

North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods (NACN) Agenda of issues Spring 2011

1. Briefly state what your two top priorities will be if you are elected?

Building a more family-friendly affordable community is a major aim of my candidacy. One goal is investing in existing residents by “completing communities” across the city so people at all stages of life can have the basic services they need close to home whether it be safety, employment, transportation choices, shopping, parks and open spaces, or quality child care and public schools. The second is making Austin an affordable community by restoring community priorities at City Hall instead of making decisions to spend \$4 million per year for the next 10 years for the Formula One racetrack or to build a \$2.3 billion biomass plant. Changing the direction at City Hall will require greater financial discipline, and Council members who respect and listen to the public.

2. What specific initiative or initiatives would you champion for our neighborhoods that would reduce opportunities for crime?

I believe the City should take a greater role in implementing the “Broken Windows” community policing approach to crime deterrence. That means the City should take a leading role in bringing together businesses, residents, and resources of multiple city departments to make NACN's area closed to criminal activity. Some strategies would include analyzing crime hotspots and the characters involved and denying criminals the opportunity to conduct crime in the area. This approach primarily needs a greater coordination between the community and multiple city departments beyond just public safety.

3. What specific initiatives would you recommend or endorse to address traffic congestion in our neighborhoods?

The NACN covers a large area with many different sizes of streets. In general I believe it's time for a new approach to transportation planning in Austin. Unfunded multimillion-dollar wish lists aren't going to relieve congestion. We need to get moving by reprioritizing funding to better maintain existing roads and to focus on faster, less expensive projects that deliver more immediate congestion relief. Just a few of the approaches that work include restriping to expand the number of lanes, adding turn lanes, and adjusting speeds and signage. Our neighborhoods also need sidewalks and safe routes to schools and walkable nearby services to help our seniors maintain their independence.

4. What specific initiatives would you recommend or endorse to bring the infrastructure of our neighborhoods up to the high quality and standards expected by Austin citizens.

The inequitable distribution of city resources and the need to invest in our existing neighborhoods has been a major part of my campaign. I believe in “completing communities” across the city: making sure that residents have the basic services they need close to home and that we finish or undertake those projects (sidewalks, lighting, parks, etc.) which make an area more livable, safer, and healthier for all residents. To do this, the City must conduct a community-based assessment of infrastructure and community needs, and this idea is being proposed as part of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan process. Such a process would allow areas such as NACN to track its needs and to use that information to advocate during funding opportunities such as the yearly budget and proposed Comprehensive Bond being considered for November of 2012. I believe such a shift in assessment practice could make a significant difference.

5. Panhandling is a major problem in our neighborhoods. What solutions have worked in other cities, and what would you propose for Austin?

Panhandling is a very difficult city-wide problem that has been made worse because of our weak economy. Examples of other community’s successful strategies and approaches to panhandling can be found at The Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (www.popcenter.org/problems/panhandling), and some of these might be appropriate for consideration here in Austin. We should look into a whole community approach toward panhandling, including strategies for discouraging aggressive panhandling, increasing programs to help panhandlers address their basic needs, and perhaps considering a voucher program to substitute for cash.