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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:

Over the course of my campaign, residents across Boston have told me that they are struggling to pay their rent. Residents who have been here for decades are gearing up to move, pointing to the high housing costs as the precipitating factor. The current crisis has evolved over decades and has been exacerbated by the Wu Administration's misguided approach. As Mayor, there are a variety of options available to bring down rent prices for subsidized and market rate housing, but the most simple solution is to build more housing. Availability equals affordability. To accomplish this goal, I would reduce the current IDP to the former standards set by the Walsh administration, reduce burdensome requirements for office-to-residential conversions, and capitalize upon underutilized parcels of public-owned land. Additionally, I have proposed an "Opt- In Rent Control" program for landlords that would offer a tax rebate if they limit rent increases over a ten year period. In conjunction, these policy proposals would not just provide a more seamless environment to build housing, but unleash capital to provide community benefits and allow folks to stay in Boston. This is an existential crisis for our city and solving the housing emergency requires decisive and immediate action from City Hall.



Q.2 A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.”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:

From a lack of multi-language translation to arbitrary rules to overcomplicated instructions to inequitable practices, the number of issues plaguing the city's code is seemingly innumerable, yet reparable when City Hall musters the political courage and determination to tackle this issue. As Mayor, I would collaborate with all stakeholders to create a more accessible, fair process for residents, small businesses, developers, and other community members. In terms of accessibility, it starts with clarity. The contrast between the excessive length of Boston's code versus that of peer cities, as well as the “unwritten rules” littered throughout, are barriers to entry for many folks. If elected, I would streamline the code, reducing the overhead and redundancy that permeates throughout the municipal zoning code. I would also ban the use of “unwritten rules” that benefit certain residents over others. Likewise, I would strive to create a more fair system, so residents and developers alike know what to expect. If folks understand the steps, the timeline, and the costs associated with a new project, they will be more likely to engage in the process and city officials will be better prepared to assist in a comprehensive fashion. Frankly, overhauling Boston's zoning code will be a monumental task. However, if we are able to institute these substantive changes, we can create a system that better serves the residents of Boston and cultivates a new era of development in our city.

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

Answer:

Boston is currently in the midst of a housing emergency, and I believe that we must increase the availability of all types of housing throughout Boston. If elected, I will use the full weight of my administration to capitalize upon Boston's real estate resources to reinvigorate and expand pathways to quality, affordable housing. As Mayor, I would reduce the IDP to 13%, from the current level of 20%, to make projects in the pipeline more financially viable. Second, I would institute an “Opt-In Rent Control” program. In short, landlords would commit to minimal increases in rent in exchange for a tax rebate each year. Third, I would reduce the burdensome, byzantine process for converting office space to residential units, thus increasing the efficiency of this process. Through these policy shifts, I believe we can increase our housing supply, thus reducing the outrageous housing costs all over 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’s intention to make our communities accessible and economically vibrant may be admirable; however, the implementation of the program has undermined the merits of the proposed changes. I have been dismayed to hear about the current mayoral administration’s blatant disregard for a fair, community oriented process in rolling out this new program. In Roslindale, for instance, residents and community leaders have expressed significant concern about the City’s bias in disseminating information about “Squares and Streets.” While it seems the City has created programming for residents to learn about the initiative, per the City’s website, 80% of the participation has been by white residents, yet Roslindale is only 50% white. Moreover, 80% of participants have been homeowners, but only 45% of residents in Roslindale own homes. I believe that all residents, no matter their race, primary language, or socioeconomic status, should have a say in the future of the neighborhood. For “Squares and Streets” to be a success, the current administration must improve its outreach efforts, assuring that everyone has a voice in the future of their neighborhood.

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:

The impact of the new Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) has been nothing short of disastrous. Housing is a human right: no one should be forced to sleep on the street, in their car, or in an unsafe location. However, the onerous regulations and restrictions promulgated by the Wu Administration correlates directly with the precipitous decline in housing construction over the past few years. Yes, there are macroeconomic forces that have created challenges for all developers, yet adding another barrier to entry for developers is exactly the opposite of what the city government should be doing. As Mayor, I would lower the IDP to the standards set by the Walsh administration. This revision would free up necessary resources for investors and developers to access capital, thus allowing these folks to get shovels in the ground and units built for residents. Additionally, I would use the tax revenue from the 26,000 units that are currently permitted in the pipeline to support first-time homebuyers in the city, as well as supplementing existing programs.



2025 Boston City Council Questionnaire

Q.6 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:

We are currently facing a housing emergency in Boston. Recent data shows that the average cost of a home in the Boston area is \$1 million. With each passing month, it is becoming more clear that the status quo is pricing families out of our great city, leading to an economic downturn as well as a demographic crisis. The creative thinking by Austin's city government was clearly a conduit to lowering the cost of housing in the city. Austin's holistic approach to reforming housing construction and development provides key lessons for Boston's leaders. One key feature of Austin's reform was the city's "extensive public outreach" that guided, shaped, and dictated many of their decisions. Whether it is the streamlined development reviews or transit oriented construction, there must be an exhaustive effort to include residents in the process, just like the folks down south. If Austin can make tangible, meaningful reforms, we can as well, and I believe with adequate political will and community engagement, these shifts can create a better Boston for all residents.

AHMA's Vision for Boston

Q.7 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:

We need to use every lever at our disposal to mitigate the housing emergency in Boston. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are an attractive option to increase housing stock for folks across the city. One of the most beneficial features of boosting supports for ADUs is their dynamic, flexible nature. As Mayor, I would wholeheartedly and enthusiastically support the legalization of ADUs in Boston. Of course, there are some situations in which the creation of these units would be impossible. However, we need to think creatively about how we use our space to ensure that we provide the most quality housing for all folks.



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:

As Mayor, I would lead Boston with a forward-looking vision. There is no doubt that parking minimums are a challenge for many developers in Boston. However, even as we progress as a city and move beyond a car-centric approach, we do still need to maintain a baseline amount of parking for residents. As Mayor, I would work closely with our developers, landlords, and city officials to ensure that parking is readily available for residents, while also negotiating creative agreements that prioritizes increasing housing stock over other guidelines or requirements.

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:

Cambridge's push to expand affordability citywide is an admirable decision that will create a wide-range of benefits for their residents. Of course, there are significant challenges that will arise as this new zoning initiative takes shape. While Boston shares many of the same affordability challenges as Cambridge, there are also a variety of unique concerns that Boston would face if it were to implement a similar policy as Cambridge. If elected, I would work closely with all stakeholders to put an end to exclusionary zoning and create a new era of housing construction that will benefit all residents. I do not believe there is one single fix that will put an end to our housing crisis. Following the same pathway as Cambridge, in an effort to expand the housing stock, is a critical piece of the puzzle and one that I would strongly consider.



Q10. 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 am proud to support a transportation and housing vision that links the intertwined nature of these two city-planning features. In fact, I have proposed creating a Housing and Transportation Czar in City Hall that would align transportation investments with housing development priorities. Through a commitment to intentionally linking our development efforts with targeted investments in our transportation system, we can create a Boston, and greater metro-area, that is forward looking and climate resilient. The research produced by Boston Indicators and Transit Matters clearly delineates the necessity of producing a network that is not just reliable and up-to-date, but one that is made to serve residents efficiently. Through specific zoning changes, I believe we can tangibly shift the makeup of Boston for the benefit of all communities, and our planet.

