

# Candidate Questionnaire on Climate and Energy

350 Austin, Solar Austin, Earth Day Austin, Shades of Green

**Candidate Name:** Mayor Steve Adler

**Candidate For:** Mayor of Austin

**1. What are your top three priorities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Austin, and what actions would you take to implement needed changes?**

My top three priorities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Austin are: 1) carbon neutrality for the City of Austin by 2020, 2) net-zero community-wide greenhouse gases by 2050 and 3) building a resilient and adaptive community in the face of undeniable climate change. I will continue to undertake these important actions, among others, towards those goals: pushing for as much renewable energy as is possible (consistent with our affordability goals that help protect lower income Austinites), closing the coal plant, facilitating electrification of and actually electrifying cars and buses (both public fleets and private vehicles) including expanding the number and location of charging stations, new mobility technologies, and procurement, keeping Austin on the leading edge of the Zero Waste movement, advancing large scale battery research and testing, and advancing the conservation and supply distribution practices for Austin Energy and our water utility (including development of new business models for each as called for in the Water Forward plan). Austin has long taken steps in these or similar directions, especially in recent years. But city leadership, together with stakeholder groups, needs to keep pressing forward.

**2. As mayor or council member, you will be a member of the Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee. What will you do to make sure that Austin Energy takes the necessary steps to phase out its use of fossil fuels for power generation by 2030?**

As Vice-Chair of the Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee, I have and will continue to support closing our remaining coal plant and minimizing reliance on gas plants, increasing the renewable power generation in our portfolio, promote energy efficiency and distributed and community renewable power generation, development of new battery and storage capabilities and technologies, expansion of automotive electrification and supportive infrastructure. Please see the response to the preceding question, no. 1.

Ultimately, we need a new business plan for Austin Energy that is less dependent on selling generated power. In the meantime, this 10-1 council has passed the most

cost-effective utility-scale solar contracts in the world, at the time they were passed. More than half of the city's energy will be renewable by 2020, and we have set aggressive goals to reach 65% by 2027 and to push for 75% in that same time frame.

Austin's solar advocates should be proud of their role in our progress to date. In 2016, Austin Energy had 1,000 mobile installations of rooftop solar- more than the combined total for all prior (8) years of the rebate program. In 2017, our 10-1 Council approved an update to Austin's Resource, Generation and Climate Protection Plan affirming our strong commitments, laid out above, through 2027. And later this year, the Council will have an opportunity to consider a landmark solar purchase power agreement – for 144 MWs - that would allow us to exceed our local goal of 110 MW by 2020 and meet 72% of our total local solar goal for 2025.

**3. Despite declining costs of solar, many low income residents and multi-family housing tenants are challenged to participate in Austin Energy's existing rooftop solar programs. Do you think it is important to expand access to solar by developing targeted programs and policies at Austin Energy? Please explain.**

Yes. Rooftop solar can get expensive and the upfront cost has been prohibitive for many. It is important to look at equitable access to renewable energy, in all respects, including whether and how renters and low- income families, as well as Austinites utilizing our Customer Assistance Program might participate. I have enthusiastically gone out into the community to promote targeted programs like Austin Energy's Community Solar program, which provides access to locally-generated solar energy for residential customers who wants to promote clean, local energy - that includes renters, homeowners with shaded roofs, or anyone who doesn't want to install and maintain a rooftop solar system with support for those that need financial assistance to participate. Such a policy meets both our renewable energy generation goals and our underlying goal in all things to promote equity.

**4. Local, distributed scale solar installation has produced values to the utility, community and the local economy. Do you support the expansion of utility investment programs (including rebates) for installing solar locally within the Austin Energy territory? Please explain.**

Yes, I have been consistently supportive of utility investment programs, including our rebate program. We must continue to do this in a way that appropriately calibrates rebates to maximize participation in community solar while keeping overall utility rates as affordable as possible for low income families and individuals.

**5. What specific role and responsibility do you see Austin taking in responding to local, regional and international impacts of climate change, including preparing for large numbers of people displaced by extreme weather events?**

Austin has taken on an ever greater and increasingly visible leadership role among cities in Texas, the country, and internationally through the C40 Cities alliance and the Under2 Coalition, and we have a responsibility to expand and elevate further this role. International leadership has now expects Austin to take an increasing leadership role. Since taking office, I have been proud to be an environmental Mayor. I've traveled to Paris and Mexico City, and around the US, to represent our city at climate meetings to share best practices, learn, and help build momentum power the voice for climate change mitigation. Adhering to the Mayors Compact that I was privileged to sign – C40 Cities and the Under2 Coalition of international, subnational governments, and the Paris Climate Accords – are top priorities. Our city is assuming a leadership role in climate change other ways, too. Two recent examples would be our successfully competing for Bloomberg Foundation environmental grants and our recent electrification/equity project that received a best practice national award from the United States Conference of Mayors. I have worked for us to achieve both. I have been assuming increasing leadership roles among my peer mayors in these organizations to help build momentum and alliances in this space. I have also been clear, both in the larger national conversations about refugees and migrants, and in specific instances such as our welcoming response to Harvey evacuees, that displaced persons, including those displaced by extreme weather events, are welcome in our city. This of course, also means being prepared ourselves. In addition to our own city's Climate Resilience Action Plan for City of Austin Assets and Operations, the City of Austin has several plans in place or underway to increase the climate resilience and adaptation of the community at large. Those plans include Imagine Austin, the forthcoming Water Forward Plan, the Onion Creek and Williamson Creek Buyout Programs, our Heat Island Mitigation Program, the Austin/Travis County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, City of Austin Hazard Mitigation Plan, Austin Urban Forest Plan, Austin Energy Weatherization Assistance and the Get Back in Business (Small Business Preparedness Program).