

2018 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name

Travis Duncan

**What's your favorite park in Austin?
Why?**

Thank you for asking this question :)

St. Edwards park uniquely mystifies me. There is an ancient feeling to that swimming hole, as I feel connected to dimensional generations of people drinking and bathing in that very spot. The trees happily envelope me in a cozy corridor, as the wind hums a sweet tone of cozy contemplation.

I feel inspired to pay homage to the Texas Rowing Championships, The Heart of Texas, and Pumpkinhead Regattas, all of which I rowed in from 2003-2007, on what was then called Town Lake. Our Jesuit Crew most often earned the gold medal, as we learned who we were and what we were capable of. I am eternally grateful for the lessons our river has taught me, and for the humans who shared in that experience. I am committed to honoring and protecting our sacred waters.

It's worth noting the universal significance of Zilker Park to so many people across the world with regard to Austin City Limits, a major catalyst for our international recognition as a celebration town. Of course, we locals enjoy it as a multi-species recreational mecca. The way Zilker feels on a holiday (or weekend) is beautifully free and peacefully chaotic, as we all cohabitate in a multitude of stranger-neighbor micro-communions. There is a distinctly Austin feeling that emanates from our exact cultural iteration of a park. This experience we envision to be universally shared for every person of our city, everyday, and in every neighborhood. We envision a truly free city for ALL.

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?

I am truly saddened by the condition of most of our parks. There is an enormous amount of garbage in the creeks, parking areas, grass (micro-plastics), and generally pollution across the entire city (as well as in the air, of course). This is not an indictment on any one individual. I only point this out because we are offering a solution: Incentivized Volunteer Contributionism - Simply, we have tools, either through elimination of utility costs, tax exemptions, or any other relevant and consensus-reached benefit, to incentivize a group of people in our city to become the Greater Good Coalition of Valued Leaders in Our Community. These are people who will be given dignity, respect, and recognition for their contributions, who will help us for ALL sorts of activities that benefit the community. We will transcend the limited thinking of the past and move inspired into the future, unified as one tribe with a greater mission, all while using the tools of our current paradigm to solve the problems of this very same paradigm!

One OBVIOUS opportunity we are missing in our parks is Cooperative Organic Farming. I'm not talking about the wimpy community garden, I'm talking about a very dedicated micro-farm within walking distance from every home. We can incentivize our cooperative respected leaders to join in the procurement of this project. Experts will be nominated to lead on logistics, while volunteers circulate to provide energy and momentum. This can be applied to ANY type of community benefit project. This is of vital importance; The only communities who are truly resilient are those who are food-sovereign.

This touches on all levels of addressing the major inequities in our city. Most low-income households have little or no of health care nor access to healthy foods. We remove the environmental toxins by cleaning pollution and diet, we strengthen the preventative medicine, which overall boosts physiological optimization and creativity. Folks will be more inspired, more energetic, happier. Most struggle with extremely high utility costs and many are threatened with tax-induced displacement, and for them the incentives for voluntary contributions will greatly benefit their households' economic opportunity. This is an investment we will get a human-being-vitality return on.

P.S. This is made easily financially responsible by the immediately available implementation of quantum renewable technology at exponentially higher output, lowest market cost, and smallest acreage footprint.

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?

Given the recently established reality in the previous answer, it's easy to see how we may very well offset much of our cost with incentivized volunteer labor. In a city of roughly 1,000,000 people, we will likely find 10,000 people (0.01% of population) who want to get free electricity somehow. If each one of these people only donates 3 hours of their time per week, we could have 1,428 people volunteering each day, which breaks down to 285 people contributing each hour, if we work from 6am to 9pm. Of course, we will organize this in any configuration as per the immediate needs of Austin's parks. We will establish an appropriate & decentralized accountability mechanism to ensure our objectives are met with all contributing fairly, in the best way they are able. Everyone is valuable and deserves the maximum respect! When we cover the Austin Energy bill for 10,000 customers as appreciation for their consistent contribution (plus public gratitude, respect and recognition), this will "cost" us roughly \$18,000,000 per year, based on an average monthly bill amount of \$150. It may be higher or lower, but given the lessening of electricity costs, and the counterbalance of the return we get, this could save us a massive chunk of that \$125,000,000, perhaps drop it dramatically (or eliminate most of it altogether). We could incentivize 50,000 people (0.05%), and spend \$90,000,000, while having 7,142 people contributing DAILY value across our entire city. Frankly folks, this is an investment we can easily make, and we will ALL share in the benefits, because we are joining in union to work together for the greater good of everyone. It helps us build a sense of shared equity stewardship of the land, so we feel connected and deserving of enjoying it with each other. There are no limits to what we can accomplish together!

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?

The last community engagement event I attended at a park was a peculiar paradox. While the tabling organizations were friendly, accommodating, and helpful, I was perplexed by their lack of proactive engagement with the groups of people gathered in the parking lot, and other areas of the park. It seems like we have an immediate opportunity to be more directly engaging with people by approaching them and inviting them to share their lived experiences and most growth-inspiring truths.

The Volunteer Contributionism Leaders are our best hope in stimulating a cultural awakening in terms of our park relationships. This can happen very quickly once we become determined to benefit the people! It's all about will and integrity.

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?

Private partners meaning paid independent companies who perform vital and specialized services to the functioning of our parks? Like the electricians who maintain our gear at Zilker, or the engineers who design new bridges and trail systems? Well, I would love to continue cooperative relationship with all people who live in Austin, and I believe we should always find ways to reach more creative agreements that benefit all people involved, while simultaneously developing a parallel and sustainable solution over the course of the years to eliminate the needed expenditure from our city budget. Our money is always best spent investing in automated and advanced infrastructure as to most quickly free those available funds for investing in the people's direct vitality. We must look at every private contract with the city as a scenario of: would we get more out of this money by directly investing in the people?

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?

Yes, I think we should remain committed to our current mechanisms of funding until we can find more regenerative and sustainable solutions for long term abundance. It's important we always explore new ideas while not being reckless in prematurely abandoning current systems. We need parallel and always regenerative innovation.

Do you consider parks an important community asset? Why?

I hope it's obvious I value parklands immensely. I am intent on protecting the Earth, as I do believe we are capable of cohabitation as massively densified populations while still being resonant with the planet and completely non-toxic to the environment. Currently, we are toxic. Now we have major problems. Virtually 99% of our land development code is not utilizing optimal earth-resonant materials and methods. We've built up our city like a bunch of careless dodos. Again, not an indictment on any individual, just a true observation to which we can awaken, so we can more quickly unify our approach and make better decisions.

Parks contribute heavily to our feelings of oneness with the Earth, as our line of sight plays strengthens our intrinsic-trust in our safety and overall sense of being grounded. Parks remind us who we are as native beings to this planet, especially amidst this petrol-concrete mega-foundation City we've laid over top. We need as much park space as we can have, while densifying our urban spaces using green architecture. There's no reason why our skyscrapers shouldn't double as massive trees. We have the technology to build net-zero, carbon-sequestering, air-purifying, human-biofield-optimizing, soul-enriching, nature-resonant, modern and visually spectacular skyscrapers. So, what are we waiting for? Isn't it obvious yet? VOTE! :)
