

2018 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name	James Valadez- Austin City Council District 3
What's your favorite park in Austin? Why?	<p data-bbox="592 373 1507 409">Ann & Roy Butler Hike & Bike Trail</p> <p data-bbox="592 451 1507 766">I've logged countless miles on this trail as an avid runner. The thing I like about the trail more than anything is how it brings so many different people together. On any given day you can see people from all over the city meeting up with friends and family for a walk, run or ride. You can see tourists from all over the world admiring our lush green space, the skyline from the board walk or our bat colony at sunset. In my opinion it's one of the things that makes Austin so special.</p>
Ensuring equitable access to quality parks for all Austinites is a key priority for Austin Parks Foundation. How might you work as a decision-maker for both your district and the city as a whole to move the needle on equitable access to quality parks?	<p data-bbox="592 787 1507 1060">First and foremost investments in our parks need to keep pace with our cities growth. Access to green space & recreational opportunities plays a critical role in building strong and healthy communities. It's also worth noting that many residents don't live within walking distance to parkland and in many cases when they do the amenities found in urban core parks are not available, specifically in the eastern crescent. We need to work diligently as a city to close this gap.</p>
The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department faces \$125 million in deferred maintenance each year, ranging from playground maintenance and aquatics needs to mowing and servicing trash and recycling receptacles. What would be your strategy for addressing this need?	<p data-bbox="592 1081 1507 1417">Again investments in our parks systems need to keep pace with our cities growth and we need to have a multifaceted approach to our funding sources. Budgeting, Bonds & expansion of public private partnerships stick out to me as the key paths to funding. I would work to recalibrate the park land dedication fee and strive to better utilize HOT tax resources to aide in funding needs. We need to work within the strategic outcome of health & environment and strive to have our funding per person in Austin for parks reach comparable levels of other cities that are in the top 10 nationally in parks and green space funding.</p>
Austin Parks Foundation is continuously involved in community engagement to ensure that our projects and work align with community values and needs. What is your philosophy on community engagement, and how would you engage with the community to ensure that their needs around parks and open space are appropriately addressed?	<p data-bbox="592 1480 1507 1864">I think community involvement is the key to success when it comes to making sure what we are working toward aligns with the needs and wants of the community. Specifically I go to programming in our parks and recreation centers- reaching out to area residents and making sure what is being provided meets the needs of the community and understanding the needs of every community is different is very important.</p>

What do you believe the role of private partners should be in maintaining and improving public parks? What actions would you take to strengthen and improve public-private partnerships?

Public private partnerships are key to many needs of the department to maintain, preserve and protect our green spaces. To strengthen and improve these partnerships I think It's critical to bring city staff and stakeholders together to best understand the needs of both sides to adequately allocate resources toward any given problem areas. Understanding time tables of need and forecasting large scale capital improvement projects to get all parties on the same page to work toward achieving an outcome is critical.

Parkland dedication fees are one mechanism by which the city funds park acquisition and improvements. What is your stance on parkland dedication fees, and are you in favor of maintaining them during the Land Development Code updating process?

I support parkland dedication fees. They are absolutely imperative to meeting the needs of or parks system. In any land development code update process at minimum I would advocate to maintain them but strive to recalibrate them to better reflect to needs of the department.

Do you consider parks an important community asset? Why?

Parks are without question an important community asset.

For context my father worked for Austin's Parks & rec department for 33 years. Some of my fondest memories have happened in city parks. I feel that as a result of my exposure to parks from a very young age it led to a life long love of fitness and in turn a far healthier lifestyle than if parks had not been a priority for the city in which I grew up.
