

Questions for the Mayoral Candidates

Addressing Citywide Issues

Just as any other major city, Boston faces many economic and social issues. Can you provide examples on how you would integrate the arts, culture, and creative community in solving social problems? How would you use our community to drive economic development in the city?

Arts, culture, and tourism contribute to the livelihood of our city. Boston is home to many cultural institutions that make Boston not only a great place to live, but also a great place to visit. We must support the arts, performances, theatre, music, dance, museums, local artists, cultural exhibits, and creative opportunities that enhance our neighborhoods and contribute to our quality of life.

Boston is a prosperous city and I believe all of our neighborhoods should share in that prosperity. Developing cultural districts in our city attracts artists, encourages business development, and establishes destinations of cultural experiences for Boston families and visitors. By supporting living and working space for artists in Boston to thrive and practice their craft, we also promote economic development.

Integrating the arts, culture and creative community in how we invest in all of our communities will contribute to making all of our neighborhoods economically sustainable

Your Personal Connection

We've all had defining moments in our lives. What personal experience with arts, culture, or creativity has had an impact on your life and your view of the community?

I come from a family that has always been involved in the creative economy, beginning in our home. Both my parents shared a strong appreciation for the arts, introducing us to both visual arts and music. It was an important expression of our culture. My brother has made his artistic talent into a career in both music and photography. My other brother attended the Boston Arts Academy where he excelled in a variety of arts.

This connection has strengthened my appreciation for artists and the work that they do. It is an important expression of who we are. As a son of Boston, I believe that our city should be one that is known not just for our outstanding art institutions, but also for a thriving art community and center for cultural experiences. The strength of our city is in our diversity and promoting the arts is a part of making this a vibrant city.

Arts Education and Programs for our Youth

While the Boston Arts Academy and the BPS Arts Expansion Initiative are providing access to quality arts education, many of our youth are still being left out of the creative community. What will you do as Mayor to champion arts education with our youth both in our schools and in our communities? How will you balance the importance of arts education with the constant pull to “teach to the test”?

I believe arts contribute to the healthy growth and development of our children. As a Boston Public School student myself, I remember being introduced to instruments, but my brother who also went through the Boston Public School system never had that opportunity. No matter what school a child attends in our system, every student should at least have the option of exploring the arts. I think we need to extend the school day and use that time to include arts, music, dance, and theatre so that every child who wants to study arts has access to it.

The New Administration's Role in the Creative Community

According to research conducted by Americans for the Arts, Boston consistently ranks among the bottom five of the 30 largest U.S. cities in what it annually invests in the creative community. Some in the creative community are concerned about the city's administrative capacity to program, support, and promote activities. Describe how you will address these concerns in the following areas:

- What three revenue sources will you create or use to increase the city's financial investment in the creative community?
- How will you modify or expand the city's current administrative structure to support the creative community?
- What are your program priorities and where will the funds be allocated?

If we invest in the arts, we will see the benefit for our entire city. We already know that creative industries create jobs, strengthen our neighborhoods, and attract tourism that brings in revenue. I believe we should focus our resources on retaining by creating incentives to develop artist housing and studio space that is affordable. We should help create a clearer path for artists to open business and thrive in Boston.

As Mayor, I would look at many different ways to bring new revenue into our city. We need to have serious conversations about raising revenue in a progressive way that invests in our city long term.

The Creative Economy

One of Mayor Menino's signature accomplishments was the promotion of the Innovation District that supports and promotes the creative economy. As mayor, how would you leverage that success and broaden your administration's commitment to the creative economy to include arts and culture as well as the innovation district? How will you foster an ecosystem, which is reflective of the up and coming independent creative community in Boston?

First, I think we must make an effort to retain the young talent who study at our art conservatories, elite art colleges and universities. We should create and expand artist housing and increase opportunities and places for their work to be exposed. I believe we need a more streamlined and transparent process for all those looking to do business with the City. Anyone opening a business or hosting an event in Boston should be able to find out how to by going to one place. I believe this will help attract more arts, cultural and creative organization to hold events in our city, bring exhibitions and open business here.

A World Class Arts Destination

While Boston is known for its hospitals, professional sports, and universities, the city has yet to fully leverage the strength of our arts, culture, and creative community as a means for tourism and branding. How would you utilize our community to market Boston as a world-class cultural destination?

Fenway Park is iconic to Boston. People around the world know it, and I believe that we should create a similar notoriety for our cultural districts in Boston. City Hall Plaza can be a regular venue for events that host a diverse group of artists, but we should also promote the creative life in all our neighborhoods.

I believe we can do that by bringing our art community together to focus on areas in different neighborhoods throughout the city as areas of cultural life. We must be intentional about our promoting these districts and making them true destinations for both residents and tourists.

Your Priorities

The start of a Mayor's tenure often sets the Administration's tone and priorities. When elected, what actions will you take in your first 100 days to provide support and resources to the creative community?

My top priority as Mayor would be to invest in all of our neighborhoods. I would pass legislation that I have authored called "Invest in Boston," to ensure that the billion dollars that the City of Boston has invested in banks today is only deposited in banks that invest in Boston. By asking banks how much they invest in our communities, by lending to small businesses, to qualified homebuyers, and to development projects in our city, we can boost our local economy, create more jobs, and strengthen our communities. Helping increase access to loans and creating a stronger market would create more opportunities for artists to practice their craft.

I would also work with artists and communities to expand our cultural districts. We have a lot of potential in our downtown and theatre district to boost the creative economy, by extending hours of our artistic venues and other businesses to create a lively cultural center.