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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 two main actions I support are stabilizing and protecting our current tenants while providing direct financial assistance and support. Rent control and stabilization as well as getting rid of the upfront costs for housing like housing and brokers fees. Creating bridging programs, housing vouchers and creating more funding for non profits and community land trusts.



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 A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.”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

Boston's current zoning is a patchwork of neighborhood-by-neighborhood codes, which are inconsistent and confusing. I would prefer the implementation of a "base" citywide zoning code establishing uniform standards on such issues as setbacks, height, and density. Neighborhood-specific overlays could still be used to address unique neighborhood characteristics, but they would be an overlay on top of a transparent, predictable base and not a completely different set of rules for every neighborhood. This would make the code far more accessible to everybody from residents to builders. Some of the code simplification is making it publicly accessible. A 4,000-page document is worthless. I would prefer to invest in a user-friendly digital system whereby residents and developers can just search for the zoning on a specific address and know what is and isn't permitted. This will empower individuals and reduce reliance on expensive legal and architectural consultation for minor projects.

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

Answer:

Rent to own programs.



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:

The new Roslindale square has done a great job at encouraging transit based housing developments. Focusing on density around the Roslindale commuter rail station and bus routes. The fact this initiative has been community based is one of best practices from this initiative, by extensive community engagement, with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) holding numerous meetings, workshops, and pop-up events. Ensuring equity in implementation is the most crucial step in this process as we need to make sure small scale developers, local property owners and non-profit housing developers are also benefiting.

The city must pursue opportunities for the new zoning in areas where the city owns land. This would allow the city to partner with non-profit developers to build deed-restricted affordable housing from the start, making a powerful statement and ensuring the new construction addresses the affordability goals of the community.

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 policies should increase production of affordable units and overall help solve some of the housing problems we have in the city. A greater focus on equity and equal housing opportunities and a real shift in development strategy that incentives affordable units.



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:

Austin's reforms created a major spike in housing production, particularly in multi-family dwellings. This supply spike hit the rental market directly. Austin's rent prices dropped by over 20% from August 2023 to August 2024, a rare and extreme outcome in today's national housing market. This indicates that boosting the housing supply can directly lead to lowering prices. Streamlining the zoning code, eliminating parking mandates, and allowing greater density—especially along transit—is required to make Boston more affordable. Boston's new IDP is a positive step towards creating subsidized housing, but an Austin-style strategy would focus on creating market conditions to reduce prices for everyone as an adjunct to the city's other strategies.

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 would support the legalization of ADU's

Phase 1: Ordinance Development (3-6 months): The Mayor's Office of Housing and the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) should promptly prepare an ordinance for consideration by the City Council. The ordinance should be constructed based on the state law requirements, but with Boston-specific amendments to consider local conditions concerning issues such as parking, historic districts, and design.

ANSWER CONTINUES TO NEXT PAGE>



Phase 2: City Council Vote and Community Engagement (3-6 months): The proposed ordinance would have to be followed by an open and vigorous community engagement process, involving public hearings across the city. Once the public had a chance to provide their feedback, the City Council would vote. With the overwhelming support statewide for this policy and with such obvious value for Boston, there needs to be a strong demand for a speedy approval.

Phase 3: Administrative Implementation (3 months): Once the ordinance has passed, the city's Inspectional Services Department (ISD) and the BPDA would need to change their systems and train personnel to process the new by-right permitting process. The city should also begin a public campaign informing homeowners of the new rules and resources available.

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:

By giving up citywide parking requirements, Boston would allow the market to decide how much parking is really needed. Builders would be free to build less parking in neighborhoods with transit access and pass on those savings to residents who do not own or need a car. For individuals who do need a car, the developers can still build parking and charge additionally over it, or as "unbundling." This only requires residents to pay for the actual parking space they utilize. This also gives the developer some room to build additional residential units so that more people are provided with options.



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 zoning overhaul is an excellent template for a city to be ambitious and comprehensive regarding housing. Abolishing single-family zoning and more intense housing demonstrates the realization that tight, out-of-date zoning is the primary reason for the housing crisis

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 would be in support of this building proposal. The MBTA is in dire need of reform as well, but they need funding as well. Housing density around MBTA stations are already too low, but through other cities initiatives we can see how beneficial it could be for our transit and housing crisis. This proposal would align Boston with the best practices of cities that are successfully tackling their housing crises. It is a necessary and logical step to create a more affordable, sustainable, and equitable future for the city.

