

## 2018 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

<b>Candidate Name</b>	Jessica Cohen
<b>What's your favorite park in Austin? Why?</b>	Auditorium Shores/Peace Point. It's somewhere you can just go and relax. Meet great people. Watch the water. It's always been my favorite little strip of Lady Bird Lake.
<b>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?</b>	District 3 has several really nice parks, however, the thing I've sometimes noticed is that there might be something broken or looking run down. As a city council member, I plan to ensure that neighborhoods that need parks will have them and that our parks have the necessary funds to ensure they're a place that people want to go.
<b>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?</b>	This is a problem I see happening over and over again. Everyone wants the parks to be there and loves to use them until they find out they actually have to pay for them with increased taxes. Currently, transportation, infrastructure, and affordable housing are such high priorities that it seems that parks are being left out. We need to make sure an appropriate part of the budget is reserved so that our parks and park facilities don't fall into disrepair. Having spent the majority of my youth working at city pools, I know exactly how important they are, who uses them, and why. I plan to work towards ensuring the Parks Department has the funds they need.
<b>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?</b>	My district has a lot of working folks. We often don't have the time to take off of work or the free time on weekends when we're trying to spend time with our families. I would like to see more engagement between the community and Austin Parks. I think we could encourage that by using strong social media campaigns, community outreach positions or volunteers who specifically go and interact with the community on weekends, and COA funded events at city parks (that are assured safe for undocumented residents)
<b>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?</b>	I have always believed that a private citizen or company wanting to donate time or money to improve our parks and facilities is a good thing. In my opinion, the Parks department has done well in fostering good working relationships with many private partners. As long as there is no profit or gain to be made by the private partner (other than the normal benefits derived from philanthropy) we should continue to build on and encourage more of these relationships.

**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 100% support parkland dedication fees however, I do not support fee-in-lieu for developments with usable park land. I also would have liked to have seen a higher cap for sites in the urban core.

**Do you consider parks an important community asset? Why?**

I absolutely consider parks an important community asset. We're not all rich. We can't all afford swimming pools and big backyards. Community parks and pools provide safe places for both children and adults to gather. They promote community events and encourage community members to interact with each other. Most importantly, parks provide green spaces which are healthy for people and promote small ecosystems for local flora and fauna.