



Leslie Pool (District 7 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE)

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

Housing is a basic human need, and every person deserves to live in a place that is safe and affordable. I am an advocate – through my appointment to the 2012 City of Austin Bond Task Force and my work to pass affordable housing bonds – for a comprehensive plan for needed housing units throughout the City and for an expansion of accommodations in new building for visitability (location of light switches, hallway and doorway widths, etc.). Additionally, the City should work with the affordable housing advocates and organizations to tap into all available programs to increase and integrate access and availability of housing to low income people in all areas of town, and be thoughtful and deliberate in siting transit stops and housing in easy distance of each other, and ensuring pathways between are safe and transverable.

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)

Being able to move from home to work, shop, recreate – to live in and enjoy our community – is key to livability. And being able to afford to ride also matters. Austin’s transit systems and transportation options should recognize the varying abilities of all residents, including and especially people with disabilities, as well as their reliance on the system and ability to pay. For the new enterprise groups in town – Uber & Lyft – I support specific regulations requiring insurance, non-discriminatory rider pickup policies, and especially a ban on price gouging. Buses and light rail do not discriminate against riders, and have installed accommodations for people with disabilities who may be riding in a chair. Intercoms and stop alert buttons within reach assist people who may have limited eyesight. As our population ages, it’s not a matter of if but rather when each of us will at some time require accommodations.

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

As I understand programs on the ground, a lot is lacking. There are some programs at some state or municipal agencies, but connections among them are not robust, and are many times



missing entirely. I would work with all groups to forward a broad agenda of education targeting employers and prospective employees alike to increase hiring and workforce participation. This then naturally increases participation in our local economy and personal independence.

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

In forums and meetings, I have reiterated the need for connectivity between housing and transit stops, between businesses and commercial areas, etc., throughout the city. District 7 has a patchwork of sidewalks in various areas. This is primarily because the city did not require developers to install sidewalks as a standard part of the development, but rather left it optional. In recent years, with federal funds attached to road projects, the city has been laying new sidewalks, repairing broken ones, and generally paying attention to the condition of these necessary pathways. The Austin Mayor's Committee is reviewing sidewalk conditions with the Public Works Department and I am very interested in those findings. There is still a lot to do and a long way to go to achieve a complete, smooth and safe network of sidewalks. To address this, I would first review the inventory of sidewalks (assuming one is complete) and then direct staff to come up with the cost and timeline for addressing its gaps. Like painting the Brooklyn Bridge, this job will never be complete, but with the right intentions and unwavering focus, the City can make a lot of progress and help a lot of people.

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

Yes, I will. People with disabilities and those who work in the disability community bring valuable perspectives to discussions of livability generally and of disability rights and requirements specifically. The City of Austin as an employer has a good record of supporting these perspectives and addressing accommodations and needs. There is always more to do, and I willingly would promote appointing people with disabilities to city boards, commissions, and task forces.

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

First, I also view disability rights as civil rights. We all have the right to lead productive lives in our communities. To the extent a person's ability to participate in our community is hindered, then it is incumbent upon the City, in its role to ensure the health and safety of all residents and visitors, to ensure that accommodations and adjustments are made where necessary, desired, or requested. This



includes transit options, access to and from, safe & smooth walkways; access to services; good jobs and health care; and so forth. I place a high priority on individual civil rights, across the spectrum.

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

I see both entities as important elements of the City's goal to ensure the health and safety of all Austin residents and visitors. Just as the City benefits from its multicultural diversity, so do we benefit from the talents and insights of the disability community. The ADA coordinator ensures that all City facilities are accessible and provides needed assistance or services where accommodations are needed. The Mayor's Committee does great work as a body with expertise in disability issues – the full, wide array – and serves to listen to the community, vet issues and ideas for the Council, and to push the envelope in areas where new ideas or changes emerge. Additionally, as the 2013 Report describes, the Mayor's Committee convenes meetings, fosters mentoring, and engages the Austin community at large to further its goals of inclusiveness and full participation, and encourages all members of the disability community to achieve their maximum personal independence.

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

In collaboration with affordable housing advocates, specifically groups like Housing Works and Foundation Communities, I would advocate for increased housing options that accommodate people with disabilities. This is a critical area needing to be addressed; there is much work to do. Affordable housing in Austin is lacking throughout the city, and I have and will continue to support bond issuances and creative thinking to address the shortage.