

ONE VOICE

CENTRAL TEXAS

OVCT Asks: 2024 Austin Mayoral & City Council Candidates

One Voice Central Texas is a coalition of nearly 100 health and human service nonprofit organizations serving the Austin area. Every day, our member organizations provide essential services to thousands of Central Texans including food access, transitional housing, aging services, and more.

As part of our efforts to engage local leadership, we prepared six questions for all eligible 2024 Austin Mayoral and City Council candidates.* We are interested in understanding how they have supported the nonprofit sector in the past and how they plan to support it moving forward, should they be elected or re-elected.

The response window was open from October 1 through October 14. Responses were limited to 350 characters (approximately 50 words).

Thank you to the Candidates who took the time to respond. Answers are provided below for the interest of our member organizations, who work closely with their communities and local representatives.

*Note, we did not receive responses from the City Council candidates for Districts 2 or 6. All other missing responses have been footnoted in each respective section.

OVCT Asks: Austin Mayoral Candidates*



Douglas Greco



Kathie Tovo

<p>Question 1: If elected, how will you adequately advocate for programs that serve vulnerable and underserved clients who rely on Health and Human Services to meet their basic needs?</p>	<p>We need to develop housing at all income levels and ensure there is deeply affordable housing throughout the city. I will fight for investments in education, workforce, living wage jobs, and childcare. I support robust investments in permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>As a Council Member, I championed funding for affordable housing, homelessness, and food and safety net programs. During the pandemic, I led in funding 1 million+ meals for AISD parents. I have a good understanding of community needs and a record of City Hall and budgetary experience that no other candidate can match and which will aid me as Mayor.</p>
<p>Question 2: If elected, what are your plans to address the underlying causes that contribute to the significant increase of health and human service needs by members of our community?</p>	<p>We have to address the skyrocketing cost of living in Austin which is driving working families out of the city and out of the middle class. The city needs to sustainably fund the services we provide as part of the base budget.</p>	<p>Focusing on Austin’s working families is the core of my campaign - and my past Council work. We need expanded investments in workforce development, affordable housing, food insecurity programs, mobility, and accessible childcare - the last two of which are also key to healthcare access. I will continue to be a leader on these issues.</p>
<p>Question 3: What do you think the City of Austin is doing well, and poorly, to address the needs of community members living in poverty?</p>	<p>Over the past 5-10 years we have made some major investments in affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, and rental assistance. We do need to improve our community engagement process as a city, especially from residents who are most marginalized.</p>	<p>The City has made strides in addressing the top costs in family budgets—housing, childcare, and transportation—but has much work to do. As Mayor, I will keep prioritizing affordable housing (esp. for families with children), supporting high-capacity transit, and working toward incentivizing employers and developers to include childcare facilities.</p>
<p>Question 4: How can Austin best address the safety needs and affordable/accessible housing needs of our community?</p>	<p>We need to invest in public safety compensation, recruitment, training, and community policing strategies, and we need to fully implement the voter approved Austin Police Oversight Act. We also need to invest in affordable housing, rental and mortgage assistance, housing for those experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>Safety: Continue to invest in public safety, violence prevention, mental health care, and initiatives like the Sobering Center (which I led in creating). Affordable housing: Preserve existing housing, invest in home repair, build affordable housing on city-owned land, and require developers to build onsite rather than pay in-lieu fees.</p>
<p>Question 5: Do you/will you support a significant budget increase for APH next year?</p>	<p>Yes. APH is currently the fifth most funded department in the city, which is disproportionate to the important services the department provides to everyday Austinites, including legal immigration services, childcare, community planning, and homelessness outreach.</p>	<p>I worked to make the APH budget a highest priority and will do so as Mayor. As the population and community needs increase each year, so should our APH budget. My past experience will be key - as I did each budget cycle, I will work to make that happen including scrutinizing other areas of the budget where cuts can be made to effect this increase.</p>
<p>Question 6: How do you propose that there will be coordination between City project plans that often seem to overlap, and/or how do you propose that strategies proposed by projects being conducted by different silos within the City don't explicitly conflict with each other?</p>	<p>As Mayor, I would work with the City Manager to provide appropriate oversight on the progress of various city projects, especially those to be completed in parallel timelines. We may also need to look at how we can appoint liaisons between departments to further integrate these initiatives</p>	<p>This concern about implementation resonates with me, given my pre-Council background in community activism. The City Manager is responsible for project managing these initiatives, and the Council must hold him accountable for authentic community engagement and timely deliverables. I will certainly do this as Mayor—as I have in the past.</p>

OVCT Asks: District 4 City Council Candidates*



Louis Herrin

Question 1: If elected, how will you adequately advocate for programs that serve vulnerable and underserved clients who rely on Health and Human Services to meet their basic needs?

LH

I will be pushing for a full audit of all of the city programs, the hope is to streamline all of the city services, to get help faster and save on the city budget.

Question 2: If elected, what are your plans to address the underlying causes that contribute to the significant increase of health and human service needs by members of our community?

LH

I do not have any plans that would significantly increase health and human service needs. I do not know enough about these problems to make an inform[ed] answer.

Question 3: What do you think the City of Austin is doing well, and poorly, to address the needs of community members living in poverty?

LH

I am not sure I could say Austin is doing anything well. I believe the City starts programs without setting goals, they are spending money without knowing if the money is being spent for the intended purpose.

Question 4: How can Austin best address the safety needs and affordable/accessible housing needs of our community?

LH

We need to hire more police officers, and they need to be dedicated to serve assigned communit[ies]. The Home ordinance is not going help with affordabil[ity], it is going to help developers get rich and increase to City tax base.

Question 5: Do you/will you support a significant budget increase for APH next year?

LH

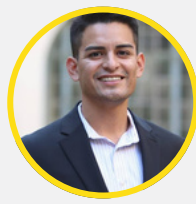
After the audit of the programs and we are able to streamline the programs, I would be open for budget increase.

Question 6: How do you propose that there will be coordination between City project plans that often seem to overlap, and/or how do you propose that strategies proposed by projects being conducted by different silos within the City don't explicitly conflict with each other?

LH

This is what I believe a complete independent city audit would show.

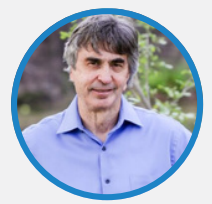
OVCT Asks: District 7 City Council Candidates*



Edwin Bautista



Pierre Huy Nguyen



Todd Shaw

Question 1: If elected, how will you adequately advocate for programs that serve vulnerable and underserved clients who rely on Health and Human Services to meet their basic needs?

EB

I'll advocate for increased resources for housing, mental health services, food security and healthcare access, focusing on marginalized populations like low-income families and the homeless. I'll work with nonprofits and governments to secure funding, streamline services and address systemic disparities to promote long-term stability and equity.

PHN

Austin needs a more integrated, transparent approach to project planning. Many feel fatigue from the number of initiatives and unclear communication. Cross-department collaboration, regular meetings, multi-project public forums & real-time dashboards can align strategies, improve engagement & track progress.

TS

First, I will champion increasing donations to our non-profits that support health and human services. I will meet with our community partners to identify improvements needed to address the increase in the unhoused. I will prioritize additional funds for rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and associated social services.

Question 2: If elected, what are your plans to address the underlying causes that contribute to the significant increase of health and human service needs by members of our community?

EB

I'll address housing instability, economic inequality, mental health access & food insecurity by advocating for affordable housing, expanding workforce development, increasing mental health funding & ensuring access to nutritious food. Tackling these challenges holistically will reduce pressure on health services & promote long-term stability.

PHN

My 16-point priority plan addresses root causes by focusing on housing affordability, workforce development, and mental health services. I'll work to address gentrification and strengthen access to preventive services, providing underserved communities with the resources they need to thrive.

TS

I want to really attack the affordable housing crisis. We need code changes and funding to create more market and regulated units. I will ensure that we have programs to assist vulnerable populations in lowering utility cost and providing food assistance.

Question 3: What do you think the City of Austin is doing well, and poorly, to address the needs of community members living in poverty?

EB

Austin has made progress addressing poverty through programs like SMART Housing & HOST, which connect vulnerable populations to resources. However, anti-displacement efforts haven't kept pace, leaving Austinites at risk. More workforce development, economic opportunities & action on food insecurity are needed to create lasting solutions.

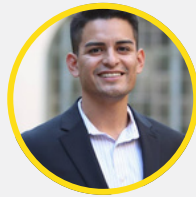
PHN

The city has made strides in affordable housing initiatives but struggles with service delivery. My 16-point priority plan calls for better coordination between departments and ensuring services reach those most in need, particularly working families and small business owners in economically marginalized areas.

TS

The number of unhoused is increasing. We have done a very poor job of increasing housing and housing affordable at lower income levels. The data collection has really improved and will allow for improved decision making. ECHO data shows that many of our unhoused were displaced from gentrified areas of the city.

OVCT Asks: District 7 City Council Candidates*



Edwin Bautista



Pierre Huy Nguyen



Todd Shaw

Question 4: How can Austin best address the safety needs and affordable/accessible housing needs of our community?

EB

Expand affordable housing programs through zoning incentives & reform the LDC to encourage mixed-use, mixed-income developments near transit hubs. Anti-displacement measures, tenant protections & community land trusts are key for stability. Public safety should prioritize violence prevention, mental health interventions & unarmed first responders.

PHN

My 16-point priority plan includes increasing affordable housing, improving public transit, and ensuring safety measures build trust within communities. I will push for policies that prioritize community-driven solutions and make housing and safety accessible to all, especially low-income and working-class families.

TS

We need to increase supply, continue to fund for the creation and preservation of dedicated affordable housing units, and continue programs that keep people in their homes. I want to address the fentanyl crisis especially working with the Texas Legislature to legalize test strips.

Question 5: Do you/will you support a significant budget increase for APH next year?

EB

Yes, in the wake of COVID-19 and the housing affordability crisis, APH is critical in addressing health disparities and social service needs. Increased funding will expand services like mental health care, homelessness support & preventative healthcare, enabling APH to better serve vulnerable populations and reduce long-term public health costs.

PHN

Yes, I support a budget increase for APH. My 16-point priority plan emphasizes expanded funding for mental health, healthcare, and food security programs. We need to ensure APH has the resources to meet growing community needs, especially for working families and vulnerable populations.

TS

I support increases in the budget for APH.

Question 6: How do you propose that there will be coordination between City project plans that often seem to overlap, and/or how do you propose that strategies proposed by projects being conducted by different silos within the City don't explicitly conflict with each other?

EB

Austin needs a more integrated, transparent approach to project planning. Many feel fatigue from the number of initiatives and unclear communication. Cross-department collaboration, regular meetings, multi-project public forums & real-time dashboards can align strategies, improve engagement & track progress.

PHN

My 16-point priority plan emphasizes breaking down silos by fostering cross-department collaboration and improving community engagement. I'll advocate for transparent and centralized communication to ensure residents can easily track and participate in citywide initiatives, creating cohesive strategies that align with community needs.

TS

The Environmental Investment Plan efforts to review city climate plans from different departments was a good model. The City Manager should direct Assistant City Managers to review plans for different departments to eliminate overlapping and competing priorities

OVCT Asks: District 10 City Council Candidates



Ashika Ganguly



Marc Duchen

Question 1: If elected, how will you adequately advocate for programs that serve vulnerable and underserved clients who rely on Health and Human Services to meet their basic needs?

AG

As a teacher, I saw firsthand how Austin's policies affect families, who face challenges with affordability, healthcare, and transit. This drove me to pursue public policy and run for City Council. I'm dedicated to advocating for efficient social services and working with stakeholders to support vulnerable Austinites and drive systemic change.

MD

As someone who has survived cancer and chronic illness, I will advocate for affordable childcare, access to healthcare, and mental health services. I support programs like Prop A, which expands daycare funding, and I will work to ensure every dollar is effectively spent to address gaps in essential services.

Question 2: If elected, what are your plans to address the underlying causes that contribute to the significant increase of health and human service needs by members of our community?

AG

Investing in housing, support services, and addiction treatment improves public safety and reduces housing instability. These solutions support vulnerable neighbors and lower costs for taxpayers by decreasing reliance on the criminal justice system. It's a smarter, more compassionate approach to Austin's future.

MD

I'll increase affordable housing options, expand accessible childcare through initiatives like Prop A, and enhance public safety services. By addressing housing instability, childcare gaps, and improving emergency response, we can tackle the root causes of health and human service needs.

Question 3: What do you think the City of Austin is doing well, and poorly, to address the needs of community members living in poverty?

AG

Austin has progressed on affordability and connectivity, despite state limitations. However, development alone won't solve deep poverty. I support partnering with the County on social programs like the Mental Health diversion center, enacting the affordable childcare bond, and strengthening safety nets for our most vulnerable residents.

MD

The City has passed many bonds to help those in poverty, but funds remain unspent and efficiency needs improvement, especially compared to other big cities. Central Health needs to prioritize spending promised money on indigent care, which would make a huge difference for those living in poverty.

OVCT Asks: District 10 City Council Candidates



Ashika Ganguly



Marc Duchen

Question 4: How can Austin best address the safety needs and affordable/accessible housing needs of our community?

AG

Austin can address housing and safety by expanding housing through zoning, mixed-income developments, and tenant protections. For public safety, we should invest in mental health crisis teams, violence prevention, community policing, and decriminalize poverty related offenses to reduce reliance on the criminal justice system and promote equity.

MD

Austin must improve police response times, enhance mental health crisis response, and add affordability guardrails to initiatives like HOME. Let's use all of our affordable housing tools: government-subsidized housing, community land trusts, streamlining permitting for homebuilding, reforming short term rentals, etc.

Question 5: Do you/will you support a significant budget increase for APH next year?

AG

Before budget deliberations, I aim to lead Council, APH leaders, and regional stakeholders to evaluate the impact of previous budget expansions on public communication and health services. It's essential that our budget reflects a commitment to health and human services while promoting equitable access to existing programs.

MD

Increasing funding for Austin Public Health is essential to meet critical needs. Addressing health disparities, expanding affordable daycare, and investing in preventive mental health initiatives that need resources. Many health-related programs were transferred to other departments so (on paper) APH's budget is actually decreasing significantly.

Question 6: How do you propose that there will be coordination between City project plans that often seem to overlap, and/or how do you propose that strategies proposed by projects being conducted by different silos within the City don't explicitly conflict with each other?

AG

With years of experience at the State Capitol addressing stalled legislative solutions, I understand the community's frustrations. To bridge this gap, I'll provide regular updates on city projects, streamline permitting, and collaborate with the City Planning Office to enhance public engagement with a project tracker for transparency and input.

MD

The City needs a centralized project dashboard that tracks large projects like Project Connect, providing clear timelines and community updates. I propose a cross-department coordination team to align priorities, reduce overlap, and actively engage community input to ensure residents' voices are genuinely reflected in implementation.