



Gregorio Casar (District 4 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE)

1. HOW WOULD YOU WORK ON THE NEED FOR MORE AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, INTEGRATED HOUSING FOR LOW INCOME PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

The City needs to continue to invest in the development of affordable housing that targets deep levels of affordability, through bond funding, utilizing city-owned land and resources, and partnerships with non-profit housing providers. While we've made significant strides in providing permanent supportive housing, the City should also look for opportunities to increase accessible housing options, recent data shows that we are still far behind in developing sustainable strategies for enough permanent supportive and affordable housing for folks from very low to moderate incomes. I'm supportive of strategies that will make sure more landlords accept section 8 vouchers. I will also support continued funding for programs that help low-income elderly and disabled homeowners to make necessary improvements on their homes to help these individuals keep their homes.

2. ACCESSIBLE AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IS A CRITICAL NEED FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY. HOW WOULD YOU ADDRESS THIS NEED? (i.e. buses, light rail, taxis, Uber/Lyft)

There is no easy solution for the transportation problems that plague Austin. We must focus on expanding transportation options and improving mobility for all of Austin's residents. This will require using all the tools in our toolbox from prioritizing local bus services—including expansions of existing routes and minimizing transfers—to fighting for safe sidewalks and crosswalks in areas that have been traditionally isolated and neglected.

With the respect to the specific needs of the disability community, the City needs to actively engage with CapMetro to ensure we continue to invest in making transit stops more accessible and that the sidewalk routes to those stops are safe and free of obstructions. I'll be a voice for ensuring that private companies that operate as for-hire transportation—from Uber & Lyft to our taxi companies to limousine companies—have sufficient accessible vehicles available in their fleets.



3. HOW WOULD YOU EXPAND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE GREATER AUSTIN AREA?

Prior to running for City Council, I worked for the Workers Defense Project, where I championed policies to create job opportunities for low-income people, immigrants, veterans, and those with traditional barriers to employment. I helped lead changes to the City's economic development policies to create jobs that pay workers fair wages and invest in training opportunities. I'll use my experience in labor advocacy to champion policies that will work with major employers to develop programs that help create jobs opportunities for people with disabilities who may be unemployed or underemployed. I believe it is important that the City invest in educational opportunities at all stages of life. The ACC Highland development is an excellent opportunity for pairing accessible, affordable housing with workforce development and adult education with a pipeline toward good employment.

Furthermore, as a major employer, the City must lead by example with our own policies—working to increase recruiting and training efforts for people with disabilities and setting clear policy direction for the City Manager to improve accommodation practices.

4. HOW WOULD YOU PROMOTE THE NEED FOR PHYSICAL AND PROGRAM ACCESS TO SIDEWALKS, PRIVATE BUSINESSES AND CITY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

Imagine Austin, our comprehensive plan, makes clear that the community envisions an Austin that is affordable and accessible to all residents. The City's building code, capital improvement investments, and land development code represent the proactive opportunities for the City to ensure that our city form meets this goal. As the City updates its land development code through CodeNEXT, I believe it is important that we consider improvements that can benefit accessibility. I will also work closely with advocacy groups, the city's boards, and city management to identify areas where we can improve accessibility within our services.

A pedestrian-friendly network of sidewalks and crosswalks is the bedrock of success for a more accessible and mobile future. Regardless of preferred transportation method, sidewalks are a common need of all individuals. Any successful future in alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles will require that our investment strategies reflect the importance of sidewalks.



5. WILL YOU PROMOTE THE APPOINTMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO CITY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND TASK FORCES?

Absolutely. I believe it is important that our boards and commissions reflect the diversity of our community. Additionally, I will request that the boards and commissioners that I do appoint work closely with advocacy groups that work on behalf of people with disabilities and seek out their input when specific concerns arise. Several strong leaders for my campaign are simultaneously great advocates within the disability community, plus they are District 4 residents, and I couldn't think of better candidates for Boards & Commissions.

6. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES VIEW DISABILITY RIGHTS AS CIVIL RIGHTS. WHAT WILL BE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

Ensuring access to public accommodations, transportation, and community needs is a civil right that needs enhanced and protected. As discussed previously, I believe improving mobility through transportation choices and sidewalks will be critical to ensuring Austin is an accessible community. Additionally, I will continue my advocacy for workforce development and training to ensure our community is increasing job opportunities for people with disabilities. And, I will promote the development of affordable housing for people at varying levels of income, ensure that we accelerate our production of units at deep levels of affordability that can separate out services.

7. HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF THE CITY'S ADA COORDINATOR AND THE MAYORS COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES?

As with any board or commission, I believe the City Manager (through his staff members) has the responsibility to provide the necessary resources and support the board or commission has the ability to meet its council-delegated obligations. I expect the City Manager to be responsive to commissioners' requests and help the board communicate with Council should additional direction or resources be needed to meet a certain task.

I will look to the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities to help guide council policy to make the City and its services more accessible. I look forward to working with community leaders, and with ADAPT in particular, to help define a work plan that we can achieve throughout the next four years.



8. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES OF ALL AGES DO NOT WANT TO LIVE IN NURSING FACILITIES. WHAT STEPS CAN AUSTIN TAKE TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY LIVING?

I believe it is important that Council expands housing options for individuals, rather than limiting them. There isn't one type of housing that can work for all individuals. Some require on-site services, others may need only occasional services, and still others may need no living assistance at all. Council's housing strategy should reflect this diversity, while we are targeting the housing gaps within each targeted demographic.

My professional background is in community organization and community support. I have worked closely with workers who have formed worker-cooperatives and other cooperative ventures that can empower individuals to work together for the benefit of all members. I believe smaller-scaled group living is an option that people who need minimal assistance might want to explore. I'd like to work with community leaders further to fully develop the options that are needed and desired.