

2018 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name

Vincent Harding

What's your favorite park in Austin? Why?

My favorite park is Dottie Jordan Park. It is my favorite park. The diversity of people that use the park is beautiful and the park includes a trail, tennis courts, a basketball court, a swimming pool, a community center, a garden, a pavillion, playsets, and it is almost entirely shaded by trees.

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?

Currently, I am supporting the bond package for Parks and Recreation. Parks and recreation are a community asset and contribute to healthy living. The Austin Chronicle did a story on the lack of publicly owned pools in East Austin and I want to increase equity in this area.

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?

With the Texas Legislature not paying for public education, it puts pressure on every local entity as it relates to local needs. One thing I have repeatedly spoken about is looking for ways to move some police department functions out of the police department to other areas; this could provide some savings. These savings could help to address some of the many needs the City has. Additionally, as new development comes on the tax rolls, there will be other opportunities to help with some of the needs.

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?

My philosophy on community engagement is grassroots advocacy through town halls, door knocking, phone calls, being present at community events, and utilizing traditional and social media forms to reach people.

As the former Chair of the Travis County Democratic Party, during my term as Chair, we saw the highest voter registration percentage in Travis County history. I think my strategy of community engagement has been proven to be successful.

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 should maintain public parks to the extent they are partner is impacting nature. As an example, the development of new communities often require park space. As it relates to public private partnerships, I think relationships can be done to improve parks. As an example, with highways, the Texas Department of Transportation works with private entities to help with signage. I would talk with subject matter experts of parks and consider the many options to make things better.

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 am in favor of maintaining parkland dedication fees in the next land development code. The fees should be tailored and we should work with various stakeholders to find the best amount.

Do you consider parks an important community asset? Why?

Yes. Green spaces are an important asset for the community and are something that non-Austinites talk about as being one of the features they enjoy about Austin. Parks are a place where people can decompress, meet their neighbors, hold functions, and also help to provide watershed protection. I have truly enjoyed the parks in Austin and have had the pleasure of taking friends and family, whom all enjoy.
