

**STATE of Our CITY     April 13, 2015**

**We're going to talk about "change" tonight, because Austin is ready for change. We've voted for change. But if you want to see change -- look around. 1,200 of us in an accessible, free, community-gathering place. This is what change in government feels like!**

**Thank you Christopher Michael for poetry that challenges us to build bridges. Thank you Max Frost for starting this evening with live music, after all we're in Austin, Texas. Thank you, Valentina Tovar, for a beautiful speech. Your generation's passion is a powerful example to mine. Finally, thank you Dr. Cruz for joining other central Texas superintendents and school boards in educating our children, perhaps the single most important thing we do to insure economic opportunity and preserve our quality of life. And thank you for letting us borrow such a fabulous facility.**

**This is the first State of Our City address since your new 10-ONE council took office. This week marks 100 days in office for your new council, and one of the promises of 10-ONE was a more responsive and representative government, and one that is open and accessible to everyone in our city. So in that spirit, we're live streaming this on the city website, and our friends at ATxN Channel 6 are also broadcasting live. Use #StateofATX for your tweets and posts, unless you're driving.**

## **Change in Government**

**This speech is about believing in and supporting change. If we want to preserve what we love about Austin, we have to change how we do things. We don't get different results without change. But change doesn't come easily, and I need your help.**

**Our change began with the adoption of the new 10-ONE Council system.**

## **Structure.**

**And now, just over 100 days into this grand change, your new council has accomplished major things. First, we unanimously passed sweeping changes to how resolutions and ordinances make their way through the council. This makes the process more thoughtful and improves public engagement.**

**During these past few years, I was troubled watching council going late -- even 3 am. Some of you have heard this, but my wife, Diane, and I have three daughters, and we always told them "nothing good happens after midnight," and that applies to council meetings, too.**

**So we're taking steps not to go past midnight, and we have made other important changes.**

**Your council formed 10 committees. Each council member chairs a committee. Here's where proposals go that need more time for consideration and public debate.**

**Some said “that our new system would devolve into ward politics.” But this isn’t happening. Council members fiercely advocate for their districts, as they should, but with committees, each member has to focus on issues that impact all of Austin. They have to lead with the whole city in mind — and that’s what they’re doing.**

**This Council recognizes that there are special district or neighborhood interests that must be protected, but also that decisions made anywhere in this city have city-wide implications on our economy, our culture and values, and our general quality of life.**

**For the new system to work, it takes transparency and accountability. The Council created a Community Engagement Task Force, led by Council Member Pool, to find best practices for involving the public and hearing your ideas.**

**When the new committee system was laid out in January, in addition to a full Council Chamber, thousands of Austinites participated on their phones. Other folks participated by email and Twitter. All these voices joined with those in the council chambers. I’ve never seen community engagement so robust and exciting.**

### **Council Membership.**

**Leadership has changed, too. We have nine new and one returning council member, and we are all working together to solve Austin’s challenges.**

**Our Council has its first Latina, two council members under the age of 30, only two Anglo males. We have seven women. (I’ve had decades of training from a household that consisted of my wife Diane and our three daughters.)**

**10-ONE is a rousing success.**

**We have a wide variety of views on the council. And so we're having conversations about serious and sensitive issues, conversations that have never before happened at the council table... but I'll tell you, these are the same conversations that have been happening in our community for years.**

**Austin is changing. Our government is changing.**

**And we're ready to make the changes that will preserve what's great about Austin.**

***State of our City is Strong, but We Have Challenges***

**The state of our city is undeniably strong. There is no city in the world with our gifts – natural beauty, creative artists and musicians, an amazing quality of life, a strong culture of neighborhoods, acceptance, engagement, a bustling economy, the best and the brightest entrepreneurs, and of course, barbecue and breakfast tacos.**

**Austin is a magical place.**

**But Austin is at a tipping point, a fork in the road. And we all feel it.**

**You know Austin is on a lot of lists. We're one of the best cities for bikes, one of the fittest, and one of the safest cities. Well, we've recently been ranked #1 on three lists that give a good sense of the state of our city because they call out our economy, our environment, and challenges with equity.**

**ECONOMY**: First, Austin was named the best city for the tech industry in the entire world. We beat out places like London and San Francisco, Berlin and Mumbai. Between August 2013 and August 2014, the Austin metropolitan area added 31,700 jobs, second highest among the 50 largest metropolitan areas.

Austin is growing in industries like technology, digital media, clean energy, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing.

Austin's unemployment rate sits at an amazingly low 3.4%.

We were one of the last cities in the country to feel the recession and one of the first to break out of it.

Our economy is not only strong, but one of the strongest in America.

**ENVIRONMENT**: Austin was named the country's best city for Wildlife for our support of wildlife habitat and park land.

It reminds us that we're not just about economic statistics. We're about our values and the day-to-day quality of life of our people. Austin is Austin because of our values and because we've been able to maintain the humanity of our town.

Our business and economic success is due in no small part to the Austin culture. We are creative and entrepreneurial, we try new things, we push the envelope, we have a no kill policy in our animal shelter, we're laid back. And perhaps the defining

**measure of who we are is that we have, and we make a priority to protect, a beautiful natural environment.**

**And Austin attracts creativity because our culture is unusually open, inclusive, environmental, sharing, friendly and diverse. What looks weird to some looks like home to the sort of people who design software and make movies and start tech companies — and that creativity benefits all Austinites.**

**Though Austin is just 7% of Texas' population, we're responsible for 30% of the state's patents and we receive nearly 50% of the state's venture capital.**

**I had the opportunity a couple weeks ago to meet with other American mayors, and Mayor De Blasio of NYC told me that Austin might be the only city in the US that is cooler than New York.**

**Ultimately, we choose to make Austin home because of our quality of life, and we're committed to protecting it.**

**The culture of Austin is strong.**

**EQUITY CHALLENGES: But the third new number 1 listing is troubling. We're the most economically segregated big city in the nation. Austin, Texas. What does that mean?**

**More than a third of Hispanic and African American children under the age of 18 live in poverty.**

**We have a huge gap in housing that people can afford – nearly 50,000 families can't afford even \$500/month rent.**

**Nearly 36% of Austin residents are “low-income.”**

**We have a fundamental moral and ethical responsibility to fix these things.**

**And we have to fix these things to ensure economic growth in our city. Plain and simple, we can't do that with massive income inequality. Inequality stunts growth. The gap between rich and poor is the largest it has been in thirty years. This is a growing and very real threat we face in Austin.**

**When people don't have money to spend on education or childcare or job training, they aren't able to maximize their earning potential. When people have less money to spend on restaurants, or technology, or furniture, there is an impact on our economy. And we want the 50,000 Austin families that currently can't afford rent for a home to reach a place where they are able to provide for themselves.**

**We must make sure that people have access to improved economic opportunity and that we are building economic engines all over our city.**

**These three number one rankings tell the State of our City. We have a great economy which is an asset and a tool we should use, that our environment, culture and values are strong and we need to protect them, but also that we have equity challenges to address and fix.**

## **Austin is a Big City**

**But if we're going to protect who we are and what we love about Austin, we're going to have to do some things differently, and we have to talk directly and honestly about what's really challenging us.**

**This is a conversation we need to have so that we can finally move past it.**

**Austin is a great city, a unique city, a much loved and admired city — and as a result, we've become something we never set out to be: a *big* city.**

**We intended to be a creative, accepting city, with a prosperous, strong economy — a great place to start a business and raise a family. We intended to be good stewards of our environment and our historic neighborhoods.**

**We just never thought we'd grow so much, so fast.**

**San Francisco, Boston, Denver, Washington D.C., Seattle, are incredible cities that people all around the world recognize and admire, and these are now all cities smaller in population than Austin.**

**Austin is now the eleventh largest city in America.**

**Austin is a big city — and we're going to get bigger.**

**There are 885,000 people now living in Austin with almost 2 million people in the metropolitan area. And in about 25 years those numbers will double to 4 million people. Our growth rate is the highest among large US cities, and by a wide margin.**



**People are coming because of who we are and what Austin is — people want to be part of the Austin we have always intended to be. In an ironic twist, the more successful we are in preserving what makes us special, the more people will come.**

**So here's our challenge: How do we preserve a wonderful Austin quality of life even while we make room for more people? How can we express our core values and protect our unique local culture as our city grows? How do we become a big city like no other, the big city that only Austin can be?**

**One thing is for certain. It won't just happen on its own. For some of us, that's hard to believe. Much of Austin's success seems to have just happened, organically, without a clear plan.**

**Sometimes it seems we've grown without a broad consensus, without aligning all our stakeholders, without having to search broadly for the best ideas, without having to work together to manage change.**

**And now we're feeling it. We are a big city with big city challenges.**

**We've got big city traffic. If people can't get around, we can't be the Austin we've always intended to be.**

**We've got big city economic pressures. If our artists, service workers, teachers and longtime residents can't afford to live here, we can't be the Austin we've always intended to be.**

**We face big city environmental threats, big city water issues, and big city infrastructure demands and education challenges. Issues we've tackled in the past are coming back on a bigger scale as we grow.**

**We all want Austin to be more than a big city. We want it to be an exceptional city, a city where the quality of life drives all else. A city that reflects our creativity, courage, stewardship and hospitality — a city of opportunity, a city that inspires others.**

**And we can do it – we can make real progress toward solving our most difficult problems. I have great faith this is true, because Austin is perhaps in the best position among all other cities in the world to truly harness its growth to solve our problems. We can do this because we can capitalize on one of the strongest economies and on our unique culture.**

**We grew because of our people and our culture, and our people and our culture can answer the challenges of growth. To do that, we have to work together like never before, and I believe we have to be open to change. There's that word again. And successful change means three things — inclusion, innovation and intentional improvisation.**

**INCLUSION, because we can't make progress on challenges like traffic or affordability unless everyone affected has a voice. To build coalitions for bold solutions all stakeholders have to be at the table. We can't work in silos and succeed. Our recent transportation bond proposition failed, in part, last November**

because too many people didn't trust the process and didn't see their own interests reflected in the proposal. We have to radically broaden the conversation, and create new partnerships and collaborations. And it's not enough to invite people to the table. You have to make room and give them a way to be heard.

**INNOVATION**, because we're trying to solve problems that no city has ever quite solved before. Austin is unique, and we're determined to be a big city like no other. We will not settle for the same tradeoffs other big cities have made. We will defend our environment and history and open culture, and that will mean growing in a different way. We need more than just best practices, we need completely new ideas, even the weird ideas Austin is famous for — ideas you get when you mix artists, tech and business and nonprofit leaders and activists who love what's special about their city.

**And INTENTIONAL IMPROVISATION**, because change is tough and we don't have time to waste. We've got to run more experiments, test more ideas. We have to be willing to try things to see what works and what doesn't. Intentional improvisation is how entrepreneurs and startups work; it's how artists create and scientists make discoveries. Austin already works this way. We just need more intentional improvising and measured testing around our biggest challenges so we learn faster together.

**Inclusion, innovation and intentional improvisation** are how we use Austin's people and culture to build a big, weird, exceptional city.

**This is what change looks like. This is what it's going to take.**

**So let's look at ten Austin challenges where change is needed and inclusion, innovation and intentional improvisation will help. But let's focus on and begin with the big two: Mobility and Affordability.**

**MOBILITY:**

**Austin is one of the most congested cities in the country. It is well past time to act.**

**When the transportation bond failed last year, our traffic problems did not magically disappear; they are still here and getting worse every day.**

**Councilmember Kitchen chairs the new Council Mobility Committee, and I will work with her and Council Members Gallo, Garza and Zimmerman, to provide real leadership to address the mobility challenges facing our big city.**

**We will have a single overall Regional Mobility Plan. Transportation is not a south Austin or north Austin problem, nor is it a Round Rock or San Marcos problem – it is a central Texas problem. Our entire region contributes to this problem, and our entire region will have to work together to fix it. Austin is dependent on the other cities and towns in our region, just as much as they are dependent on us.**

**Remember “inclusion?” That means having one plan for all the transportation organizations: CAMPO (our mobility planning organization), CTRMA (our regional mobility authority), CapMetro (our transit agency), Lone Star Rail (the Central Texas – and beyond – rail service), Travis County, the City of Austin, RideScout, Movability Austin, AARO (Austin Area Research Organization, AURA, and others.**

**We're not talking about just everyone at the table; we're talking about a single plan for everyone and under which each entity moves forward.**

**Our transportation plans, services and policies will be complete, which means they must include all parts of Austin and the greater region, and are inclusive of all modes of transportation, from highways to sidewalks and mass transit to bike paths and mobile apps.**

**We must take the time necessary to ensure our plans are complete and inclusive; however, our mobility challenges are so severe that we cannot wait until planning is finished before taking action to address these challenges.**

**Remember "innovation?"**

**Our biggest regional mobility challenge is rush hour congestion on our major highways like IH35 and MoPac. While there are efforts underway to make those roads work better, anyone who has seriously looked at this problem eventually recognizes the unavoidable truth - we cannot simply pave our way out of congestion. What we *can* also do is manage demand for those roads and give people real options to avoid driving on our major roads at the same time as everyone else.**

**To reduce demand for space on our roadways at rush hour, we've got to get more cars off the road.**

**We will adopt staggered work hours, telecommuting, taking transit, ride-share, and try different modes of transportation. Success will have a real impact on rush hour traffic. It can be done almost immediately with very little cost to taxpayers. If we can get just 17,000 cars off road at rush hour, we could potentially lighten traffic to levels we enjoy on state holidays.**

**I commend Austin City Manager Marc Ott for committing to a 20% reduction in rush hour commutes across all City departments by the end of this year. Travis County Judge Eckhart - this is a challenge: will Travis County do this, too? To our State leaders working in Austin and all the Commissioners and Directors of our State Agencies, can you step up as well? I applaud the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and Movability Austin, who are sponsoring the "Mobility 20/20 Pledge" - to reduce the number of single-occupancy cars driven during rush hours by at least 20% by the year 2020. Can we get that done sooner?**

**But we cannot get people to choose other commuting options, if those options do not exist where they live and work.**

**it is time to change that. we will fast track sufficient park and ride facilities at the perimeter of congestion so folks can leave their cars before reaching downtown and get into transit for the remainder of their trip. I am supporting Council Members Kitchen, Troxclair and Gallo advocating for areas previously underserved with mobility options.**

**We'll soon have separated lanes on MoPac and Hwy 183 where buses will travel quickly past congested traffic in regular lanes. Tired of watching the buses pass them by, a growing number of motorists will use the park and ride facilities and get out of their cars.**

**And we will fast track high quality commuter transit service from these park and ride facilities to downtown Austin in additional separated lanes on MoPac and even running in the shoulders of IH-35 (if the State Legislature will accommodate us). I am supporting Council Members Houston, Renteria, and Garza advocating for areas previously underserved with transit.**

**Additionally, our Council and our City Staff are seeking other immediate and low-cost solutions to battle traffic. A few weeks ago, the City of Austin announced a *Traffic Congestion Action Plan*, which includes immediate actions, and we will try them and keep what works.**

- Launching a "don't block the box" campaign to keep intersections clear.**
- Testing changing lane directions; limiting left-hand turns at rush hour.**
- Scheduling more of our street repair and construction projects at night.**
- No scheduling long-term street closures within five blocks of each other.**
- Permitting fewer lane closures for downtown events.**
- Accelerating improvements to key intersections. We've targeted**

**improvements on IH35/51<sup>st</sup> Street, Loop 360, the Y at Oak Hill and Four Points, and some of the more than 180 intersections in Austin with intersection issues that need correction.**

-- **And listen to this: We will make sure traffic lights are timed to keep things moving. Austin already has a state-of-the-art Advanced Traffic Management System to monitor traffic flow. It can synchronize and change traffic signals from a central command in real time. But, we've never had enough trained staff to run it. Now we're getting that staff.**

**But we need more than immediate traffic relief. We need new ideas, *your* ideas, to tackle the long-term challenge we face. It's time to start hearing from new people and trying new things. We need innovation.**

**What if we are looking at our traffic problems the wrong way? We owe it to ourselves to engage Austin's amazing innovative minds in the business, tech, public policy, arts, and nonprofit sectors to think of new ways.**

**And today a new way to harness your brainpower called MobilityATX has launched. Over the next few months, MobilityATX, a public-private partnership to facilitate a citywide mobility discussion, will provide critical community input to the City Council and City Manager, Capital Metro, and other transportation stakeholders. I challenge all of you to go online to [MobilityATX.com](http://MobilityATX.com) to get involved, or engage by tweeting [@MobilityATX](https://twitter.com/MobilityATX)– let's crowd source solutions that can make a difference.**

**We need to be big city bold. We need to innovate, take things to scale, be fearless in trying new things, and unafraid to test ideas even if they don't work - but we must learn quickly.**



**We're open to all ideas, and we will refresh the conversation and stop rehearsing the same old scripts about roads vs. rail vs. bikes, etc, etc. We've got to think more creatively. We've got technology for ridesharing and bike sharing, and tracking traffic and crowd sourcing parking, internet capabilities and sensors, all that weren't imagined five to ten years ago. Austin should be the first city to use these technologies at a grand scale to keep people moving.**

**That's the Austin we've always intended to be.**

**And while traffic may be our most visible problem all over the city, Austin suffers from an even more distressing challenge...**

### **Affordability**

**We all know that Austin is becoming increasingly unaffordable. We become more affordable by making things cost less and by ensuring families have more to spend.**

### **Expenses.**

**On the household expenses side of the equation, housing costs are the main driver for most families. We must make housing affordable for families at all income levels and at all stages of life. We talk a great deal about median family income, but a healthy community supports households at all income levels – so we can't just look at the median.**

**We have a supply and demand imbalance causing a housing affordability crisis. Many more people want to live in Austin than there are homes to rent or buy. Neighborhoods with affordable housing are rapidly gentrifying, and housing prices**

**are increasing all over the city: not only for low-income families, but also for middle-class families. To address our housing supply gap for low and middle-income families, Austin needs to construct about 100,000 new housing units by 2025, and we need to save another 35,000 affordable units from disappearing through gentrification.**

**We must make a meaningful dent in this gap and then we must close it. And, these new and preserved homes must be located in all parts of town.**

**We will continue to employ bonds and incentive programs, as these have been effective tools, but they are not nearly enough to meet a gap this size.**

**But this is Austin. We must also harness Austin innovation to bring more resources to this issue. We must explore innovative resource raising tools, such as social impact investing, to make truly meaningful progress and create an Urban Land Conservancy Strike Fund. We can buy and preserve affordable properties. We must make better use of our existing tools, such as our density bonus program.**

**There are programs in our city being piloted by organizations like United Way and ECHO, that are seeking to raise funding to solve community challenges with models like “Pay for Success” with investor or contributor payback coming from a portion of what the public saves when the challenges are solved.**

**What about also inventing our own solutions, like an Austin Bond... like the old US Savings Bonds... where investors buy into social progress in our city with a promise that, after a long hold, they’ll get paid back their investment plus a little interest?**

**Tell me, if such an Austin Bond were available, might you consider buying a \$25 Austin Bond for your next baby gift?**

**In addition to using new, innovative tools, we must make better use of our existing tools. We need to expand our density bonus program, and our use of land trusts, and we need to reimagine the city's SMART housing program.**

**I plan to work closely with Councilmember Renteria and Council's Housing and Community Development Committee to finally implement the Homestead Preservation district tool that was created several years ago to help keep long-time residents in their homes in neighborhoods experiencing rapid gentrification and displacement.**

**For those who already own homes, or hope to one day soon, we must also address affordability by offering a meaningful reduction in their property tax burden through a 20% homestead exemption. And this must be done in a way that minimizes impact to vital city services and infrastructure. I believe this can be done, and I am proud of my colleagues for taking on this issue, especially Councilmember Troxclair, who introduced a resolution which council recently adopted, directing city staff to research options for implementing such a homestead exemption. This will be part of the City's new budget debate that is about to begin in just a few weeks.**

**In that upcoming budget process, I am sure you will see the continuation of this Council's scrutinizing of even the most minor budget line item. These things add up.**

**For those who rent, we must find additional mechanisms to reduce household expenses. This council will soon consider a proposal to restructure the drainage fee that appears on all of our utility bills. We can change the fee structure to make it fairer for those who rent apartments.**

**We also need to help those who live in apartment and multifamily condos reduce their utility costs by facilitating energy efficiency upgrades financed via innovative tools, such as the PACE program which allows property owners to creatively finance home improvements that pay back quickly with reduced utility bills.**

**I support the efforts of Councilmember Garza who is leading the effort to establish a Regional Affordability Task Force with members from the City Council, Travis County, ACC, and local school districts to explore ways we can coordinate to provide critical services and infrastructure, without negatively affecting affordability.**

### **Increasing Income.**

**On the other side of the affordability equation: how do we ensure Austin households earn enough income?. It's this simple -- If a family is able to get the necessary education, skills, training, and has the opportunity to compete for a well-paying job, Austin will be more affordable .**

**Austin leads the nation in creating middle-class jobs. What we are lacking is the training and access to training for the folks who live here to qualify for those jobs. That's one of the reasons so many people are moving here. To take those jobs we don't fill locally. Our own homegrown talent needs the education, experience and training to fill those available middle class jobs.**

**We will close the wage gap by having more of our neighbors earning college degrees and workforce certificates. Since 1996, the gap in average earnings of a worker with a bachelor's in Austin compared to one with just a high school degree has doubled. This is a huge factor in our growing inequality, and why the city must do more to support Workforce Solutions, Austin Community College and our business community to develop career pathways for advancing tens of thousands of low wage employees to jobs that pay enough to allow their families to live in Austin. A great use of economic incentives could be to support companies that are willing to help train our residents for the new jobs those companies create.**

**We must preserve affordability for a widely divergent resident base or Austin will lose the diversity that gives our city its flavor, creativity and soul.**

**Let me touch on several other areas where I will be joining with Council Members on issues that are important to us both.**

### **Permitting**

**There cannot be a conversation about affordability in Austin without addressing the challenges presented by our Permitting Process.**

**Permitting and development in Austin costs too much, takes too long and makes everything more uncertain and housing more expensive. I thank my council colleagues, including Council Members Gallo and Zimmerman, for helping to lead our efforts to fix this problem, and fix it now.**

**By Council resolution, in about thirty days our City Manager will set forth specific metrics for success and a timeline for clearing the permitting backlog. In about sixty days, he will present a plan, again with metrics for success and a timeline, for fixing the permitting process entirely. This is how a council-manager government is supposed to work. This Council is making this area a priority and our staff will be responsible for finding the way.**

**This Council and our City Manager are building a new relationship as we get to know one another and work together on challenges. I thank Marc Ott and his executive staff for embracing this Council's new way of doing things.**

**I am also eager to work with Council Member Casar and our Planning and Neighborhoods Council Committee on monitoring this important permitting work, and also in exploring ways to accelerate permitting for developments that provide real community benefits, like projects that provide fair conditions for the hard working men and women who build our big city.**

**Ultimately, the final fix to permitting requires us to finalize the Land Development Code re-write, or CodeNext process. That has to be among our highest priorities.**

### **Public Health**

**Austinites in the Rundberg, Colony Park, and Dove Springs neighborhoods are much more likely to suffer from chronic diseases than the rest of Austin. It is unacceptable that your health is determined by where you live. When it comes to having a healthy family, it shouldn't matter which Austin neighborhood you live in.**

**And when families have health insurance, the burden on hospital emergency rooms is reduced, families avoid financial crisis resulting from medical debt, children are healthier and have improved academic achievement, and parents take less time off work to care for sick kids. We will to expand efforts to connect families to health insurance.**

**I look forward to work of our new Council Health and Human Services Committee chaired by Councilmember Houston, to continue our efforts in public health and eliminate tragic health disparities. And working with Ms. Houston to ensure that the promise of the new Innovation Zone, its new medical school and teaching hospital, marries health care and technology in a way that directly improves the equity and efficacy of health care delivery in a way that benefits the Zone's neighbors to the east of IH-35.**

### **Eliminating Food Deserts**

**Not everyone in Austin has equal access to convenient, healthy food choices. Hunger is especially prevalent in the eastern crescent of Travis County. There are five ZIP codes, largely in Council District 2, that do not have a single full-service grocery store. This is unacceptable and I will be working closely with Council Member Garza to address the issue of food access in these areas.**

### **Homelessness**

**Nearly 2,000 Austinites lack a place to call home on any given night. I want to work with Council Member Tovo to continue Austin's investment in the housing and services needed to end homelessness.**

**We are down to about only 250 homeless veterans in Austin. Former Mayor Leffingwell pledged to end veteran homelessness, but his term ended before his goal was finally achieved. I will seek to finish that work. The Veterans Administration, City of Austin, and ECHO are working together to increase housing opportunities for those who have served our country, but they cannot do it alone. So, I am personally calling upon landlords and property managers in our community to accept housing vouchers for veterans. Those who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for our country should not be denied a safe place to live.**

**And to support the cooperation of these property owners, I will support creating a Landlord Incentive Fund and promoting the Austin Good Landlord Program to reward and acknowledge landlords for housing the formerly homeless.**

### **Ethics and Transparency**

**To improve transparency, we must implement electronic and searchable filing for campaign financing and lobbyist registration. This system will improve the public's access to information on who is funding candidates and lobbying City Hall. We will bring up to date and more in-line with State legislative practice our lobbyist registration and reporting requirements in a way that's fair and fits with our board and commission structure. And we should always be trying to increase the public's access to the City's non-confidential data and information.**



## **Education**

**One of the primary vehicles to ensure Austin's future economic growth, shared prosperity, and resiliency is through education. We cannot be a great City without great schools. As Mayor, I have made education a priority in my office, and we will lend our support to finding creative and even audacious ideas to support public schools.**

**Only 53% of Central Texas children enter kindergarten school ready**

**To ensure students enter school ready to learn, we must find a way to ensure that all Austin families have access to full-day high-quality Pre-K. Austin ISD has for years demonstrated its commitment to the success of our youngest residents, through their strong Pre-K program. And with the help of charitable partners such as the United Way, access to Pre-K for low income families is growing. The Mayor's office will partner with schools and the non-profit sector to explore innovative ways of raising additional pre-K resources to make further progress toward universal access for all Austin families and using new communications tools to distribute needed information about the importance of school readiness.**

**I am committed to work with Council members Tovo, Houston and Troxclair who are serving on our joint subcommittee with Travis County and AISD, and other Council Members who have been champions for children and families.**

## **Utilities**

**I'm prioritizing a serious re-evaluation of the business models of Austin Energy and Austin Water. For Austin to continue to have a great economy and support innovative businesses and maintain an affordable yet high quality of life, we need these utilities to be healthy and stable... even as we endure prolonged drought... even as technology transforms the worldwide electric utility industry.**

**We must develop business models that can keep the lights on and the water flowing for all essential needs, and without our utility bills becoming unaffordable. It won't be simple, but we are up for the challenge and I'm anxious to work with Council Member Gallo, chair of the Austin Energy Committee, and Council Member Garza, chair of the Public Utilities Committee.**

## **Parkland**

**Our city needs to support the efforts of the Council's Open Space Committee and its chair Council Member Pool to ensure that all our residents, especially our kids, enjoy neighborhood parks and receive a fair share of park improvements. I will support Council Member Casar's advocacy for District 4, which has the highest number of children, many living in apartments and in older more dense neighborhoods.**

## **Conclusion**

**Austin is a wonderful, magical city. We're growing bigger every day, and we have challenges that we need to address. We need to manage our growth so that it doesn't manage us, and to preserve what we love about Austin.**

**At the end of the day, you should grade this new Council by whether we addressed big challenges and did big things. This will require us to think and do things differently and that means change.**

**Change does not come easily and it needs champions.**

**Are you willing to help? Willing to be included? Willing to innovate? Willing to support your city council leaders when they take risks to try new things, the things that might make Austin a big, exceptional city?**

**Our biggest challenges were not created overnight, and the solutions will not happen overnight, either. But we're starting now and we are acting boldly.**

**Thank you for being here tonight, or for listening and watching. Austin will stay special because of you and others who share the belief that together we can make Austin a truly great city for all of us.**

**Thank you.**