



Mike Martinez (Mayoral CANDIDATE)

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

In many ways, Austin is a victim of its own success. We are seeing the effects of Austin's popularity with the rising costs of housing and services. The recent affordable housing bonds are one way to address the need, but market forces are also part of the equation. During my time on the Council, I have supported increased density on our transit corridors and in the urban core as a way to create affordable and accessible units and help meet increased demand.

I also helped to create the existing PUD ordinance which provides a structure for entitlements in return for community benefits, which often includes provision of affordable housing. When we consider affordable housing projects, accessibility is something I've fought to prioritize. I will continue to ensure that we're making forward progress in increasing affordable housing stock that is accessible. I was proud to support the Visitability ordinance which will have a significant impact on improving accessibility over time as new housing stock comes on the market.

An important component to affordability is ensuring that people aren't priced out of their homes. I've supported creating a Homestead Preservation District which will allow residents to stay in their homes and neighborhoods that might have otherwise been pushed out of the City as a result of rising property taxes. I also cosponsored an item that led the Council to increase the homestead exemption for seniors and the disabled from \$51,000 to \$70,000 which was the first increase since 1986. We should reevaluate this policy annually to ensure that we're increasing the exemption to keep pace with the rising cost of living in Austin.

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)

As Chair of the Capital Metro Board of Directors, I helped lead our transit agency out of near financial disaster into a place of fiscal security while expanding services such as Bus Rapid Transit and the Red Line, and the agency has earned national recognition for



unparalleled transparency. By providing quality and reliable public transportation, we're able to give our residents alternative options that encourage reduction of single occupancy vehicles on our roads and ensure that the needs of dependent riders and people with disabilities continue to be a priority for our transit agency. Capital Metro has increased the investment in free and heavily discounted bus passes to those most in need, and we should continue to expand this program to meet the needs of our community. We must continue to view transportation as an integrated system and approach future initiatives in a way that ensures connectivity and access for everyone.

We are currently allowing TNCs such as Uber and Lyft to operate under a temporary ordinance with the requirement to contribute a portion of each ride into a fund that pays drivers to take disabled passengers, which ensures that these services are available to everyone. This agreement was supported by ADAPT given that it will increase transportation options for people with disabilities. In the near future we will consider a permanent ordinance, and I will fight to include the highest accessibility standards possible. As we work on renewal of taxi franchises, I will also ensure that they are held accountable for providing adequate accessible vehicles to meet the needs of our community.

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

Keeping things affordable in Austin is not just about keeping things cheap. It's also about helping folks earn higher wages and gain employment that provides opportunities for upward mobility. We should first look at our hiring practices at the City of Austin to identify any options we aren't already using to provide employment opportunities within the City for people with disabilities.

I led an 18-month process that engaged a wide array of key stakeholders to establish strict base standards that all future economic incentive agreements would have to meet in order to even be considered by the Austin City Council. These included providing construction workers with OSHA 10 safety training, workers compensation insurance, and a living wage or prevailing wage for every worker (whichever is highest). We also require companies to provide permanent employees a living wage, health insurance and domestic partner benefits. We expanded further considerations to reward companies that provide additional community benefits such as providing workforce development, a commitment to hire locally, and implementation of programs to employ and train economically disadvantaged workers which includes people with disabilities. I would be



open to amending this policy to strengthen requirements or incentives to provide opportunities for people with disabilities.

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

Sidewalks are a critical and essential component of accessibility, and we should ensure the continual investment in improving sidewalks citywide. We're in the process of installing ADA accessible ramps at all intersections, but should work with community members and groups including ADAPT to identify critical locations which should be prioritized. We identified \$800 million in needs as part of our sidewalk master plan, and we're currently investing about \$4.3 million a year. I'm very supportive of including funding for sidewalks as part of any transportation bond proposal moving forward as well as leveraging any state or federal funds that come available for these types of improvements.

The City currently works in conjunction with Cap Metro to ensure that their bus stops are ADA compliant and that City sidewalk improvements are coordinated to provide true connectivity. Many of our local businesses are ADA accessible, but there are still some stores and restaurants that have not met that requirement. We should work to set up a low-interest loan program for businesses that want to invest in ADA retrofits.

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

Absolutely. People with disabilities are a core part of the fabric of Austin and should have a voice in the decisions we make at City Hall. With the new Council, I hope to see a dramatic increase of public participation in our process. Every Austinite will have true representation under our new system. Transportation, affordable housing, utility rates, and our Land Development Code are key issues for people with disabilities, as they are for many across our City, and there would be great value in ensuring that people with disabilities have a seat at the table as part of many of our boards and commissions that address these issues and make policy recommendations to Council.

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



Access should be viewed as a civil right, and accessibility is a basic issue of equity which I have fought for my entire time on Council. We have opportunities as we consider infrastructure, policy related to land development, capital improvement projects, and social service investments to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in our community. I'll continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that we're taking a comprehensive and thoughtful approach in ensuring that the rights of the disabled are protected.

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

The challenges facing our community in regards to accessibility are complex, and the opportunities to improve quality of life for people with disabilities are great if given the necessary attention and resources. The City's ADA Coordinator and the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities both have the potential to play a critical role as we work to improve conditions in Austin for people with disabilities. Council has a responsibility to coordinate with the Committee and the Coordinator and give their input the weight it deserves. By forming a strong collaboration, we can move forward with innovative solutions together.

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

People with disabilities should have every opportunity to stay in their homes or with family if they decide that is the best option for them. Council can play a role in helping to make that possible in several ways. The Visitability ordinance that I strongly supported will make staying home a more feasible option for many as our new housing stock increases. Accessory dwelling units would provide a level of affordability that could also make independent living a more viable option for people with disabilities that have lower incomes. As a part of CodeNEXT, we should seek opportunities to address communal living for the disabled to ensure the highest health and safety standards as well as ensuring that our building Codes require high accessibility standards for all improvements and new development. I also support significantly increasing the City's investment in social service contracts, which help provide critical services through organizations such as Meals on Wheels and More that can help make it possible for people to continue living at home.