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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:

I believe we need to use every tool available to reduce the cost of housing, especially for our renters. I supported the Mayor's rent stabilization home rule petition and have spoken in support of the pending statehouse bills that would give cities the option to limit rent increases and ban no-fault evictions. In addition, I have supported shifting broker fees to the person who engaged the broker and bills that would give renters the right to purchase their homes.

Going forward, my office will spend time lobbying in the statehouse to get the rent stabilization bill passed. In addition, I would like to see Boston play more of a role in creating mixed income housing, which we can achieve by becoming a market participant in the sale of buildings. The City can then create the mixed-income rental housing that we desperately need.



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 A 2023 report commissioned by the Boston Planning Department found that the Boston Zoning Code is “bloated, outdated, inconsistent, and inequitable.”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

I support efforts to rewrite the zoning code to allow for more predictable development and eliminate situations where projects are prevented from coming to fruition because they face years of delay before they can be built. I support the Mayor’s proposals to modernize Article 80 to make it more predictable and transparent, including the standardization of community benefits. While we are still waiting for Squares and Streets to come to District 6, I support the Mayor’s efforts to create more housing as of right around transit hubs and look forward to having that process come to my district. In addition, I support the Neighborhood Housing zoning reforms that will help us build more ADUs.

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

Answer:

The subject of my maiden speech, and probably the best thing I have done in my first term as a councilor, has been to establish the Access to Counsel pilot that is designed to provide an attorney to people in eviction proceedings. The pilot is currently available to anyone with a child in Boston Public Schools who is in an eviction proceeding, and I was happy we secured more funds for the pilot in the FY26 budget. But I will be looking to expand the pilot to other groups in the following years, and I will be holding hearings to discuss what groups to focus on next. I have also prioritized fighting for increased funding for the City Housing Voucher Program, and will continue to do that, especially given the Trump administration’s attacks on Section 8 vouchers.

I will support rezoning efforts to allow for more housing development as of right. In addition, I will look for ways to expand the City’s acquisition fund and increase community ownership through Community Land Trusts.



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:

I would like to see Squares and Streets in Jamaica Plain. I want to see more density where people can walk to the Orange Line, the Green Line, buses, or where they can easily bike to work. Jamaica Plain has all of that. I followed the Squares and Streets process in Roslindale closely and I hope they apply the lessons they learned in that process to the next one. In particular, in Jamaica Plain, I hope they are able to bring the whole community to the process, instead of just older homeowners who have more of an incentive to resist change.

I also hope the Mayor is able to implement the aspects of her Anti-Displacement Action Plan that are designed to keep local businesses and long-time residents from being pushed out of neighborhoods. With those in place, if Squares and Streets can't succeed in Jamaica Plain, I don't think it can succeed anywhere.

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:

I am glad to see the increased number of affordable units for each proposed development, for example, at 3430 + 3440 Washington St. (to replace Hatoffs), I supported the development of 230 units of much-needed housing to Jamaica Plain, with 20% affordability. I have heard the criticisms that the new IDP has resulted in less development, but I see the IDP as reflecting our values of creating housing for everyone, and I think it clearly tells developers that if you cannot figure out how to build something with greater affordability, we don't want you developing housing in Boston. I would like to continue to send that message.



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 attended the hearing with the Austin City Council. I support zoning changes that will allow for the development of more housing as of right and to reduce or eliminate requirements like parking minimums, as well as the Mayor's Article 80 modernization. At the same time, I am not convinced everything that worked in Austin will work in Boston, since Austin has roughly twice as many people with nearly 10 times more land. But I think Austin is a good example of what we can achieve if we push for change, and while we may not want to simply copy them, we should use them as an example that change can be good.

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 this and my understanding is that this is happening through Neighborhood Housing and Council does not have a role as this would go to Zoning Commission. But I would love to talk if a way to expedite the timeline.



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 never want to see housing not get built because of concerns about the number of parking spaces available. I would favor removing minimums and instead leave parking up to market forces. If a developer is building housing in Back Bay, she likely knows they can sell the housing without any parking. But a developer in West Roxbury building something off of the VFW Parkway, likely also knows that their units won't see without adequate parking. So I don't see the problem with removing parking minimums.

Q.9 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 would rather allow building up to six stories as of right on main streets and near transit hubs, a la Squares and Streets, before I would push to allow it citywide. I would hope that would go a long way to creating more housing in Boston. In addition, I would not want to see changes like this without implementation of the Mayor's Anti-Displacement Action Plan, which includes expansion of the Access to Counsel program. In purely residential areas, I would favor rezoning from single family to multi-family units or to allow triple deckers as of right.



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:

A next step I could work on would be to work with a policy team to map what a ½ mile radius around transit hubs would look like in District 6. I see in the report that the average density around MBTA Commuter Rail stations is well below the 6 units/acre benchmark at only 3.2 units/acre. When I think about the low frequency of the Needham line that travels through West Roxbury (yet the extremely high usage in peak hours), I wonder how we could work with the MBTA to increase frequency and reduce costs to meet rider needs if we are able to add significant housing stock. My concern with this is that a ½ mile radius would include most of West Roxbury and all of Jamaica Plain. While I am in favor of building up on our main streets and near transit hubs, this policy might not fit as well in a neighborhood webbed with public transit like Jamaica Plain.

