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General Questions

Q1. Every candidate is talking about the housing affordability crisis. Housing costs are increasing for everyone, but renters in particular are bearing the brunt of this crisis, with many frequently spending 30, 40, and even 50% of their income on rent. What is your plan to bring down rent prices for both subsidized and market rate housing?

Answer:

The lack of housing affordability isn't just a talking point, it's the reality that families in our city live every day. Too many of our neighbors are paying 30%, 40%, or even 50% of their income on rent, and that is simply unsustainable. On the City Council, I've been clear: we can't just describe the crisis, we have to deliver solutions.

In my district, longtime residents are experiencing economic displacement at some of the highest rates in the city. According to the City of Boston's displacement map, Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan are among the hardest-hit. That's why affordability and stability have to be at the heart of everything we build. We need to build more units, but we need to ensure that we are simultaneously creating a variety of housing stock to meet the needs of residents and ensure families can not only stay in the neighborhoods they've built, but have real opportunities for long-term stability, wealth-building, and homeownership.

First, we created the Housing Acceleration Fund to jumpstart housing production. This puts the City in as an equity partner in developments—so we're not just watching from the sidelines, but actually shaping the type of housing that gets built. As an equity partner, we can help drive affordability and make sure these projects reflect what our communities truly need. Our own housing sites are also ripe for increasing density, which is a good opportunity to scale up and get creative with how we add more units that people can actually afford.



Second, enforcement and protections matter. We passed rent stabilization through the City Council, and now that proposal is at the State House. That was a clear statement that Boston renters deserve protection from displacement and predatory rent hikes. While we push the state to act, we're strengthening tenant protections locally and making sure landlords play by the rules.

Third, as Chair of Ways and Means, I've worked to increase investments in City-funded vouchers that help subsidize rents and housing for residents. We also invested in the first-ever position at the Boston Housing Authority focused on helping voucher holders purchase a home.

That not only creates a pathway to ownership and generational wealth, but also frees up an apartment at public housing sites—moving families off the waiting list and into stable housing.

And finally, we need to keep tackling costs at their root. That means streamlining permitting so that whether it's a porch renovation or a multi-family project, we're not tying things up in years of red tape that drive prices higher. The more efficiently we can build, the faster we can bring rents down.

At the end of the day, equity has to be at the center. I've fought to tie affordability to opportunity—so that residents in Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and across Boston not only have access to stable, affordable homes, but also to jobs and generational wealth. Because housing policy isn't just about rent prices, it's about building stronger, healthier, more stable communities.

We've made progress, but we know the work isn't done. The Council has to stay creative, keep listening to residents, and keep pushing bold ideas until every family in Boston can find and afford a home.

Q2. A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.” At over 4,000 pages, it is layered with districts, sub-districts, and other confusing variations that make most new development, from the smallest additions to large multi-family projects, more expensive and time-consuming than they need to be. What efforts do you support to simplify the zoning code and create consistent standards across the City?

Answer:



The zoning code we have today is bloated, outdated, and inequitable. If the code isn't fair and consistent, then the housing we create won't meet the real needs of our communities. That's why I support a comprehensive rewrite—not just to simplify the process, but to undo past harms of generations of flawed zoning policy. We need a code that builds the type of housing all communities need and to ensure our zoning is not furthering existing segregation and displacement. We have to make sure the growth we allow actually creates affordability, protects tenants, and opens pathways to homeownership.

Q3. What specific housing policy initiatives will you prioritize as an elected official?

Answer:

As for my priorities:

- Housing Acceleration Fund – Making the City an equity partner in development so we can help shape the type of housing we build and keep affordability at the center.
- Density Where It Works – Scaling density on City-owned sites and in areas that can support more housing, while making sure it's the right mix of units for families, seniors, and first-time buyers.
- Vouchers & Homeownership – Expanding City vouchers and supporting pathways to homeownership, including the first-ever BHA position to help voucher holders buy a home—building wealth while freeing up public housing units.
- Tenant Protections – Enforcing strong protections and continuing the fight for rent stabilization at the State House.
- Streamlined Permitting – Cutting red tape so that both small and large projects can move forward without unnecessary costs and delays.

At the end of the day, zoning should be a tool for equity. It should reflect our values as a city: that everyone deserves the opportunity to find and afford a home in Boston.

Current City Policy

Q4. Since the Squares and Streets initiative was launched in Q3 of 2023, one new district has been approved in Roslindale Square. What does it do well and how should it be improved? Which neighborhoods should be after Roslindale and why?

Answer:



The Squares and Streets initiative is about creating more housing and stronger neighborhood centers, and Roslindale Square shows a model of what's possible. It sets clearer rules and encourages walkable, mixed-use growth that can support both housing and small businesses. That's a step in the right direction.

But we also know each neighborhood is different, so we need to take this neighborhood by neighborhood. We should be starting in areas with the highest potential to increase density, and using real data—on housing demand, transit access, and infrastructure capacity—to guide those decisions.

At the same time, we have to be sensitive to the residents who already live in these neighborhoods. In some places, changing the zoning code could increase the risk of displacement, and that's why protections and strategies to keep residents in their communities must be a top priority. That means stronger tenant protections, affordable housing requirements, and pathways to ownership that make sure families can stay and grow in the neighborhoods they call home.

Roslindale shows us the potential. The challenge—and the opportunity—is to expand Squares and Streets in a way that delivers more housing and density, but does it equitably: with community input, data-driven decisions, and real safeguards against displacement.

Q5. Boston's new Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP), which went into effect in October 2024, raised the affordability requirements for new residential buildings requiring zoning relief and changed the structures of the cashout and off-site options. What do you think the impact of the new IDP policy has been?

Answer:

Unfortunately, current market conditions have slowed the pace of new housing production, so we haven't yet seen the full impact of the new IDP policy. But based on the research, the policy is achievable—and importantly, it's moving us toward deeper affordability.

One of the most promising aspects is that developers can meet their IDP obligations by including voucher holders. That's a win-win: families with the greatest need gain access to new units, and developers are able to meet their requirements in a meaningful way.



But I think the bigger picture is this: I constantly hear from residents asking, “When we build units, they say it’s affordable, but affordable for who?” At the same time, developers tell me about the overwhelming demand for the affordable units they do create—one developer shared they had 700 applicants for just 12 units. The need is undeniable, and IDP helps ensure new development actually meets it.

Residents also raise another critical point—affordable housing has to be spread across the city. Concentrating affordable units in only a few neighborhoods can limit economic growth and opportunity there. IDP is a tool to create more inclusive, balanced neighborhoods across Boston, where affordability and stability aren’t tied to just one zip code.

And for my district, this is especially urgent. The median household income for Black families is still below \$55,000. That reality has to shape how we measure affordability and make decisions about housing policy. If equity is at the center of implementation, IDP can be one of the most effective tools we have to both meet the need and build stronger, more inclusive communities.

Q6. This past December, the Boston City Council hosted members of the Austin City Council for a two-day visit, during which the Austin City Councilors presented recent zoning changes they enacted that resulted in increased housing production and lowered rents. Austin has made national headlines as one of the few cities in the US to see rents decrease over the past year. After a building boom resulting from these reforms, rents fell by more than 20% year over year from August 2023 to August 2024. Do you support Austin-style zoning reforms as a strategy for bringing down home prices?

Answer:

I was glad to welcome the Austin City Council to Boston, because we should be learning from other cities that are tackling the housing crisis head on. Their zoning reforms—citywide parking reform, height bonuses tied to affordability, streamlined development reviews, and transit-oriented development—helped spark a building boom. And the result is undeniable: Austin saw rents drop by more than 20% year over year, at a time when most cities saw rents going up.

But we also have to be clear—Boston isn’t Austin. Austin covers about 305 square miles of land, while Boston has less than a third of that—just 48 square miles of land. Austin can build higher and spread outward, while Boston really can only build up. That makes every square foot of buildable land in our city that much more valuable.



Boston's own land audits show we control about 9.5 million square feet of vacant or underutilized city-owned land, but more than 75% of those parcels are 5,000 square feet or smaller. That means we're working with scattered infill opportunities, not large tracts of land—so our zoning reforms have to be laser-focused and equity-driven.

That's why I support many of the principles behind Austin's reforms—like streamlining reviews and encouraging more density around transit—but we need to adapt them to Boston's reality.

AHMA's Vision for Boston

Q7. The Affordable Homes Act signed by Governor Healey last summer legalized Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) everywhere in the state except Boston. ADUs have frequently been cited as a “win/win/win” way to create much needed new homes, while providing rental income and/or multigenerational housing opportunities for homeowners. Do you support or oppose legalizing ADUs by right citywide? If so, what should the timeline be for implementation?

Answer:

I support legalizing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right citywide, and I think the time to move on this is now. ADUs are one of those rare “win/win/win” solutions: they create much-needed new housing, they provide homeowners with rental income that can help them stay in their homes, and they create opportunities for multigenerational living, something that is very important in communities like mine.

The state recognized this when it passed the Affordable Homes Act, which made ADUs legal everywhere except Boston. That leaves us behind at a time when we can't afford to stall. Our city is experiencing some of the highest displacement rates in the state, particularly in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, and families need more stability, not fewer options.

ADUs won't solve the housing crisis on their own, but they're one tool we should be putting to work right away. Legalizing them by right citywide would cut through red tape, reduce permitting delays, and allow homeowners to create housing more affordably than large-scale development often allows.



For me, the timeline should be immediate—we shouldn't be waiting years to implement something that helps residents stay in place, build wealth, and create more flexible housing options. Alongside legalization, we should also make sure there are supports for homeowners—especially lower-income homeowners—so they can actually take advantage of this opportunity. That includes access to financing, technical assistance, and safeguards that ensure ADUs add to neighborhood stability rather than displacement.

At the end of the day, ADUs are about giving families choice, creating new pathways to affordability, and helping longtime residents stay in their communities. Boston should not be the exception—we should be implementing every tool at our disposal.

Q8. There is a large body of research showing that parking minimums add significantly to the cost of development, which leads to higher rents and home prices. In 2021, the City eliminated parking mandates for affordable housing citing the cost of such requirements and because it gave the homebuilder the ability to provide parking that matches the needs of the residents, rather than an outdated and arbitrary city formula. Do you support or oppose expanding the elimination of costly parking mandates to all new residential development?

Answer

I don't fully support or oppose eliminating parking mandates across the board, because I believe this has to be a neighborhood-by-neighborhood conversation. Each neighborhood in Boston has a very different set of amenities and infrastructure. Some areas have robust transit access and nearby resources, while others don't. For residents in those neighborhoods, parking isn't just about convenience—it's about access to opportunity.

I think about my own family. I grew up watching my parents both work two full-time jobs, day and night. They relied on a car to make it work, because there wasn't a bus that could get them where they needed to be on time—especially in the middle of the night when they were heading to a second shift. Even today, in my own district, there's no bus line that connects directly to hospitals in Brigham Circle. And for many families, affordable and healthy food options aren't within walking distance, which means travel is necessary. If we eliminate parking mandates everywhere without thinking about that, we risk creating new barriers for people who are already working hard to get ahead.



That said, in neighborhoods where the transportation is strong and amenities are plentiful, I can absolutely see eliminating parking mandates as the right approach. It lowers the cost of housing, speeds up development, and makes sense where residents already have real transit options.

So for me, the question isn't simply "Do you support it or not?" It's: how do we make sure our policies reflect the realities on the ground in each neighborhood, and avoid unintended consequences? Where public transit is robust, parking mandates can be lifted to bring down housing costs. Where it's not, we need to move carefully until infrastructure and access catch up.

At the end of the day, this is about balance—building more housing, yes, but also making sure families can actually get to work, school, healthcare, and food.

Q9. The City of Boston's population has been growing steadily for the past three decades. As this trend continues, we will need to build a lot more homes to ensure that current and future residents can afford to live here. To that end, do you support or oppose allowing residential construction up to 6 stories by-right citywide?

Answer:

I support allowing six-story residential construction by right, but I believe it has to be done responsibly. For me, that means focusing six stories on main business corridors and major thoroughfares—the places where added height and density can strengthen our small business districts, support transit use, and bring more housing where it's needed most.

At the same time, we have to be thoughtful about how this growth impacts our neighborhoods. Not every street in Boston should be lined with six-story buildings. We need to protect our side streets and make sure that where development does happen, there's enough green space and open space built into the project. I've seen buildings go up with no backyard and no breathing room, and that's not the kind of city we should be building. If the lot size is large enough to accommodate height and create open space, then that's where six stories makes sense.



I also believe zoning reform has to be tied to our larger goals:

- Affordability and stability—production alone doesn't guarantee affordability. Six stories by right must come with deeper affordability requirements, protections against displacement, and pathways to homeownership.
- Neighborhood equity—in places like Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, where displacement pressures are highest, reforms have to center longtime residents and make sure they benefit from new development.
- Infrastructure alignment—added density has to match the transit, schools, and services in each neighborhood.

Bottom line: I absolutely support six stories by right, but we have to build in a way that strengthens our business districts, protects our green space, and creates housing that families can actually afford.

Q 10. A recent study from Boston Indicators and Transit Matters found that Boston does not build enough housing around public transportation to support a high-functioning system. Given the reliance of Boston residents on public transportation, do you support or oppose permitting residential construction up to 12 stories by right citywide within 1/2 rapid transit, commuter rail, and bus stations?

Answer:

I support permitting residential construction up to 12 stories by right around major transit stations, because if we want a strong MBTA system, we need more people living near it. The Boston Indicators and Transit Matters study is right: Boston hasn't built enough housing around public transportation and that weakens both our housing supply and our transit network.

And we've seen this work. At Shawmut Station, we were able to get more housing approved by aligning development with transit access. It makes sense to do the same at other major hubs like Ashmont, Forest Hills, Jackson Square, and Ruggles. These stations are on major thoroughfares and business districts where taller buildings can fit in, support small business foot traffic, and bring more residents closer to reliable transit.

The key is to pair this growth with affordability and stability. Production alone doesn't guarantee affordability—so 12 stories by right near transit must come with deeper affordability requirements, family-sized units, and homeownership opportunities.



And in neighborhoods like Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan—where displacement rates are already high—we have to make sure new development strengthens communities instead of pushing residents out.

If we get this right, transit-oriented housing can lower costs, support small businesses, and give more families the stability of living near the transit they rely on every day.

