



2014 – Austin Mayoral and City Council “Get to Know Your Candidate” Town Hall City Council District 1 Info Sheet

The following questions were e-mailed to all candidates invited to attend the town hall. Below are those responses received as written by the candidate with occasional minor edits to conserve space on this sheet. Those candidates scheduled to attend have been highlighted in **red**. Key: **Bio Questions** | **Ice Breaker Questions** | **Issue Questions**

Name	Michael Cargill	Ora Houston	Valerie Menard
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Campaign Web-site	www.cargillfortexas.com	www.oraatx.com	www.valforaustin.com
Occupation / Main Source of Income	Small Business Owner	Retired	Writer/editor
Previous Occupations	Small Business Owner	Program Manager	Magazine editor
Education	2 Years College	Huston-Tillotson University	BA-English, BJ-Journalism
How long have you lived in Austin (Years)?	15	60	32
How long have you lived in Texas (Years)?	18	60	52
If not a native Austinite, what brought you to move to Austin?	Military Assignment	Father worked at Samuel Huston College	UT
Though a non-partisan race, generally, what political party do you associate with or are registered to vote as?	Republican	Democratic	Democratic
Previous public offices sought and/or held and when:	Sought County Constable	Austin Independent School District - 1982	NA
What civic organizations do you belong to?	N/A	President, Myra McDaniel Chapter, Union of Black Episcopalians, Life member of the NAACP, Austin Alumni Chapter - Huston-Tillotson University	Center for Mexican American Cultural Arts
Have you ever been convicted of a felony?	No	No	No
Have you ever had any civil judgments against you?	No	No	No
Do you belong to your neighborhood or homeowner’s association?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have you participated in neighborhood planning?	Yes	Yes	No

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If yes, how have you participated?	I attend the meetings so I am informed and can give my input. Sought	I was vice-chair of the Upper Boggy Creek planning team.	
What is your favorite book?	Interview with a Vampire	The Heart of Whiteness by Robert Jensen	Pride and Prejudice
What is your favorite movie or television series?	Will & Grace	NCIS	The Big Bang Theory
What is your favorite hobby(ies)?	Chess	Bird-watching and gardening	Watching The Big Bang Theory.
What is your favorite thing to do in Austin?	Dog park with my dogs	The quietness of my house	Discovering new restaurants.
Why are you running for office?	<p>Austin is continually growing and we must end the indecisiveness of the City Council. We must work with the community and experts to develop a comprehensive traffic plan that includes rerouting commercial trucks, reversible lanes, and encouraging alternative work schedules.</p> <p>The City Council should engage county and state government, and local businesses in its efforts to encourage working from home, telecommuting, carpooling, the use of public transportation and staggering work hours to drastically reduce congestion on Austin's roadways without limiting the public's access to services.</p> <p>Restructuring bus routes and bus stops could improve the public's access to transportation for commuting to work and at the same time relieve traffic congestion.</p>	<p>All of my adult life I have been a public servant. My desire to represent the people of District #1 is an extension of who I have been and who I will continue to be. Over the years I have had an opportunity to watch many changes in our city, some good, some not so good, and some with unintended consequences which have had a negative impact on many people. The change this November to geographical representation on the City Council (10-1) will provide an opportunity for different voices to contribute to the vision, history, and experience of the city and explore creative solutions to the complex issues Austin faces.</p>	<p>I'm inspired by the spirit of single-member districts that embraces new leadership by casting a wider net and opening the process by lowering the cost of political campaigns. District 1 has long been ignored by City Hall and anticipate the chance to represent my neighbors.</p>
What are your top three priorities for Austin?	<p>Traffic & Public Transportation</p> <p>Preserving Life through Safe Neighborhoods & Communities</p> <p>Environment & Water</p>	<p>Workforce housing throughout Austin, escalating property taxes, and transportation.</p>	<p>1) Reducing the property tax burden on homeowners by adopting a homestead exemption. 2) Reducing traffic congestion. 3) Increase access to city services in District 1</p>
Traffic continues to be an increasing problem for many Austinites as they commute to and from work. Is this a top priority for you?	Yes	Yes	Yes

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If so, what is your plan to help alleviate some of the traffic problems? If not, why?	<p>The City Council should engage county and state government, and local businesses in its efforts to encourage working from home, telecommuting, carpooling, the use of public transportation and staggering work hours to drastically reduce congestion on Austin's roadways without limiting the public's access to services.</p> <p>Restructuring bus routes and bus stops could improve the public's access to transportation for commuting to work and at the same time relieve traffic congestion.</p> <p>Let's roll, Austin!</p>	<p>The focus must be shifted to getting people into the Central Business District rather than moving through the district. The growth concept map shows that most of the growth will be east and northeast, and if we could encourage people to leave their cars at home or at a park and ride, and utilize public transportation, traffic congestion will be mitigated.</p>	<p>I plan to begin by working with Capital Metro to increase bus service and routes into District 1. I will work to bring economic development to District 1 that is compatible with neighborhoods so folks can stay in their neighborhoods to access basic services rather than having to travel across town, e.g. grocery shopping, restaurants, movies, etc., as well as the much needed employment opportunities. Efforts to rewrite the land development code as part of CodeNext will be integral. I will also ask to serve on the Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee to begin to encourage TxDot to open toll roads to reduce congestion, e.g. toll-free Fridays.</p>
What do you see as the greatest untapped opportunity for economic development in Austin?	<p>With the State Capitol located in District 1, and my successful history of lobbying the State Legislature, I'm confident that I can bring the resources needed to elevate District 1 by bringing more funds to the City of Austin. We have a moral obligation to give children and adults the tools they need to succeed in today's complex world.</p>	<p>Manufacturing jobs in District #1.</p>	<p>District 1. It's a large district, 45 square miles, with more open acreage than any other district. We have only two grocery stores to serve this entire area and a limited number of restaurants and other retail and service businesses to serve the residents.</p>
Do you think Austin affords enough legal rights and protections to its gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender residents?	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>
Why or why not?	<p>Yes but they State can do a lot better. We can use City Council as a bully pull pit to the State</p>	<p>This is a question that you must answer for me. I think that the City of Austin has made strides: I remember the public service announcements with LGBTQ officers from the Austin Police Department sharing their stories; and that the City passed domestic partner benefits seven or eight years ago. However, as I am not a member of the LGBTQ community, I would need to base my assessment off of conversations with members of the community.</p>	<p>While Austin prides itself on its progressiveness, I know that as a person of color, that's not always true and I'm guessing that the same is true for the LGBT community. I look forward to hearing more about the issues of concern among LGBT residents.</p>
Name some infill projects that are vital to the health and success of your district. What are the pluses and minuses of the development of these projects?	<p>I don't have any issues with infill projects as long as they do not create gentrification.</p>	<p>The major health and safety concern for District #1 is the landfill off of 290. If you are aware of infill projects in the District, I would like to have a conversation about those.</p>	<p>I recently heard that there are plans to build another golf course in District 1, we already have one, . If so, I'm not a fan. Golf courses are big water guzzlers and cause chemical runoff into the water supply. On the plus side, Colony Park represents how good planning and research into federal funding for sustainable communities can help. We also have the cultural district along East 11th and more coming for MLK, Coronado Hills, and other parts of District 1.</p>
Are the needs of downtown Austin and its outlying communities being balanced effectively?	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>

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Why or why not?	The urban rail project that is being forced on us, is really designed to help keep congestion from forming around the old Highland Mall and from there to downtown. There is no current problem there that exists which will be solved by this light rail project. They are not addressing current areas with high congestion so, this tells me they are going to use up all of our money to try and prevent a speculative problem and leave the rest of us on our own with no traffic relief.	The focus for the past 20 years has been on the expansion of the Central Business District into historic East Austin. With the development of the medical school district, innovation zone district, entertainment district, Waller Creek district; and with all of the city, county and state governments in the Central Business District, the core of Austin has received most of the attention. The outlying neighborhoods outside of the Central Business District have received little attention, and it is time to recalibrate the priorities.	City planning has focused on central Austin, since 1928 when communities of color were pushed to the east side of town. Now that downtown has extended into East Austin, those neighborhoods have been gentrified forcing these communities out of generational homes due to rising property taxes, and further east. This continued focus on the city's central core continues to ignore outlying communities, exacerbating issues like lack of city services, growing economic disparity, traffic congestion, etc.
Will you vote for or against subsidies to large employers?	Against	Against	For
Will you require a total cost-benefit analysis before voting on any subsidies or loans to any businesses?	Yes	Yes	Yes
What are the strengths and weaknesses of Austin's new city district system?	We shall see once the new district leadership is in place.	The 10-1 city district system allows every resident of Austin to be educated and encouraged to participate in the decisions that are made regarding the quality of their lives. The weakness is that we have a window of opportunity to pivot to an inclusive form of government, or we will slip back into the way it has always been because that is what we have known, and that is what feels comfortable. We need to make that shift and take advantage of this window of opportunity, so that every voice in Austin will be represented.	The chief strength is that Austin will have true representative government for the first time. The greatest weakness will be the threat of gridlock. We will have to work together to continue to move Austin forward.
Would you entertain any further changes to the system?	Yes	No	No
Do you believe that affordable housing should be distributed throughout the city?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you support the energy and water conservation policies of the City of Austin utilities?	No	No	Yes