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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:

ABDIKARIM'S Plan to Fight Displacement: Anti-Displacement Zones with real affordability rules
Affordable housing based on neighborhood income, not regional AMI
Nonprofit building acquisitions to stop predatory landlords
Stronger inclusionary zoning, more affordable units, and lower income thresholds
Metro Boston Housing Compact to hold suburbs accountable
Push for rent stabilization & social housing at the state level
This is about justice. This is about our future. This is about staying 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 A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.”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:

As your city councilor, I will champion targeted, evidence-based policies to reverse displacement and protect working-class communities. This includes creating a Citywide Anti-Displacement Overlay Zone to trigger affordability requirements and tenant protections in high-displacement neighborhoods; tying all new development to deep affordability benchmarks based on Boston’s neighborhood-level median income, not HUD’s inflated regional AMI; expanding the City’s Acquisition Opportunity Program to help nonprofits purchase occupied rental buildings before private investors do; and enforcing mandatory affordability through strengthened inclusionary zoning, raising the required affordability percentage and lowering the income thresholds.

I will also work regionally to implement a Metro Boston Housing Compact, which requires suburban towns to meet fair-share affordable housing goals and unlock state-level support for rent stabilization and social housing development. We cannot piecemeal our way out of a crisis this deep. It’s time for bold structural change, because everyone deserves the right to remain.

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

Answer:

As your city councilor, I will champion targeted, evidence-based policies to reverse displacement and protect working-class communities. This includes creating a Citywide Anti-Displacement Overlay Zone to trigger affordability requirements and tenant protections in high-displacement neighborhoods; tying all new development to deep affordability benchmarks based on Boston’s neighborhood-level median income, not HUD’s inflated regional AMI; expanding the City’s Acquisition Opportunity Program to help nonprofits purchase occupied rental buildings before private investors do; and enforcing mandatory affordability through strengthened inclusionary zoning, raising the required affordability percentage and lowering the income thresholds.



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 has successfully leveraged zoning for vibrant mixed-use developments along main streets and transit hubs. This strategy not only facilitates the construction of affordable housing but also boosts foot traffic for small businesses and enhances walkability for residents. To maximize impact, we need to prioritize community input in shaping these neighborhoods, enabling us to create denser affordable housing for families. We must also improve outreach and language access to ensure that the benefits of the initiative reach all community members. Our infrastructure should promote equitable access for pedestrians while supporting small businesses and allowing cyclists to safely share the road with vehicles. Fields Corner and Uphams Square should be the next targets for this initiative. Both neighborhoods, already part of the initial plan, offer significant opportunities for transformative mixed-use development, with high traffic and thriving small business hubs ready for revitalization. Together, we can create bustling environments that benefit everyone.

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 data clearly shows that the new Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) has made significant strides in creating both affordable and deeply affordable housing units. This presents us with a valuable opportunity to not only lower the eligibility thresholds but also to increase the construction of family-sized homes. By leveraging the square footage estimates outlined in this policy, we can make a meaningful impact on our housing landscape and better serve the needs of our community.



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:

To effectively combat the affordability crisis in densely populated urban centers like Boston, we can draw valuable lessons from Austin's zoning reform. This approach highlights the power of data-driven research in addressing our housing challenges. By abolishing mandatory parking requirements, offering height bonuses for affordable housing, and streamlining the approval process, we can significantly boost the housing supply and reduce rental costs. Implementing these transformative changes is essential for fostering a more sustainable and equitable housing landscape for all residents.

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 will advocate for allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to be built by right. In the upcoming term, we can swiftly implement measures to develop ADUs in my district, where many suitable lots are available. The city needs to establish a straightforward process, ensuring that ADUs are built safely and effectively, enhancing our community's housing options.



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:

Eliminating parking mandates is essential. It lowers construction costs and reduces car traffic in Boston while compelling a reevaluation of our bus and train routes.

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:

This will boost the housing supply, providing more options for renters and buyers. By eliminating zoning restrictions, we can facilitate denser development without delays. This approach enhances equity, allowing residents to live closer to their children's schools, workplaces, and walkable neighborhoods.

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:

This will significantly modernize Boston in numerous ways.

