



City of Austin

Ora Houston, Council Member District 1

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January 29, 2018

Dear Bond Election Advisory Task Force,

Please accept my thanks to each of you for your service on the Task Force. While this may appear to be a daunting task, the work that you are doing it is critically important to both ‘newcomers and those who have lived here for years’.

I advocate on behalf of many of the individuals who reside in the City who are experiencing the pressures brought on by the rapid growth in the City of Austin, especially young families with children, elders, individuals with different abilities and those whose incomes are at the low end of the wage scale. They are being forced to relocate, sometimes to the edges of or outside the center city because they cannot afford to stay in the city due to rising cost of living. Some families have lived in the community for five generations or longer.

It is my belief that city policies, including fiscal policies, must allow individuals who are hanging on by a thin thread, to ‘live within their means’ and not have another tax rate increase for the 2018 Bond. Aside from the financial burden to our constituents, it may be the reason for some to cast a ‘no’ vote for the much needed bonds. Individuals will soon be experiencing the impact of the \$720 million Mobility Bond, followed closely by the \$1 billion dollar school bonds.

As public servants it is important to be extremely thoughtful regarding how the funds taxpayers approve are spent and ensure that projects are identified through an equity lens. Bond priorities have been historically based on the zip codes in the City or in the neighborhoods with the economic and political power to demand that their projects are included.

I am writing to share my preferred priorities for the 2018 Bond proposal.

- Flood mitigation, bridge reconstruction and regional ponds for the urban watersheds in the District;
- Funding for deferred maintenance at the Carver Museum;
- Implementation of phases II & III for the Carver Museum & Genealogy Center;
- Funds to collaborate with developers to construct income accessible housing on City of Austin property or on land owned by other governmental entities;
- A district pool at Colony Park (perhaps a natatorium);
- Funding for the implementation of the master plan for Givens Park (named for Dr. Everett Givens, DDS) and construction of a much needed new pool;
- Master plan for recreational and leisure activities to further develop Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park as an outdoor venue to assist in mitigating traffic congestion in the city center.

Other priorities not on any list:

- Sidewalk infrastructure outside of the 'urban core' (east of Hwy 183 – District is composed of 46 square miles);
- Construction of a facility for the Municipal Court that is safe and asbestos free (partner and/or co-locate);
- The need to relocate police headquarters to a location that is not so close to the interstate (easy target);
- Travis County Exposition rehabilitation, repurpose and reuse (public/private partnership).

Once again I very much appreciate your dedication, focus, time and the difficult decisions that the Task Force must make.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "O Houston". The letter "O" is large and circular, with a vertical line through it. The name "Houston" is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Council Member Ora Houston
District #1