

The Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
2009 City Council and Mayoral Candidates
Questionnaire
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District 7

1. Economic Development, Job Creation, and Retention: How would you encourage job creation and retention? Please describe the model/tools and/or incentives you would support to boost economic development in San Antonio. What are your thoughts on addition organized labor entering the San Antonio region?

The quality of life that a City has to offer significantly influences whether businesses will locate there. As a City, we can encourage job creation by enhancing what San Antonio offers to workers and their families. Issues like safety and security must remain a top priority. Continuing to invest in clean streets and parks, good schools, improved transportation models, and low cost utilities is also critical. By improving our quality of life we help create a productive workforce, which in turn can help companies become more profitable. Moreover, a focus on quality of life enhances the work being done by the Office of Economic Development. It has established tools and incentives to boost development. However, we must not forget that over 80% of businesses in San Antonio are small business. We need to do more as a city to reach out and retain those companies. I was raised in a small family business and I spent my career working for Southwestern Bell, a unionized company. Both entities shared similar values; respecting workers, safe working conditions, and producing a good product. When these values are upheld, there's less need for organizing and a greater desire to do quality work.

2. Emergency Services: Do you believe that the City of San Antonio provides adequate Police and Fire protection and other emergency services for its citizens? Please explain. If additional personnel are required, what funds will be used to pay for service enhancements?

For a city the size of San Antonio we are understaffed 500 police officers. The Chief of Police presented the city manager, Ms. Sculley, with a 5-year plan to improve our staffing numbers. The plan recommends an increase of 100 officers per year. Additionally, the police are facing a serious retirement bubble. The 100 additional officers per year barely cover retirements and the fire department also needs more staffing and equipment. Over 55% of the city budget is allocated to police and fire. In our pending budget deficit the City Manager has called for a 1%

decrease in police and fire. We do not need less safety allocation at a time when we will be asking more of our police and fire fighters. Nim Kid, the city's emergency response coordinator, has been very successful in obtaining Homeland Security grants for security enhancements. I would support these efforts and would stress the need for additional personnel.

3. Education: What role should local government have on education and workforce issues? How can the City be involved in student mentoring and dropout prevention programs? If additional monetary resources are being recommended, from where will they come?

More than ever we need graduates that are job ready. Unfortunately, we are witnessing more graduates finishing school below graduate aptitude. We should focus our efforts in creating partnerships between the Chambers, education institutions and workforce development agencies to combat this problem. The City's role has been to budget funds for afterschool programs, learning centers, and summer programs. During my term on council, I used my discretionary monies to fund every second grader in District 7 to visit the Children's Museum and the Magik Theatre. Because outings are excluded in today's school curriculum, I left it important to step in and fill that void. Also I funded two classes and teachers to a one week summer robotics training to enhance math and science curriculum. Ultimately, the answers to curbing dropouts and truancy should be spearheaded by school districts and supported by city government.

4. Water: What do you think about the status of water with regard to the current drought? What is your plan to improve the quantity and quality of water for our City and region? How will your proposal(s) be funded?

We are very fortunate in San Antonio that the Edwards Aquifer provides us with an extremely pure water source. Anything we do to limit its absorption or create impurities is a disservice to the health of our community. Scientific research tells us that impervious cover over 15% can endanger the Aquifer. Sadly, we do not know what the total impervious cover of the Aquifer is today nor is there a comprehensive plan. This is a conversation what we should be holding at city, county and regional level. There is current program that uses sales tax money to buy undeveloped land over the Edwards Aquifer and its tributaries and I would like to see this program continued.

5. Transportation: What transportation projects would you recommend and support in order to alleviate our traffic congestion issues? How would your proposed projects be funded? Please share your thoughts on the

recommendations of the San Antonio Bexar County Transportation Task Force.

Recently there was a restructuring of the transportation authority aimed at creating less duplication and overlap among the entities that tackle the issues of transportation. In addition to large scale, long-term planning and solutions such as light rail, we need to consider small scale, short-term solutions. For instance, we presently don't offer an express bus from Bandera at 1604 all the way into downtown. During my term on council, Via only offered service out to Mainland and Bandera. I was able to help facilitate the creation of a community friendly bus route all the way to 1604. Now, we need an express route that gets these riders directly into downtown. The expansion can be funded by passengers who would participate in more rider friendly routes.

6. Energy: Do you believe our municipally owned electric utility has done a good job diversifying our energy mix, including coal, natural gas, nuclear power, wind and solar? Please share your thoughts on the importance of each of these sources.

CPS has done an outstanding job in their diversification and implementation of conservation methods. They have been proactive in teaching their consumers to conserve energy. The next sitting council will decide the future energy pathway. In conversations with residents in my district, they have expressed opposition of expansion through nuclear power. There are many unresolved questions regarding waste disposal, safety and security, and the cost. CPS has already budgeted \$276 million dollars in preliminary design and engineering costs. That money could have been used to winterize 69,000 homes, where materials and labor could have been purchased locally and thus injecting our local economy with that sum. I would be open to a conversation about putting to public vote the issue of expanding our nuclear power sources.

7. City Budget and Finance: What are your top five budget priorities for FY 2009-2010? What is your position on increasing revenue streams for the City to address basic city services, such as streets, drainage and other infrastructure improvements?

My top priority is safety, which includes police protection, fire protections and emergency medical services. Infrastructure is also critical. Maintaining our streets, sidewalks and drainage system are important in our daily routines but also in upholding property values. Another of my priorities is workforce, business and economic development, so that jobs will continue to come and stay in San Antonio. Our neighborhoods are

also among my top priorities with an emphasis on graffiti abatement and animal control. And finally, I would prioritize city employee compensation, to continue the Civilian Pay Plan, that way we can ensure that our city workforce is productive and proactive in dealing with the difficult challenges that lie ahead. The state of the economy is forcing our city to get back to basics – to return to the nuts and bolts services outlined in our City Charter. But we can still be innovative in increasing our revenue streams. During my term on council, I pointed out to the City Manager that we did not have one dedicated grant writer for the City. Thanks to my recommendation, funding was allocated for that position and that person has brought in over a million dollars in grant funding. Our city employees can also be helpful and creative in showing management how to cut costs and wasteful spending.