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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:

I am a housing professional, having run the Office of Fair Housing & Civil Rights under Mayor Walsh, serving as Commissioner of Housing at the Boston Inspectional Services Department (ISD), and being engaged in the planning, housing, and development processes at City Hall for over 15 years. I have seen what works and what doesn't, and I am ready to bring this experience to the City Council.

Everyone deserves an affordable, stable place to call home. A housing affordability crisis – marked by skyrocketing housing costs, gentrification, and displacement – threatens that fundamental right for too many residents. We need strong leadership to ensure Boston remains a city where everyone can live and thrive, not just the wealthy few.

To create more affordable housing for low-income and middle-income earners in Boston, the city must expand inclusionary zoning policies, incentivize developers to build affordable/workforce units, and repurpose underutilized public land. Strengthening partnerships with non-profit housing organizations and community land trusts can also ensure long-term affordability. Streamlining permitting processes and offering tax credits can reduce construction costs and encourage investment. I will advocate for the creation an abundance package that will cut red tape and expedite the development of workforce housing. Additionally, preserving existing affordable units can help prevent displacement. Engaging local neighborhoods in planning and decision-making ensures developments meet residents' needs while promoting equitable growth. These strategies together can address Boston's housing crisis and improve stability for low and middle-income households.



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 A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.”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

I strongly support the rewrite of the Boston Zoning Code to simplify the code, streamline the development process, create more housing that Bostonians can afford and affordable commercial space, and so much more. As City Councilor, my top priority will be tackling Boston's housing crisis. Zoning code reform is a critical place to start.

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

Answer:

1. Address Gentrification citywide, by enforcing existing and creating new housing zoning ordinances and housing & building codes that improve the quality of life of Boston's most vulnerable low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and its residents. The goal is stopping displacement of these residents, who disproportionately are people of color and members of other protected classes under the fair housing laws.
2. Utilize zoning for creative approaches to maintain existing and develop new housing for low- and moderate-income groups, and seniors, or to more generally expand the availability of income restricted and naturally occurring workforce and affordable housing.
3. Combat blight by holding slumlords accountable, as well as address rapidly rising rents across the city, especially in low- and moderate-income parts of the city.
4. Generate and promote information and opportunities to increase homeownership, especially in communities of color, and among low-income and moderate-income groups. Along with traditional homeownership opportunities, there should also be an expansion of alternative forms of resident-owned housing, such as community cooperatives and land trusts.
5. Strengthen and financially support Neighborhood-based organizations and businesses with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other appropriate funds to stabilize communities and fight against gentrification.
6. Prioritize the use of City funds for the preservation of income restricted housing. Focusing public funds to trigger private investments in areas of the City that need the greatest amount of support.



7. Enhancing the Boston Resident Jobs Ordinance to expand monitoring and reporting efforts to better identify important opportunities for Boston. With over \$12 billion of construction on projects, better oversight permits the City to distribute resources to respond to income inequality and homeownership gaps.
8. Use inclusionary zoning to preserve existing affordable housing and to create “demonstration areas” or interim planning overlay districts in certain neighborhood areas experiencing significant gentrification, creative tools can be used to prevent displacement.
9. Activate vacant lots to both combat neighborhood blight and create additional housing units in our neighborhoods.
10. Address Boston Housing Authority waitlists so people in need of housing have predictable outcomes.

Current City Policy

Q4. Since the Squares andStreets 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:

Squares and Streets is well-intentioned and has set out goals to increase housing, expand commercial space, and make neighborhood centers more vibrant. The biggest challenges thus far has been the perceived lack of community input -- this is something that must be addressed. I think the most logical places to implement Squares & Streets next would be Allston Village, Cleveland Circle, and Packards Corner.

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 City of Boston must ensure that it is setting policy that maximizes the creation of units that are affordable to Boston residents. As we seek to create more affordable housing in Boston, we must include all stakeholders to ensure production is being maximized. In listening to industry experts, we must be nimble and open to flexibility on Inclusionary Zoning during the current economic downturn and doubling down on the incentivization of housing creation. In this economic climate, the 20% policy is preventing housing creation. Twenty percent of nothing is nothing. I am more interested in practical policymaking that results in housing creation, not political stances that sound good, but actually inhibit the goal of housing production. As City Councilor, I will work closely with all involved parties to expand affordability in Boston.



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:

We should always be engaging housing experts and looking to other cities across to see what housing solutions could potentially work in Boston. I would encourage more of these conversations and use pilot programs to test it in our market. I support sweeping zoning reforms, including streamlining the development review process, bonuses for parking reform, and meaningful transit-oriented development. However, it must be noted that Boston and Austin are two very different cities. We cannot assume that just because something works in another part of the country, that it is going to work in Boston. We should always be bold and unafraid to explore options that could mitigate our current affordability crisis.

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:

ADUs present a unique opportunity as we work to expand Boston's affordable housing stock. I support legalizing ADUs by right (so long that they meet other standards).



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 support reducing parking mandates for residential development.

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 greater density in target areas, however, I support a more targeted approach in identifying zones for large-scale by right zoning increases.

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 support increasing more dense, by-right construction near transit centers. However, I support a more targeted approach in identifying zones for large-scale by right zoning increases. A blanket policy would drastically alter the character of many neighborhoods and potentially cause chaos as 12-story buildings are being built next to one- and two-family homes in residential neighborhoods.

