



Ora Houston (District 1 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE)

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

I don't use the term "affordable," because there are different income ranges used when people talk about "affordability." The city's S.M.A.R.T. Housing (Safe, Mixed-Income, Accessible, Reasonably priced, Transit-Oriented) defines "affordability" at 80% median family income. The dollar amount of 80% varies if you are talking about individual districts, the City of Austin or the standard metropolitan statistical area.

The median family income in District #1 is \$42,000. That includes public employees, people with disabilities, our seniors, and people on fixed incomes. I support partnering with other jurisdictions to use public land, throughout the city, to provide homeownership and rental opportunities for people with disabilities. In addition, there must be opportunities for people to age in place in their community and not require relocation. Housing should also allow for service animals and the companionship of pets. I will work with disability advocacy groups to apply for grants, educate the Austin Apartment Association regarding the issues, and identify small businesses who are willing to retrofit housing.

In multi-family developments, the median family income - 60% and below, should be established and a number of units should be built using universal design standards, to make the units accessible for people with differing abilities.

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)

More people with differing levels of abilities are living in our community, however, transportation continues to be a major barrier to training, productive employment, health care, recreation, and leisure activities. I support a review of the current bus routes by the members of your organization to make recommendations to the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, and CapMetro regarding such issues as wait times, most used routes, new routes that are needed, and the service that was called Special Transit. All taxi companies are required to have vehicles that are accessible. At



this point in time the alternative transportation companies do not have such a requirement. Any suggestions would be appreciated to encourage them to be inclusive.

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

I initially need to meet with advocacy groups, the Committee, and the Coordinator regarding what is currently being done in the employment arena, before I can discuss how to expand employment opportunities. The unemployment and underemployment rates are in the double digits in District #1. I am willing to consider incentives for the creation of economic development zones in the district, to help people become self-sufficient. People with disabilities, people re-entering our community from the criminal justice system, and returning veterans will be included in the “hiring” metrics.

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

Disability Advocacy Groups, the Texas Civil Rights Project, the ADA Coordinator, and the Mayor’s Committee will be invited to revisit the City’s Transition Plan and make recommendations regarding sidewalks, especially those in older areas and those required for connectivity from home, work, and transit options.

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

Yes, I commit with your assistance to appoint people with disabilities to boards, commissions, and taskforces. My first preference is for the person to live in the district, and for the individual’s interests, skills, and life experiences to match the mission and purpose of the entities.

6. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES VIEW DISABILITY RIGHTS AS CIVIL RIGHTS.



WHAT WILL BE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

The question is “what are the top five priorities from the members of ADAT and other advocacy groups for people with disabilities.”

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

I must have information regarding the role of the ADA Coordinator and the Mayor’s Committee and their relationship to the disability/elderly community. What has been accomplished? What is in the pipeline?

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

As we know, state policy guides the transition from facility based services to community living options. There are limited federal programs, medicaid waivers, designed to accomplish these transitions. I am willing to support efforts to work with the State Legislature to address this issue.