

Manager Matters

District 4 City Manager Profile Feedback

Submitted by

Julio Gonzalez Altamirano

July 5th, 2017

Table of Contents

Overview	3
Skills & Abilities	4
Facilitating a new public safety consensus.....	4
Supporting shared prosperity.....	4
Coordinating transportation mode shift.....	5
Enhancing neighborhood-level democracy.....	6
Preparing for climate change.....	7
Leading Austin’s best workforce.....	7
Acting as a bulwark for responsible budgeting.....	8
Delivering performance turnarounds.....	8
Personal Attributes	10
Empathy.....	10
Accessibility.....	10
Creativity.....	10
Culture Fit.....	10
Integrity.....	11
Collaborative.....	11
Analytical.....	11
Loves Cities.....	11
Critical Challenges	12
Growth management.....	12
Economic shocks from automation & climate change.....	12
Federal & Texas state assault of local governance.....	12
Appendix A: Suggested Reading	13

Overview

In the coming decade, Austin will face continued challenges creating inclusive economic growth while responding to a hostile state and national policy environment.

District 4 residents are looking for a uniquely talented public sector manager that can successfully lead the sizeable and complex enterprise that is the City of Austin as it provides a vigorous municipal response to challenges our community will face.

In accordance with the feedback format selected by the City Manager Search Advisory Task Force, this document provides resident responses in the areas of (1) skills and abilities, (2) personal attributes, and (3) critical challenges.

The feedback presented in this document is based on a community meeting attended by 28 residents, as well as ten separate one-on-one conversations with District 4 residents and stakeholders conducted by the document's author. The document's text attempts to relay the precise language and terms utilized by District 4 residents whenever possible.

These items do not reflect the public feedback and invited testimony received by the Task Force at its public hearings.

Skills & Abilities

Facilitating a new public safety consensus

Over the past decade, public safety has dominated Austin's General Fund spending as the City increased budgeted positions for its police, fire, and EMS services. National events, state policy intervention, along with local fiscal and management concerns have prompted District 4 residents to raise a variety of pressing questions about accountability and effectiveness in policing, as well as questions about fiscal sustainability across all the public safety services.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager effectively support the creation of a new public safety consensus.

Rigorous use of research-backed metrics to evaluate requests for new public safety positions and operational changes.

Experience providing collaborative, public feedback to the Police Chief on areas for improvement in patrol and investigative operations.

Demonstrated ability to implement alternative crime reduction strategies beyond patrol increases, such as cost-effective mental health and drug treatment programs.

Ability to collaborate with police leadership to strengthen investigative capabilities and boost clearance rates.

Track record of successful negotiation with police leaders to ensure accountability on use-of-force and misconduct.

Commitment to ensuring all public safety services match Austin's diversity on categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Partnered with policymakers and budget staff to clearly identify long-term fiscal consequences of healthcare and pension obligations encumbered through adopted public safety contracts and operational changes.

Supporting shared prosperity

District 4 residents wish to address the uneven benefits of Austin's economic growth, as well as the city's persistent economic and racial segregation. The limited prospects for meaningful shared prosperity policies emanating from the federal government or Texas policymakers have put the spotlight on cities as the likely leaders on shared prosperity policies.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager ensure the City of Austin thoughtfully contributes to shared prosperity.

Measures equity, publicly communicates equity measurements, and adjusts recommendations and plans to ensure equity.

Demonstrated ability to engage renters (Austin is a renter-majority city) and include their point-of-view in policy recommendations and operational decisions.

Experience partnering with higher-education institutions to implement innovative partnerships that support economic fairness (e.g. voluntary payments to support transit, student and employee-focused housing construction, and support for paid student internships).

Commitment to low-income and marginal community members. Proven drive to desegregate and boost diversity in employment, health, housing, transportation, and policing.

Ability to implement economic fairness and equity criteria into economic development programs.

Experience shifting building code oversight from law enforcement approach to tenant protection and support.

Familiarity with concepts of “intersectionality” and “positionality”.

Coordinating transportation mode shift

The residents of District 4 agree with oft-repeated formulation that Austin will not solve its mobility and congestion issues simply by building additional road capacity. They are eager to usher in a shift in available transportation choices that emphasizes alternatives to car-centered mobility and that reduces the rate of injuries and deaths from car crashes.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager ensure the City of Austin thoughtfully contributes to coordinating the implementation of transportation mode shift across the relevant local agencies.

Experience advocating for and implementing mass transit.

Demonstrated ability to implement expansion to an urban bicycle network.

Familiarity with best practices in creating walkable commercial corridors and neighborhoods.

Ensured on-time and on-budget completion for road maintenance projects.

Believes in the concepts underpinning the “law of induced demand for traffic congestion”.

Commitment to pro-active efforts to reduce injuries and fatalities from car crashes.

Enhancing neighborhood-level democracy

Austin features a diverse array of neighborhood-level stakeholders including legacy neighborhood associations, “friends” of neighborhoods groups, tenant organizations, neighborhood-focused digital communities, community development entities, civic clubs, and merchant groups. District 4 residents expect the next City Manager to engage Austin’s diverse array of neighborhood-level groups and aim to ensure greater inclusion of historically marginalized groups in neighborhood-level decision-making.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager ensure the City of Austin thoughtfully contributes to enhancing neighborhood-level democracy.

Collaborative partnerships with neighborhood-level organizations to assess needs and fine-tune implementation plans.

Commitment to reforming neighborhood consultation procedures to comply with Fair Housing laws.

Demonstrated track-record of providing resources for growth in broad neighborhood-level organizing and engagement that includes renters and homeowners across all income-levels and tenure in the city.

Experience engaging renters and in working in a renter-majority community.

Background in community organizing.

Experience implementing participatory budgeting initiatives.

Developed initiatives that targeted funds for services such as parks, transportation, and libraries towards densely populated areas to ensure higher fund productivity.

Preparing for climate change

District 4 residents agree with the scientific consensus: the planet’s climate-warming trend over the past century is extremely likely to be the result of human activities. The next City Manager will need to be pro-active in implementing Council priorities that address climate change, as well as in managing the City’s operations towards establishing long-term resiliency in local public systems – particularly the electric and water utilities - given the likely impacts of climate-warming.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager successfully prepare the City of Austin for climate change.

Acknowledges the reality of human-driven climate-warming.

Experience providing performance feedback to executive leaders of publicly-owned utilities.

Track-record of working with utility executive leadership to calibrate utility models that balance fiscal sustainability, affordability, and carbon reduction goals.

Ability to optimize capital investments to enhance flood management and watershed protection.

Leading Austin’s best workforce

In addition to efficiently providing high-quality public services, District 4 residents believe the City of Austin should set a high bar as forward-thinking employer that acts as a model for other large enterprises in the region.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager ensure that the City of Austin performs as a model employer in Central Texas.

Ability to create a workplace that supports employee advancement and growth by modifying organizational structure, position designs, and pay grades.

Commitment to enabling civil servants an ability to share and collaborate on developing policy recommendations without fear of political meddling or intimidation.

Experience using a designated “Devil’s Advocate” for high-stakes decision-making.

Ensures a work climate that was rated as healthy by workers, and promoted creativity and risk-taking.

Helped create parity between community demographics and city workforce.

Proven commitment to creating a workplace with no tolerance for sexual harassment.

“Busted silos” across department to focus on solving problems instead of being driven by organizational inertia.

Advocacy for pay equity, on-site childcare, and paid parental leave initiatives.

Experience with turning around departments with troubling talent departures or morale problems.

Constructive relationship with relevant collective bargaining associations.

Acting as a bulwark for responsible budgeting

Feedback provided by District 4 residents emphasized a desire to balance forward-looking public investments without saddling future generations with unsustainable budget obligations.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager act as a responsible steward of the City of Austin’s finances.

Public sector management experience with substantial budgets and operational complexity.

Demonstrated ability to successfully achieve goals with budgeted funds.

Ability to manage capital project and infrastructure contracts to meet cost and quality expectations.

Experience “telling unpleasant truths” to policymakers and community leaders.

Delivering performance turnarounds

The preferred City Manager leadership style communicated by District 4 residents emphasized the need for a leader that generally avoided micro-managing senior personnel, but that would assertively engage troubled divisions or unexpected problems to ensure enduring performance improvements.

The following skills and abilities will help the next City Manager deliver performance turnarounds for troubled divisions, as well as quick resolution to surprise challenges.

Proven ability to improve the performance of divisions or teams under distress and/or failing to meet reasonable expectations.

Fluency with information technology domains such as relational databases, client-server architecture, telecommunications infrastructure and protocols, data modeling, and software application development.

Experience with business process re-engineering.

Ease with quantitative reasoning.

Personal Attributes

District 4 residents identified several personal attributes they would like the next City Manager to possess. The most frequently identified attributes can be grouped into the characteristics provided below.

Empathy

District 4 residents indicated a strong preference for individuals with lived experience that allow them to relate to diverse populations and respect the unique challenges marginal groups face. City Manager candidates should have experience working effectively with LGBTQ individuals, people of different races, cultures, and income levels; and they should have a proven dedication to addressing the issues of the most vulnerable, not the loudest and most wealthy. Residents also expressed a desire for a City Manager with a proven ability to listen to all generations (from the elderly to “millennials”).

Accessibility

Feedback from the District 4 community emphasized the need for a City Manager that would be “visible” to the community and personable enough that – in the words of one resident – the City Manager would be “approachable to all, from homeless to elite.”

Creativity

Many District 4 residents agreed with the need to find someone “open to non-traditional ways of doing things”. They are seeking a person that is inherently an “option generator” for community leaders and Council Members, instead of a “my way or else” implementer.

Culture Fit

A very frequent request from District 4 residents was a bilingual City Manager, with Spanish being the preferred pairing with English. The City Manager should be committed to providing language accessibility to all of Austin’s diverse groups. There were also requests for a musical pedigree ranging from enjoying music to being able to sing and play an instrument. A “love of the outdoors” as well as appreciation for urban hiking and trails was also requested by District 4 residents.

Integrity

District 4 residents are seeking someone committed to public service and not simply looking out for their personal advancement. They want a City Manager that makes choices that convey that they are a mission-driven person.

Collaborative

Team-oriented, adaptive leadership that avoids being excessively prescriptive was the consensus leadership style from District 4 residents. Many residents vocalized their desire for a leader with the ability to make “tough decisions” where the right solution might be unpopular in the short-term.

Analytical

The next City Manager should be rigorous analysts, capable of long-term thinking and dealing with uncertainty. The City Manager should have a track-record of setting and communicating clear goals and evaluating their effectiveness towards meeting those goals. Many District 4 residents specifically requested that the next City Manager be “Intellectually curious”.

Loves Cities

The following description from a District 4 resident captured a common view from community members: “Cities can be magical. Austin is growing and needs to become a real city.” District 4 residents seek a City Manager that believes in the positive role city government and the municipal public sector can play in improving the lives of Austinites.

Critical Challenges

Growth management

This includes the many challenges created by a city experiencing relatively rapid population growth: housing shortages, the appropriate distribution of costs to build new infrastructure, managing shared resources, ensuring preservation of historically important artifacts, spaces, and structures, investing in productive transportation projects, and ensuring fiscal sustainability for the post-boom version of the city.

Economic shocks from automation & climate change

Another common thread amongst District 4 residents identifying critical challenges was the belief that we need to prepare for several incoming economic shocks based on climate change and powerful new technology-driven changes, namely continued automation in all its forms (service job-destroying software applications, robotics, autonomous vehicles, etc.)

Federal & Texas state assault of local governance

District 4 residents uniformly cited hostile state & federal policy initiatives as a critical challenge that the next City Manager will need to help Council and other community leaders navigate.

Appendix A: Suggested Reading

District 4 residents made several “suggested reading” recommendations for the next City Manager.

These included several City of Austin documents: the 1928 Master Plan, the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan, and the “Quality of Life” series of reports.

In addition, residents recommended:

Evicted: Poverty & Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond

Drawdown by Paul Hawken and Tom Steyer

Human Transit: How Clearer Thinking about Public Transit Can Enrich Our Communities and Our Lives by Jarrett Walker

The Campaign Zero solutions page at: <https://www.joincampaignzero.org/solutions/>

Weapons of Math Destruction by Cathy O’Neil