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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 City Council needs to use every tool available to address rent increases that are forcing working families out of Boston. I've continued to push for rent stabilization, an authority we can only get from the State. As long as there is still a ban on rent control in the State of Massachusetts, there is only so much we can do at the city level. That being said, increasing the supply of affordable housing units is well within our purview. I have actively led efforts to jumpstart mixed-income housing production despite the current interest rate environment through the creation of a Housing Accelerator Fund. I also support maintaining a 20% affordability requirement on all new developments. This ensures we continue to build, increasing the housing stock while ensuring new development doesn't just cater to the ultra-wealthy.



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 A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.”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

Looking at this report, it's clear that our zoning code is actively working against the housing goals we're trying to achieve. As it stands, 58% of existing buildings are considered "nonconforming" in our zoning code. It's clear that our current zoning code does not work for residents and is serving as a barrier in many cases to creating mixed-use housing in neighborhoods that need new and affordable development the most. The biggest opportunity is adopting as-of-right housing development in transit areas and neighborhood squares. Right now, even small housing projects get bogged down in months of hearings and reviews that add costs without improving outcomes.

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

Answer:

My top priority is expanding mixed-income social housing across Boston, which I believe is one of the most effective tools we have for both increasing housing stock and creating economic mobility for working families. Mixed-income social housing works because it brings together families at different income levels in the same developments, creating opportunities for social and economic mobility that segregated housing doesn't provide. When you have market-rate renters, moderate-income homeowners, and subsidized tenants in the same building or development, it creates pathways for families to move up economically while staying in their communities.

The \$110 million Housing Accelerator Fund, which I strongly advocated for. It creates mixed-income developments while generating ongoing revenue for more housing. This model shows we can build housing that serves families at 30%, 60%, 80%, and 120% of the area median income in the same projects.



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 Roslindale Squares and Streets effort is one of the most creative initiatives we have seen in the city recently to address issues of zoning. The new zoning districts create a more mixed-use neighborhood center that supports walkability, small businesses, outdoor gathering spaces, and new housing growth. The push for multi-family housing, specifically near the Roslindale Village MBTA Commuter Rail Station, is a great first step in giving residents full access to their neighborhood under a zoning structure that works for them.

The six-district approach, ranging in height and density, allows different scales of development based on location rather than arbitrary boundaries. We do need to ensure these districts produce the mixed-income housing we're promising, not just market-rate units. Strong affordability requirements and pathways to homeownership should be embedded in future developments. As for which neighborhoods should come next, Fields Corner, Cleary Square, and Codman Square were already identified as the first four locations. I'd prioritize these because they have existing transit access and commercial corridors that could support more housing. These are also neighborhoods where working families live and where we could create homeownership opportunities through transit-oriented development.

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 new IDP policy does represent a significant step forward in ensuring that new development contributes to housing affordability rather than just adding more luxury units. Raising the requirements from 13% to 17-20% affordable units and lowering the threshold from 10 to 7 units means we're capturing more developments and getting more meaningful affordability from each project. What I particularly support is the deeper affordability targeting. Moving from 70% AMI down to an average of 50-60% AMI for rental units in large projects. This better reflects the income levels of families who are being priced out of Boston. The 80-100% AMI range for homeownership units also creates real pathways for working families to buy homes, not just upper-middle-class households. These policies are a great start, and as interest rates likely start to come down this fall, I expect to see more of this housing going into actual construction.



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:

Absolutely. I was one of the three councilors who invited the Austin delegation to Boston specifically because their results speak for themselves. Rents in Austin are consistently decreasing. What I'd love to see Boston replicate is the elimination of the regulatory barriers that make housing construction unnecessarily expensive and slow. Like Boston, at the root of Austin's trouble was a zoning code that prevented the construction of much of anything without an extensive special permit process that favored bigger developers and added cost and time to projects. The specific reforms that make the most sense for Boston include eliminating minimum parking requirements citywide. This is something I've consistently supported and that Cambridge already did in 2022. Developers can now build their projects without having to add parking spaces, which can add significant cost and logistical challenges to a project. The key insight from Austin is that building a lot of new housing quickly can help to reduce prices. This aligns perfectly with my work on mixed-income social housing and the Housing Accelerator Fund. Of course, Boston has constraints Austin doesn't have, with a smaller and denser existing core, but that makes it even more important to eliminate the artificial barriers that drive up construction costs. When we make it faster, cheaper, and more predictable to build housing, those savings get passed on to renters and homebuyers. Austin proved this works, and we need that same courage here.



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 ADUs by right citywide, and we should move quickly on implementation. The fact that the entire state can now build ADUs except in Boston puts us at a disadvantage when we desperately need more housing options. The "win/win/win" framing is accurate. For homeowners, ADUs provide rental income that can help with mortgage payments or create space for aging parents or adult children. For renters, they create more affordable housing options in neighborhoods where new construction is limited. For the city, they increase housing density without major infrastructure investments. The timeline should be aggressive. We can't afford to drag this out while other communities are already benefiting from the state law.

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 strongly support expanding the elimination of parking mandates to all new residential development. The research is clear: parking requirements can increase housing costs by up to 17%, and those costs get passed directly to renters and homebuyers, whether they own a car or not. The 2021 change for affordable housing was a good first step that proved this approach works. When we let developers build parking based on actual demand rather than arbitrary formulas written decades ago, we get more housing at lower costs. Many of my constituents, particularly younger residents and seniors, don't own cars or own fewer cars than our outdated parking requirements assume. This connects directly to my broader housing strategy. We can't solve our affordability crisis while maintaining regulations that artificially inflate construction costs. Parking mandates also prevent the rehabilitation of older buildings because adding parking often requires expensive variances or is physically impossible on small lots. Boston has a comparatively expansive public transportation system. When we eliminate parking minimums near transit stations and in walkable neighborhoods, we're encouraging the kind of development that reduces car dependence and supports local businesses.



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:

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The principle behind Cambridge's policy is right. We need to eliminate exclusionary zoning that prevents working families from living in neighborhoods with good schools, transit, and job access. When we limit housing in well-connected areas, we force people into longer commutes and push families out of Boston entirely. My approach would be to start with transit-oriented development around MBTA stations and key squares, then expand outward. The Squares + Streets initiative in Roslindale shows how this can work - creating mixed-use districts that allow multifamily housing near transit while respecting neighborhood context. We should accelerate that model citywide.

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:

The Boston Indicators study makes it clear that we're underutilizing our transit infrastructure. Only about half of our rapid transit station areas meet the 16-unit-per-acre benchmark necessary to justify high-frequency transit service, and Commuter Rail station areas average just 3.2 units per acre. That is well below the 6 units per acre needed to support even basic transit service. This connects directly to my work on mixed-income social housing and the Housing Accelerator Fund. When we don't have enough people living near transit, we can't justify frequent service, which makes the system less useful for everyone. It's a vicious cycle that keeps people car-dependent and makes our transportation investments less effective.

ANSWER CONTINUES TO NEXT PAGE>



2025 Boston City Council Questionnaire

The 12-story by-right approach makes sense near rapid transit and major Commuter Rail stations, particularly in areas like Forest Hills, Malden Center, or Chelsea, where we already have the infrastructure but not the density. For bus routes, I'd want to be more targeted, focusing on high-frequency routes and major corridors rather than every single bus stop. What's crucial is ensuring this development includes mixed-income housing, not just luxury units. The report shows that environmental justice communities, which are disproportionately low-income communities of color, bear the brunt of climate change despite contributing less to pollution and relying most on public transportation. Transit-oriented development should serve these communities, not displace them.

