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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:

As an At-Large City Councilor, I've led efforts to make housing in Boston more affordable, accessible, and equitable. In my first two terms, I championed key housing reforms and fought to ensure that every neighborhood, regardless of zip code, offers real opportunities for residents to live and thrive. Now, as President of the Boston City Council, I've continued this work by championing and obtaining more city vouchers and housing for vulnerable populations. I've supported the Boston Acquisition Opportunity Program (AOC) which prevents displacement and keeps people in their homes. We've strengthened tenant protections and homeownership, and we are exploring ways to convert underused municipal buildings into new housing options. I supported Boston tenants facing the threat of eviction by holding hearings with colleagues on a right to counsel tenant pilot program. This program seeks to alleviate the financial and social burden of eviction on tenants and city resources while reducing overall eviction rates. I advocate for a transfer tax of 2%. I've offered written and in-person testimony at the State House in support of this HRP, and I tell groups that this is a cause very worthy of their advocacy if they want to move the needle on affordable housing. Boston has a critical opportunity to use its own land to drive equitable development. I would prioritize partnerships with community land trusts and limited equity cooperatives to create permanently affordable homeownership and rental models rooted in community control. We must transfer full control of public land from the BPDA back to City Hall to ensure greater accountability and transparency. City-owned land should be made available to smaller, mission-driven builders, community land trusts and community development corporations at low or no cost, with strong affordability requirements. To support this, we must streamline the permitting process for small- and mid-sized builders. Finally, we must strike a thoughtful balance between development and preserving essential green space for future generations.



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:

We need to update our outdated zoning code. I support Squares & Streets because it is a thoughtful way to get more housing built in our economic hubs, ones that want to see more residential foot traffic. Squares & Streets is a good citywide model. It would be great to actually simplify the zoning code itself, but I also understand the density of the zoning code makes that difficult.

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

Answer:

I would increase and publicize property tax assistance and exemptions for seniors, and expand partnerships with nonprofits to make homeownership more attainable for working-class and first-generation buyers. We should also study a vacancy tax and consider alternatives like a land value tax (LVT) or VAT to discourage speculation and keep housing stock active and accessible. Finally, development decisions must be guided by community-led planning rooted in housing justice.

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:

I believe that development, especially in the hubs of our neighborhood, is good. We are in a housing crisis, and we need to do the work of building houses. We do need to also ensure that we are not causing displacement, so we should have measures to prevent displacement, such as commitment from developers to not increase rents on commercial properties. After Roslindale should follow Hyde Park & Jamaica Plain where conversations have already started.



Q.5 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 current economic challenges of high interest rates and expensive building materials complicates assessments of the effect of the IDP policy. Developers look to market conditions foremost on whether it is a sensible time to develop. I have ongoing conversations with activists, unions, and developers about what makes the most sense for our city and what additional incentives we can provide to do the work of building housing and building affordable housing.

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:

Yes.

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:

Yes I support, and I support rolling it out soon.



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 expansion of the policy in the form of incentives and not mandating no minimums.

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 more housing by right across the city. What the correct threshold is for as of right construction must be deliberated.

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:

Yes.

