



Candidate Name: Alexandra Valdez
District: At-Large
Email: info@valdezforboston.com
Website: valdezforboston.com

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 affordability crisis in Boston stems in large part from housing. While there is no single solution, the City Council can take many steps to lower rents and expand affordability. First and foremost, we need to reform the zoning code to ensure a quicker development process. In the past, well-intentioned rules and regulations have overburdened developers with delays and legal costs, slowing down the production of new homes. This stick approach has held us back. What we need is a carrot approach that makes it easier and faster to build abundant housing. I support zoning and permitting reforms that speed up housing production, especially near transit, and the creation of a Green Fast Track to incentivize sustainable, all-electric developments. I would also support a real estate transfer fee on luxury sales to fund affordable housing, and I support tenant protections and rent stabilization tools to prevent displacement. By combining more housing supply with affordability safeguards, Boston can ensure that working families, immigrants, and longtime residents are not priced out of the city.



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 A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.”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 a former neighborhood liaison to Jamaica Plain, I worked closely with residents, community CDCs, and developers on housing issues, the Article 80 process, and zoning challenges. I saw firsthand how outdated and overly complex rules create unnecessary barriers for example, a family replacing a fence or remodeling a kitchen being forced into a zoning violation because they were a few feet over. Our zoning code is outdated, inequitable, and in need of a complete rewrite if we want it to truly work for the people. I support a comprehensive overhaul to simplify and modernize the zoning code, eliminate unnecessary triggers, and establish consistent citywide standards. Just as importantly, this work must be done in partnership with residents, community organizations, and developers all at the table so we create a fair, transparent system that supports housing abundance, affordability, and equity.

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

Answer:

I'll champion expanding the current ADUs program citywide, extend financial support for low- and moderate-income homeowners, and advocate for a real estate transfer fee on luxury sales to fund affordable housing. I'll push for a full rewrite of Boston's zoning code, streamlined approvals, and overlays that fast-track affordable and sustainable housing. Finally, I'll fight for stronger tenant protections like right to counsel and eviction prevention so residents can stay in their homes as we grow.



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 is a great step forward because it tackles one of the root causes of our housing crisis: outdated zoning. That said, in Roslindale's new district map, I still see too many areas preserved as single-family only. While single-family homes remain an important option for families who want them, we also need to think outside the box and recognize that they cannot be the default in a city facing a severe housing shortage. If we are serious about addressing affordability, we need zoning that prioritizes multifamily and even high-rise housing, not just incremental change.

My concern is that this initiative could get slowed by NIMBY resistance, when in reality we need bold, meaningful reform that truly unlocks abundant housing options. As a Hyde Park resident, I see firsthand how large amounts of land and green space are locked into single-family zoning; areas like Hyde Park, Mattapan, and West Roxbury should be next in line so we can open up opportunities for more diverse housing types while preserving open space. By expanding this program equitably across neighborhoods, we can create a citywide framework for abundant, affordable housing.



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:

Boston's new Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) is a positive step toward increasing affordable housing, as it raises affordability requirements for new residential buildings requiring zoning relief. By adjusting cashout and off-site options, the policy encourages more units to be built on-site, which helps integrate affordable housing throughout the city rather than concentrating it in a few areas. However, it will be important to monitor whether these higher requirements slow development or lead developers to pursue exemptions. To maximize the impact, the City should pair IDP with streamlined permitting, stronger incentives for green and low carbon developments, and oversight to ensure affordability goals are met. Done thoughtfully, the updated IDP can help Boston produce more housing that is both equitable and sustainable, while supporting a diverse and inclusive community. I would love to measure success by the number of new units created under this policy.

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:

I support many of the policies highlighted by the Austin delegation, such as citywide parking reform, streamlined development reviews, and incentives for affordable units, as tools to increase housing production. However, I am cautious about directly applying Austin's model to Boston. While Austin saw a 20% drop in rents, that outcome was influenced not only by increased supply but also by decreased demand something Boston will not experience due to its persistent high housing demand. Boston's context requires tailored solutions, so while I support reforms that reduce barriers to development and expand housing options, I am wary that replicating Austin's approach would automatically produce the same drop in rents here. One size does not fit all, and we need strategies that reflect Boston's unique housing market and demand pressures



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 strongly support legalizing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right citywide. As someone deeply invested in creating housing for every generation, I will champion this policy. ADUs are a proven “win/win/win,” adding much-needed housing supply while providing homeowners with rental income and multigenerational housing options. We need to start viewing housing through a generational and cultural lens, ensuring policies meet the needs of families, elders, and diverse communities. Implementation should be timely and phased, with guidance for homeowners, zoning adjustments to remove barriers, and support for low- and moderate-income residents, ideally within 12–18 months.

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 expanding the elimination of costly parking mandates to all new residential development. The goal in Boston is to build abundant housing, and removing outdated parking requirements is a practical step toward reducing development costs, speeding up construction, and allowing developers to better match parking to residents' actual needs. Every tool that helps us create more housing should be on the table if we want to address our city's housing crisis.



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 allowing residential construction up to six stories by-right citywide. Policies like this are essential to creating an abundance of housing and addressing Boston's affordability crisis. By enabling more multifamily development without unnecessary delays or barriers, we can expand housing options, promote equity, and ensure that current and future residents have the opportunity to live in the city.

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 permitting residential construction up to 12 stories by right within a half- mile of rapid transit, commuter rail, and bus stations. Access to public transit should not be a luxury. Residents of all incomes and backgrounds should be able to live near transit without feeling excluded. Building more housing near transit supports affordability, reduces car dependence, and strengthens Boston's transportation network for everyone.

