

In particular, we need to include housing that is affordable in the redevelopment and the rents of the Red River businesses, which support our music scene, should be considered in the discussions of maintaining a standard of affordability in the Waller Creek Project.

process, which will provide an opportunity to develop a clearer community vision for the above-ground improvements along the creek.

Transportation

7. Access to downtown is difficult, and bound to become more difficult, due to congestion on our highways and arterial streets. What strategies would you support to make it easier for people to get downtown? How should those strategies be funded?

It is fundamentally important to provide easy access to public transportation throughout Austin, including the downtown area, as set forth in a comprehensive plan for the City. Extending rail lines, improving bus lines and

I would support a number of strategies aimed at building a more robust multi-modal transportation network, such as the following:

bicycling infrastructure are a few ways to address our current transportation challenges. With a heavy emphasis on public participation, the comprehensive plan would address transportation issues in consideration with our

- a central-city circulator to connect the current Red Line terminus at the Convention Center with the heart of downtown, the Capitol Complex, the University of Texas, the Mueller development, and eventually Seaholm, the Long Center, and the airport;

goals of economic development downtown and in desired growth areas.

- the proposed Green Line to Manor and Elgin, utilizing existing track that roughly parallels 290 East;

A few strategies about how this could be funded include a combination of tapping into the federal funding streams available through the stimulus package, partnerships with the State of Texas, bond initiatives and exploring

- rapid bus service on North Lamar/South Congress and Burnet/South Lamar, as well as other lines to be added in the future;

permanent, dedicated funding streams.

- improved conditions for bicycles and pedestrians, including completion of the Lance Armstrong Bikeway, the extension of the Pfluger Bridge, and the creation of a bicycle boulevard on Nueces.

As with any transportation project, funding would come from wherever we can get it: bond funds, CapMetro funds from the one-percent sales tax, stimulus funding, other federal funds, and potentially funds derived from local options that could be approved by the legislature this session.

8. Part of the Envision Central Texas “Vision” is more transportation choices, including transit options such as commuter rail, light rail, and rapid bus.

Yes, I have been a strong supporter of using the comprehensive planning process to address our infrastructure needs. As part of a long range comprehensive plan that addresses Austin’s growth, it is essential that

Yes, I will support planning for and implementing transportation choices that connect population centers and guide future land use. I do support the concept of the streetcar system, and I support moving ahead with further work on it.

Will you support planning for and implementing transportation choices, both as connectors of towns and activity centers and as a tool to guide future land-use? Do you support the streetcar system proposed as part of the Downtown Plan?

we use this opportunity to guide our transportation and land use plans and that we support planning for and implementing multi-modal transportation options as both connectors of towns and activity centers.

I also support the streetcar system proposed as part of the Downtown plan but think we could benefit from more discussion and public input regarding both the routes and financing for the plan.

9. Bicycles are a cheap, effective way to meet many of our transportation, environmental and fitness goals. What are three things the City should do to encourage biking? Are you a cyclist? If so, how do you use your bike?

Several things the City can do to encourage commuter biking in particular are improving end of trip facilities like showers, bike lockers, lighting, and racks. We also need to do a better job of incorporating bike lanes into

There are many things the City should do to encourage biking, including these:

new and established roads and finish key commuter infrastructure connectivity like the Lance Armstrong Bikeway and the Pfluger bridge.

- Update our bicycle plan, and set a realistic timeline for implementation;

In regard to whether I bike, about three years ago, I began training and competing for triathlons. I ride my bike frequently several times a week during the spring and summer months as part of my triathlon training.

- Improve our city-wide network of trails;

During this time, I often take advantage of the Veloway bike paths.

- Promote and install more bike racks, including racks designed by local artists.

When I am not training for triathlons, I ride my bike for pleasure and exercise a few times a month.

These and nine other suggestions are described in more detail in the bicycle position paper on my website, at www.chrisforaustin.com/issues/bicycles/.

I am a cyclist; in fact I don't own a car; I get around mainly by bike.

10. Most Austin residents pay about \$5 a month for a transportation user fee on their utility bill to support transportation projects, but automobile projects get far more funding than bicycle projects.

Yes, however it would appear that we need much more funding for bike projects than a \$5 opt-in would provide. I strongly believe the best way to secure funding for City projects is to identify priorities for Austinites through a

I support the concept of spending some part of the revenue from the transportation user fee on bike projects, and enabling bicyclists to have some option to that effect. The challenge would be to find a mechanism that works while still ensuring

Would you support allowing bicyclists to opt for their user fee to go toward bike projects?

comprehensive planning process. Through this process, we can best determine funding streams that would reflect bicycle usage as an appropriate part of the total transportation budget.

that we keep our roads properly maintained.

11. The Great Streets program has shown promise on many streets downtown, but other streets have not seen any improvements years after implementation of the program. How should we speed up progress improving the walkability of Austin's streets?

While there are many things we can do to improve the walkability of Austin's streets (installing benches, awnings, sidewalks, trees, etc) this takes funds that all departments are lacking in the current economic downturn.

I would look for opportunities to increase Great Streets funding, potentially in connection with the proposed replacement of parking meters with pay station kiosks. Other potential funding sources include federal stimulus funding and future bond items.

This problem is not unique to the Great Streets program and we will continue to lack the appropriate implementation funds if we do not embark on a comprehensive planning process and address the revenue side of our budget.

We can also continue to encourage Great Streets improvements as sites redevelop. I would also look to the ongoing Downtown Plan as an opportunity to identify priorities for sidewalk improvements, as well as funding sources for that work.

Parks

12. What are the elements of great urban parks? How should the City, or the City and private-sector partners, create and maintain quality parks and open space downtown and around transit centers?

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.

I generally share the views Jane Jacobs set out on this subject in Chapter 5 of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). The success of an urban park depends largely on the presence of "a wide functional mixture of users to populate

and enliven [the] park through the day." Attractors such as concerts, sporting events, or chess matches can help.

The City should work together with the county, the school district, and private-sector partners toward the goal of ensuring a healthy mix of uses surrounding our parks downtown and around transit centers. We should also continue working

with private-sector partners such as the Austin Parks Foundation to support an ongoing program of improvements and activities.

Several elements of great urban parks include:

- Comfort: the space is clean, safe, and green;
- Access: the public can get to the space easily
- Sociable and diverse: the space has multiple uses (places for children, adults, sports, leisure, etc) and a diversity of people can use the space.

In regard to the second question(s), I am inspired by the work of groups like the Project for Public Spaces who have been widely recognized for their expertise in developing spaces around people, so that people use the spaces.

My views regarding the questions asked depend greatly on the type of project, for instance:

- If a project is an open space downtown (square, plaza, etc) rather than a park then there are different considerations and it is more appropriate that it is funded and maintained by public-private partnerships;

If a project is located around a transit center, then it become appropriate for CapMetro to partner in the development, funding and maintenance;

If a project is a park in a neighborhood downtown, then it may make more sense to develop, fund and maintain the project through neighborhood matching programs, adoption programs like "It's My Park Day", the Trail Foundation, etc.

13. In light of tight budgets, how can the City conserve, restore, and improve our parks and fulfill long-standing objectives like the Boardwalk Trail at Lady Bird Lake?

Much like the Great Streets program and other City programs, this problem is not unique and we will continue to lack the appropriate implementation funds if we do not embark on a comprehensive planning process and address the revenue side of our budget.

A few ways we can address funding for this particular project is through a combination of stimulus dollars, grants, federal funding opportunities, and Park usage fees.

Especially given the downturn, these programs are incredibly important to maintain because even more people will be utilizing our outdoor spaces because of adjustments they will make in their entertainment and leisure budgets.

The City can continue to work with private-sector partners like the Austin Parks Foundation and the Trail Foundation, as well as nearby property owners. For larger projects such as the Boardwalk Trail, we can also consider future bond items.

Crime

14. Do you think Art Acevedo has done a good job so far as Police Chief? What changes do you think should be made to the ways Austin deals with crime?

There is no question that Art Acevedo has been an active Police Chief. While it appears he has been doing a good job, there is always room for improvement.

I think Chief Acevedo has been doing a good job; I'm not a fan of involuntary blood withdrawals, but I appreciate the Chief's willingness to talk with the community on that and other issues. I think Austin and other cities should be thinking

I am pleased with policies like cite and release which, I believe, more appropriately address the criminal act while saving resources. On the other hand, I am concerned about the controversy regarding the mandatory blood draws.

carefully about ways to increase opportunities for education, housing, health care and employment, and reduce our current incarceration rates.

Also, especially in economic downturn, it will be even more important to involve our community in policing efforts so neighbors can effectively partner with APD to identify areas for improvement, increase cultural competency and prevent and report crime.

15. Many downtown businesses and visitors complain about panhandling. Should steps be taken to curb panhandling? Would you support adjusting current panhandling ordinances?

We need to properly enforce aggressive panhandling in a compassionate way.

Yes, steps should be taken to curb panhandling. I am open to adjusting the current panhandling ordinance, and I would also look for other approaches to address the problem, such as efforts to promote referrals to local social service agencies.

Quality-of-life-laws have done little to address both the symptoms and the root-cause of panhandling and homelessness, and other direct and indirect issues affecting our city related to homelessness: issues of mental health, drug

and alcohol addiction, the impact on tourism, and crime to our downtown and other areas. I am eager to work with many partners in the community, including many of our downtown businesses, the organizations producing the Urban Issues Forum, APD, the ARCH,

Caritas and Front Steps to tackle the best ways to address the issues of homelessness in Austin. By addressing issues of enforcement of existing laws and root-causes of homelessness (economic opportunities, job training, mental health services and affordable housing stock) we can make significant improvements in this area.

As one part of the solution, I believe my background in economic development and affordable housing issues would be a benefit to this conversation.

Urban Development

16. Mayor Wynn estimated that 80% of the taxes generated by downtown are used to subsidize city services and maintenance in other parts of the city. Should more of the property taxes generated downtown be used to help downtown?

How would you improve city services and maintenance services downtown?

17. If you agree that sprawl is not a desirable development pattern and that a strong core is necessary for a strong city, what are some ways you would discourage sprawl, but encourage urban density and good urban design?

Identifying priorities for improvement is best addressed in a comprehensive planning process. There are great examples of communities like Seattle which issued a bond election at the end of their process to appropriately fund

priorities throughout the City. I would support a similar strategy to address the needs of downtown improvements, as well as improvements throughout the City.

I agree that sprawl is not desirable and that a strong city core is important. And this issue can best be addressed by embarking on a long-range comprehensive plan with strong public participation and education on the importance

of this discussion. I believe one of the largest contributors of sprawl is lack of affordability within the Austin core. If we want to discourage sprawl it is essential to have affordable, mixed income and mixed housing

types near jobs and commercial areas. An offering of multi-modal transit options will be key.

There are needs for our property taxes all over the city. I'd support meeting our needs as best we can, whether they're downtown or not. I would support more public awareness about the revenues arising from our downtown tax base.

I would also support improvements in our infrastructure and services citywide, including downtown.

Adhere to strong standards in the Drinking Water Protection Zone;

Continue strategic acquisition of open space and conservation easements;

Refine development regulations to create more appealing places in the core;

As the fundamental first step of the comprehensive planning process, existing City plans including neighborhood plans, design plans and transportation plans should establish the foundation of the comprehensive plan. However, I would like to initiate

Focus development along transit corridors.

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.

One of the assets I would bring to this discussion is my ability to bring competing interests to the table to forge solutions on complex issues. I am confident that this issue could be best addressed in a long-range, comprehensive planning process with a heavy emphasis on public participation. The solution should be one that is reflective of city-wide goals but respectful of preserving neighborhood character and interests.

18. There have been problems implementing some neighborhood plans. What will you do to ensure consistent and fair implementation of the comprehensive plan? How would you engage the public in the development of a comprehensive plan?

In addition to the views I have just previously shared, I would like to stress the need for community oversight in every step of the process. We also need to be actively pursuing regional conversations and partnerships in the discussion of how we grow as a City.

We need active public involvement at all stages of the comprehensive plan, and I would work to ensure that plans for implementation are addressed during the planning process. I support some form of sector planning that could engage the public in meaningful planning efforts across the city.

I believe it is because of my local experience on the Planning Commission, my regional and big picture experience at the State Legislature and my leadership style in general that I earned the trust and endorsement of the Austin Neighborhoods Council who is a major stakeholder in this process.

19. Most social services in Austin are concentrated downtown. How are the social service providers, their clients, downtown businesses, our community and visitors affected by the location of these services downtown?

While many of the social services downtown are very high profile service providers (Salvation Army, ARCH, etc) the bulk of our social services are networked throughout the community to serve clients where they are located.

The providers downtown are within easy reach of their clients; the clients benefit from that proximity, but in some cases they may be negatively affected by their proximity to other, less healthy choices downtown. Downtown businesses, the community, and

Would you change the existing conditions?

Some examples of our social service network located outside downtown include our clinic system and affordable housing options.

visitors tend to be negatively impacted by the persistence of public safety issues in the blocks around E. 7th and Neches. I would seek solutions that would change the existing conditions, and in finding appropriate solutions I would turn first to those currently providing services.

While we absolutely need to increase safety downtown, it's most appropriate to provide social services in a location that is accessible to clients: throughout the City.

In regard to what changes are needed to the address the existing conditions, I support enforcing current ordinances and laws in a compassionate way while addressing the root causes of the need for social services. I encourage a community-wide dialogue to better address this issue.

As one part of the solution, I believe my background in economic development and affordable housing issues would be a benefit to this conversation.

20. Are you committed to the concept of nodal (also referred to as activity centers) growth, as an alternative to sprawl development, as found in the Envision Central Texas "Vision" and the CAMPO 2035 Draft Growth Concept?

Yes, with neighborhood involvement.

Yes, I support the concept of nodal growth as an alternative to sprawl development.

21. Do you think tearing down an existing 100-unit apartment complex and replacing it with a 200-unit complex increases or decreases overall housing costs? What other relevant effects does this type of redevelopment have?

In order to answer the first question, I would need more information. The outcome would depend on a number of factors including what rate of affordable housing was included in the new development, what area of the City the development is occurring, what

Redeveloping older complexes can result in a larger supply of housing, and in at least some cases the new development may be more environmentally responsible than the units it replaces (though generally there's also some environmental benefit in reusing

amenities are provided to the community, the design of the housing, mobility options, etc.

existing construction). Newer units tend to be more expensive than those they replace, and a project may tend to raise property values in the surrounding area. It would be hard to generalize about whether overall costs will be increased or decreased.

22. Do you think Austin is better now than it was 10 years ago? Do you

Some things in Austin are better than they were 10 years ago and others are not.

Austin was a great city ten years ago, it remains a great city today, and it will still be a great city ten years from now. I think we are making progress in the way we grow as a city, and I'm excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Many are right to point out our failures to protect Barton Springs and the Edwards Aquifer, address traffic and sprawl and issues of basic affordability in Austin.

Others are excited about the opportunities we now have as a bustling city – the 14th largest city in the nation – bringing economic and educational opportunities as well as diversity which has grown our vibrant arts and culture scene.

Just think about the ACL fest or the excitement over the possibility of being an energy leader – there are many who think “we should have done this years ago”.

So, it’s a mixed bag of exciting opportunities in a city we all love and the nostalgia for the way things were when we all first moved to Austin or grew up here in Austin.

I hope you and I agree that Austin will be better in 10 years than it is now – after all, I assume we’re all involved to make Austin a better place! There will undoubtedly be changes in Austin 10 years from now.

And, I am excited for the opportunity to be a part of how we engage Austinites about how we want to evolve over the next 10 years through our community participation in a long-range, comprehensive planning process.

As part of my campaign, I have been focusing on how we look to the future to plan for not just my vision, but the vision of our collective values.