

Go Green Highland Park Candidate Questionnaire

1. Please state your name and a brief explanation why you are running for City Council.

My name is Andrés Tapia.

Why I am running:

My platform is for an even more welcoming and thriving Highland Park.

My over 25-years as a business leader with strategic planning experience, and my deep knowledge of what it takes to create diverse, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable communities provides me with a fresh and differentiated perspective -- yet, this perspective is grounded in Highland Park realities having lived and raised my family here for 30 years. Further, I am a results-oriented business leader, with the ability to put strategic planning into action to move our businesses, our neighborhoods, and our residents forward post-pandemic. I will be able to bring my experience as a collaborative professional who has a deep understanding and commitment to building a more diverse community that is equitable and inclusive for all. I am a visionary leader ready to help balance the wants and needs of all residents guided by the priorities of fiscal stability, public safety, infrastructure investment, and community vibrancy. Community vibrancy includes the environment, the arts, historic preservation, and everything that makes Highland Park a special place now and in the future.

2. Briefly describe any environmental accomplishments or projects in Highland Park, in which you have been involved.

I see care for our environment as a through line in the core priorities of the City. A green infrastructure is cost efficient, it makes life healthier for all, and it adds to our community vibrancy.

As a nature lover and avid outdoors person who is also concerned about the impact of climate change in practically every area of our lives, I am proud to live in a city that takes the environment -- and our responsibility to do our part in reducing our carbon footprint -- seriously. I am fully committed to be an active leader and participant with the rest of The City Council on ensuring we fulfill our commitment to our three-year Sustainability Plan and beyond.

3. Highland Park has a robust Sustainability Plan. Are you familiar with the plan and how would you improve or change it?

Yes, I am familiar with it. It is comprehensive, holistic, leading edge, and actionable. Its holistic nature is particularly notable in that it seeks to address interrelated issues as parts of a whole (energy, natural areas, waste, economic development, communication, leadership, etc.). As a City Councilman it would be my fiduciary responsibility to carrying out the carefully crafted plan. My focus would be on doing all we can to incorporate the specific goals into all decision making. As strategic planning is what I do as a professional, I am supportive of revisiting this plan every 3-years so that we continue to extend and expand the impact of green efforts and commitments.

4. If elected, do you plan to introduce any new initiatives to address the climate crisis? Do you have particular environmental priorities, or see connections with other priorities for your community?

In the current Sustainability Plan there are polices and ideas that are yielding meaningful measurable results and that have garnered deserved external recognition. Among the many steps are good and leading-edge practices such as preventing idling PACE busses, requiring dark sky compliant lighting in specific zones, achieving energy conservation at the water plan, and requiring that all future inspector and administrative vehicles be all-electric or hybrid. There are also specific goals that have been set such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions of 5% by 2025.

I am also supportive of all new commercial development include EV chargers and I would suggest that this also apply to all multi-family buildings and new residential. An additional emphasis I would bring is that I would like to see more done on noise pollution which affects many things such as quality of outdoor experiences, stress, and harmful impact on plant and animal life.

5. What can the city do to increase recycling, composting and waste reduction in Highland Park?

The City currently makes participating in the weekly curbside recycling program very easy through contractor LRS which has helped Highland Park have higher than national average recycling by residents and businesses.

I would advocate for more proactive and continual education of, and communication to, residents, visitors, and businesses of the various ways all can contribute to reducing our carbon footprint. There have been good communications created over the last few years, and there is an opportunity to integrate these messages into mainstream communications since we are trying to influence new habits, something very difficult to do.

6. Gas-powered leaf blowers emit dangerous greenhouse gases, operate at high decibel levels and push particles into the air which may include herbicides, pesticides and other unhealthy dust. Section 102.005 of our city code currently states that the penalties for using gas-powered leaf blowers between May 15 and October, 1 include a misdemeanor and a fine up to \$1,000 for the person using the equipment and a separate fine can be issued to the property owner for allowing it. What do you believe the city can do to hold landscaping companies accountable and to better enforce this ordinance?

I believe in the ordinance and I firmly believe in holding people accountable to the code but would be willing to entertain a conversation on the topic.

7. Do you support modifying existing city building codes to require electric vehicle charging readiness in new commercial, multi-unit and residential construction?

Yes

8. Many residents support a plastic bag ban in HP. Please share your thoughts on such a measure.

Reducing the use of plastic is important for the environment. But achieving this is going to require collective problem solving with the various parties that would be affected (small businesses, residents, shoppers) so we can come up with practical alternatives to easily move goods. There are new alternatives that are being developed and explored but a national standard has not yet been identified. It's also important to lobby county and state government to get support for developing incentives. As an elected official I would be willing to commit to working toward smartly reducing our dependence on single-use plastic bags.

9. Optional: What do you do at home to reduce your carbon footprint?

My family takes steps to be stewards of our fragile planet. Just as we should take action as a City to integrate environmentally sustainable efforts into our day to day business, we have done the same where practical and economically feasible. A sample of actions include: purchase of a hybrid vehicle ten years ago with plans to replace it in 1-2 years with a 100% electric vehicle; we participate in a Clean Energy program for our home where we are either receiving clean energy or we are helping purchase it for the grid as a swap; we have looked into solar but our tree cover is an obstacle though we have recently come across "roofless solar" option which we are currently looking into; we have upgraded all our major and smaller appliances to the top tier in energy efficiency; we participate in weekly recycling program; we are mindful of making environmentally sound choices affecting our daily energy use in home; we donate used clothing still in good shape as well as unwanted items to charities that can use them instead of adding them to a landfill.

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