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Development community generous in giving to Randi Shade



Deborah Cannon/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Randi Shade says she listens to all sides.

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By **Sarah Coppola**
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Published: 9:57 p.m. Tuesday, June 14, 2011

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As Austin City Council Member Randi Shade raised money for her re-election effort over the past seven months, one industry was especially generous.

Members of the real estate and development community and their spouses have donated at least \$170,000 to Shade since her campaign began last fall, according to the four finance reports she's filed since then.

That's nearly half of the \$382,000 Shade has raised overall. And it's just an estimate. The true number is probably higher, because many donors did not list their job titles or employers on the finance reports, making them difficult to identify.

Shade came in 13 points behind Kathie Tovo in the May 14 general election. The runoff will be Saturday .

Nearly a fourth of Shade's total money came from a dozen "bundlers," supporters who gathered several donations on her behalf. They work for some of Austin's biggest lobbying, law and development firms, including Armbrust & Brown , Jackson Walker , Stratus Properties and Endeavor Real Estate Group .

Laurie Swan , a vice president at Stratus, said she raised money for Shade because "I've lived in Austin a long time, and for me, (the fundraising) is not about where I work and what I do for a living," she said. "I care about this place and think Randi is the right person for the job."

In addition, groups outside of Shade's campaign have spent substantial sums on Shade's behalf — including the Real Estate Council of Austin Good Government political action committee, which spent about \$55,000 on a pro-Shade get-out-the-vote effort.

"I believe the development special interests are contributing because they regard Shade as their representative on the City Council," Tovo said. "They are investing in a candidate and will expect a return on that investment."

Shade said just because people donated to her campaign or helped her raise money does not mean they'll get special treatment on city matters.

"People are defined by more than just their profession," Shade said.

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"For the Tovo campaign to narrowly define my base as the development community is insulting to all of the other people who are supporting me. I've proven that I'm not a tool of the development community. I have a reputation for listening to all sides."

Shade said she has broad support, with donations from the Jewish community, the gay community, the high-tech sector, the restaurant industry, employees at the University of Texas and nonprofit groups, among others.

Nearly half of Shade's 1,500 donors gave the maximum allowed under city rules — \$350 per person per election (\$350 for the general election and \$350 for the runoff).

A quarter of Tovo's 900 donors gave that much; most gave \$100 or less.

Tovo, a former Planning Commission member, began her campaign several months after Shade, in March , and has raised about \$147,000 .

About \$23,000 came from three bundlers — Danette Chimenti , who served with Tovo on the Planning Commission and the Austin Neighborhoods Council ; Bryan King , a member of the city's Board of Adjustment ; and Nikelle Meade , an attorney at the Austin law and lobbying firm Brown McCarroll .

Shade said many of Tovo's donors are "a very narrow group" of neighborhood and environmental activists who frequent City Hall and who Shade said often wield as much influence as or more than lobbyists and development representatives.

Tovo's donors include activists Jeff Jack of the Zilker Neighborhood Association; Bill Bunch and Colin Clark of the Save Our Springs Alliance ; and Brian Rodgers , a real estate investor and frequent critic of the City Council.

It's difficult to compile a complete tally of donors who are also neighborhood activists because candidates don't have to list donors' neighborhood affiliations or city involvement on their finance forms; they have to list only the job titles and employers of people who donate \$200 or more.

Tovo said her donors represent a broad cross section of people and include small-business owners, artists, Hispanic leaders and neighborhood advocates.

David Armbrust , a partner at the law and lobbying firm Armbrust & Brown who raised about \$25,000 for Shade, said it has become a common tactic for City Council candidates to criticize the development industry, but Shade is the kind of person who will keep an open mind regardless of who donates to her campaign.

Armbrust and another attorney at his firm, Richard Suttle , regularly lobby the City Council on behalf of development and business clients; Suttle is currently representing Formula One racetrack organizers in an upcoming council vote.

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



30 comments Sort:



 [pro-development](#) Score: 0
10:51 AM on June 16, 2011 [Report Abuse](#)













From Rob Lippincott, Owner of Guero's on South Congress
Re: Kathie Tovo


The story is, my partners and I, in the development to the north of Guero's, after working with the neighborhood association for over a year, held a mutual press conference with them, announcing our agreement to getting a variance for the project. That was on a Thursday. On Monday we went to the planning board meeting to get the variance. We were approached by a lawyer BCNA had hired and she told us the neighborhood association had changed their mind and would be going for a postponement, which they got (90 days). We found this out by reading the resignation letters of two of the members of the committee, Kathie had called a " special meeting " of the committee, excluding the two who resigned, because she knew they favored us, and had a new vote to go for a postponement. She then got them to agree not to tell anyone about their vote till the variance board meeting so we could not try to negotiate further. The upshot was the association spent \$10,000 on a lawyer and got a slightly worse deal from us. And we had to pay the bank for three more months of interest (\$18,000 a month as I recall) and in that time also hurricanes Katrina and Ike ??? came through raising building prices so much my family had to get out of part of the development. Altogether very scummy in my estimation, especially so when you know that her husband's architectural firm had been considered and then not hired for the project. She should have recused herself.

Hope I didn't get too worked up, but reliving those exciting days of yesteryear gets me going.
Hope to see you soon,

<p>-- Rob Lippincott 1400 S. Congress Austin, TX 78704</p>		
	<p>cosmoguy 6:40 PM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Score: -2 Report Abuse</p>
<p>All of these NIMBYs need to visit the inner city of Detroit if they're so interested in keeping low density...cuz that's what happens when everyone/everything moves to the 'burbs. I bet (what's left of) the residents in Detroit are DYING for development in the core.</p>		
<p> 3 replies</p>		
	<p>austingoober 3:53 PM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Score: -1 Report Abuse</p>
<p>I t would be useful to compare Sade's contributions to those of other sitting council members. Incumbents tend to get the support of the big players, including deveopment related interests. I think Shade's contributions are par for the course for an incumbent.</p>		
	<p>w_roos 3:10 PM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Score: 3 Report Abuse</p>
<p>Give me an example of a **major** decision on which Shady Shade broke with the developers. I don't consider approving a bikelane or a jogging path, while welcome, to be major.</p>		
	<p>Build It 2:09 PM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Score: -3 Report Abuse</p>
<p>As a developer, I have to say I'm so happy that Shade is dependent on our money and support. We've got her exactly where we want her. We say jump, she says how high. I'm really looking forward to the next 3 years with her as our go-to gal.</p>		
<p> 5 replies</p>		
	<p>txsgrl96 10:44 AM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Score: 4 Report Abuse</p>
<p>So it JUST HAPPENS that Randi Shade has 750 supporters who can afford to donate \$700 in this economy to support ONE candidate for city council? That's quite an investment.</p>		

	<p>The livin' is easy Score: 5 10:06 AM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
<p>The Statesman forgot to mention the huge toll-road contingent that is also behind Miss Shade's shady contributions.</p>		
	<p>burly Score: -2 9:59 AM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
<p>And Tovo supporters do not expect a return on their investment?</p>		
<p>4 replies</p>		
	<p>OldBlowhard Score: 2 9:26 AM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
<p>Shade's donors would be wiser to lease a bunch of buses and buy a bunch of KFC dinners Saturday for anybody with an ID and the time to take a ride to a polling place. My bet is early voting has already sealed victory for Tovo.</p>		
<p>3 replies</p>		
	<p>Matt78704 Score: 5 9:22 AM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
<p>Well, at least this article makes it very clear who the development community relies on to get their projects passed. Shade has tried to paint herself as a moderate, but she has clearly sided with the profit interests every time.</p>		
<p>1 reply</p>		
	<p>DefenderOfTheTruth Score: -3 9:19 AM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
<p>The 50k Tovo "loaned" herself isnt considered development money? I'm assuming it came from the architecture bankroll.</p>		
<p>3 replies</p>		
	<p>MT IN ATX Score: 10 9:14 AM on June 15, 2011</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
<p>The downtown developers are destroying the Austin music scene.</p>		
<p>Shade is backing the wrong team.</p>		
<p>I can't fully support Tovo but I CAN vote against the Shade/Leffingwell/Martinez block.</p>		


	gggarret 9:09 AM on June 15, 2011	Score: 8	Report Abuse
i would vote against anyone who took money from and is endorsed by richard suttler.			
 1 reply			
	pro-development 9:08 AM on June 15, 2011	Score: -2	Report Abuse
Kathie Tovo = Anti-Urban Density = Suburban Sprawl			
 10 replies			
	papa 8:37 AM on June 15, 2011	Score: 2	Report Abuse
Ydnar, new_word_otter , Think ahead please. first things first. Shade to be defeated first, then next election Martinez and leffingwel .			
	Ydnar 8:16 AM on June 15, 2011	Score: 1	Report Abuse
Stratus? That's Jim Bob Moffett! Hang her!!!			
	maelstrom 7:58 AM on June 15, 2011	Score: 2	Report Abuse
Send that bum Shade packing, vote for Kathie Tovo!			
	The Lorax 7:16 AM on June 15, 2011	Score: 9	Report Abuse
Take a gander at this -- Randi Shade wants to hand our tax dollars over to the British billionaire and Formula One racing boss Bernie Ecclestone.			
Does he really need our tax dollars? You decide -- he just bought his daughter America's most expensive mansion:			
http://realestate.yahoo.com/pr heiress-buys-americas-most-expensive-mansion.html			
 6 replies			
	papa 6:54 AM on June 15, 2011	Score: 2	Report Abuse
This is just the beginning... vote Shade out !!... then let's VOTE Mike Martines out. and grandpa Leffingwell out too !!. Lets go to the polls now !			
 2 replies			
	research	Score: -8	




6:37 AM on June 15, 2011

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After reading all the comments, let me get this straight. Ms. Shade supports business...and that is a bad thing? My vote is with Ms. Shade.

 4 replies




[prof](#)


1:08 AM on June 15, 2011

Score: 10

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Give me a break. Shade is a total lapdog for the developers. She hasn't cast a single vote against them, and that includes some votes that really stink. A small group of people doesn't come up with \$200,000 because they think a council member is generically good. As always, follow the money.

 4 replies



[PI](#)

12:10 AM on June 15, 2011

Score: 15


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A more nuanced understanding of the issues related to growth and development, is not growth vs. no growth, but whether growth should pay for itself.

With the Domain (\$60MM subsidy), as with the F1 track (\$290,000,000 subsidy), as with Water Treatment Plant 4 (impact fees to developers 1/10 the size of the public burden),as with the financial underpinnings of the Waller Creek Redevelopment (failed TIF mechanism is solved by placing a monthly fee on every Austin Water Utility account), and also the disparity between tax valuations for residential versus commercial properties (the former push the limit of market valuations, the later are always undervalued for tax purposes), it is always the same: the general public and existing tax base are taxed to subsidize growth.

Lets bring accountability and fiscal sustainability to growth and development. Growth should pay its own way. It doesn't need subsidy and it shouldn't be allowed a cosseted relationship with City Hall.

Vote for Kathie Tovo.

 [10 replies](#)




[Love Austin](#) Score: 10
12:09 AM on June 15, 2011

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This article makes clear why the Statesman has been writing love letters, er flattering articles, to Randi Shade all week. The Statesman fears that its real estate listings, which make up the bulk of the Sunday paper, would shrink if developer lapdog Randi Shade was not re-elected.


Darn, too much to comment on when talking about Randi Shade and developers' money.




[Love Austin](#) Score: 3
12:00 AM on June 15, 2011

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Ironic that as these F1 lobbyists fund Shade's campaign, today F1 boss (and billionaire) Bernie Ecclestone's 22 year-old daughter bought "the most expensive home listed for sale in the United States." Now F1 will need Austin taxpayers' dollars even more!


 [2 replies](#)



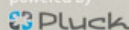
[peterpaul](#) Score: 8
11:26 PM on June 14, 2011

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please Randi, move away from the table. You have gorged enough.

 [2 replies](#)

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