

1) Given what will likely be typical silence from the State of Texas, and the host of other challenges Council must address, how important is it to you that Austin take meaningful action to combat the climate crisis next year? What do you propose the city should do?

Responding to the urgency of the climate crisis is one of my top three priorities at the City. And fortunately, the Council has laid a strong predicate through an array of policy directives over the last four years and I expect our forward motion to continue, particularly around **community and climate resilience**. As a dais leader on the environment, I have passed a number of significant environmental initiatives as an elected official. Here's a snapshot of banner legislation I led on:

- Series of updates to the Energy Resource, Generation & Climate Protection Plan (2015, 2017, 2019)
- Community Climate Plan (2017)
- Austin's Climate Protection Plan with Green New Deal tenets (2019), and
- Austin's Community Resilience Plan (2020). In May, the City Council unanimously approved a resolution I authored that creates a Community Resilience Plan. The idea for this broader resolution came after the Council approved a number of climate-related initiatives last year. It grew from my Climate Resilience/Green New Deal effort but when it landed at Council we were deep into our initial response to C-19. That timing – random that it was – points emphatically to our need to target how to make our whole community more resilient, especially those whose lives are vulnerable, economically disadvantaged, or disproportionately affected. My legislation established a chief resilience officer position in the Equity Office. **The pandemic has handed us a lesson in adaptability and resolve, and our city has responded really well.**

A report on **Austin's Climate Equity** will be presented to Council this fall. The authority for this report was my 2017 Community Climate Plan resolution.

I co-sponsored the two initiatives my colleague CM Alter authored in 2019, too: boosting Vehicle Electrification efforts and a resolution declaring a Climate Crisis; in 2020 I led on a resolution requesting Texas Gas Service provide a feasibility study regarding the use of **biomethane** and measures to **reduce natural gas leaks**.

I also championed action last year that resulted in the City of Austin joining a lawsuit against the **Permian Highway Pipeline**. Construction of this **Kinder Morgan** pipeline fouled Blanco County drinking water and polluted the Trinity aquifer when the drilling crew hit a void, sending 39,000 gallons of toxic drilling fluid into the aquifer. Multi-national corporations should not profit from their actions that befoul Texas' natural resources.

I supported the creation of a Council Water Utility Oversight Committee. I serve as that committee's vice chair. At our August meeting, I brought Richard Suttle, representing Tesla, and David Foster, of Clean Water Action, to testify about the impacts of the gigafactory in Travis County with a focus on anticipated manufacturing water use. The amount the factory needs is immense. Water is a finite and precious necessary resource, so any plans Tesla has as to its water use need to be understood, planned for, and made public.

2) The lack of federal leadership on COVID-19 has deepened many preexisting inequalities. As a city, what do we need to do to ensure we build back better?

In addition to passing my FY21 budget initiatives increasing investment in child care and healthcare, I am active on several COVID-19 response “cabinets.” My staff and I are most active on the Community Preparedness & Education cabinet that is staffed by city health and public information staff, and council offices.

My team and I take the lead on mask and education distribution for this cabinet, and to date we have distributed over 50,000 masks to the Latinx, Black, and refugee & immigrant communities that are disproportionately affected by this virus.

We couldn’t do this alone – we need the help of our community non-profits, like ATX Emergency Supply foundation, a group that has been extraordinarily generous and helpful for our COVID-19 response. The most important partner we have is our community. We are also working with church leaders, and union leaders, non-profit groups and social groups, to get mask supplies and information out into the hands of our families.

We can only do this together, working as a team.

The city’s COVID-19 response will continue to be informed by the recommendations from groups like the Latinx COVID-19 Health Equity Strike Force; and it’s notable the Community Preparedness & Education cabinet is doing a lot of that work. Not everything, and we can ALWAYS do better. I am committed to doing better and to doing what we can to improve our COVID-19 response.

3) If elected to the city council, what will you do to ensure that every Austin resident has access to safe, stable shelter?

Prior city councils have worked long and hard with community groups to address the complex issues around homelessness. This council has done more than ever to highlight the social justice aspects of this widespread issue by decriminalizing homelessness and ramping up our efforts to treat people experiencing homelessness as people to be seen and assisted, and not ignored.

I was a leader in bringing resources and important system supports to the homeless community after the camping ban was relaxed in June 2019. In preparation for the expected outcomes after the ban was decriminalized, I worked with my dais colleagues in October 2019 to bring necessary resources and align our systems to help in more effective and efficient ways. This year, the Council has approved the purchase of two hotels for housing, is actively searching for additional structures to buy, has focused more intently on providing Permanent Supportive Housing, and has activated a more organized system of support with ECHO and other community non-profit organizations whose civic mission is helping people living without shelter.

The Council approved historic levels of funding in the FY20 budget and is putting another \$60 million toward these programs in the FY21 budget. District 7 has been fortunate to have Permanent Supportive Housing developments approved that offer a full range of supportive services to help those who are exiting homelessness: a safe, clean place to live in a supportive community with resource-rich wrap-around services provided.

I was a co-sponsor on the Tenant Relocation initiative that is the basis for the City of Austin’s tenant advocacy program. The program contracts with Rio Grande Valley Legal Aid to provide counseling and pro bono legal assistance to renters who have disputes with landlords. The legal supports help even out the inequitable balance of power that often exists in these kinds of situations.

The City has a housing voucher program to assist with lease payments, but state law prohibits cities from requiring landlords to accept housing vouchers. The City's successes have been the result of persuasion and moral commitment, but if the State were in favor of housing vouchers and required them to be accepted, then a whole lot more people would find a place to live with a lot less difficulty. Addressing the complexities of the individuals who are without a home is a public policy area with a lot of need that the City Council continues diligently and deliberatively working to address, an area where the City of Austin cannot do it all alone: significant financial and programmatic support from the State of Texas and the federal government is desperately needed. Our current situation is a direct result of the state and federal government changing policy on caring and housing for people. Without those necessary supportive services, they have ended up on the streets. Our country needs to do better.

4) Recent protests have underscored just how many people don't feel safe when contacting the authorities. What concrete steps does council need to take to ensure all Austinites are safe in our city? On what timeline?

My priority is to get APD back to the basics of its mission: public safety. The timeline: as soon as is possible, recognizing the complexities of – for example – disconnecting the Forensic Science lab from APD to become a wholly independent operation. The City of Houston made its forensics lab independent of HPD in 2012, and the man who was tapped by former Mayor Parker to lead this reformation now lives in Austin. My colleagues and I are in active discussions with him over what worked and what didn't, how Austin is similar or dissimilar to Houston, as part of the ongoing work happening to reimagining a leaner and more community-oriented police department. Doing this properly will take time and I'm committed to taking the time to do it right.

One of the more tangible changes I proposed was a **diversion of mental health emergency calls to trained professionals through new investments in EMS**, on gaining \$6.5 million to house the homeless, and much **more robust funding for victims services**. We need to stop asking our police officers to handle social service needs, and most importantly, we need to hold them accountable and responsible for improving community relationships.

More recently, I have discussed the urgency surrounding rewriting cadet training curriculum. We have to act in a strong unambiguous fashion as to the ethic of our direction to counteract the flood of opportunistic rhetoric coming from the Governor, Lt Gov, and the Texas Republican party. There's no reason for this issue to be divisive: we can have police and they can ensure our safety, and not make us feel unsafe. We have to move on the academy soon, and we have to do it right.

Austin has been in the midst of significant dislocation and disruption for most of this year. Enduring a pandemic is difficult enough without adding in civic unrest and turmoil. My heart broke watching the actions of the police on May 30 and 31. People throughout our community were desperately unhappy and confused and rightfully angry at the tragic turn of events here.

In the resultant protests in the weeks that followed, this community spoke, and we listened. I am optimistic about this reimagining conversation and the audit of APD that's underway, and I am committed to more changes as we proceed.

So now, we need folks to stay engaged as we move into a public review of many functions at APD over the coming weeks and months to find opportunities for more efficiency and a more equitable vision of community safety.