

Mushtaque Mirza – Response to A Better Cambridge Candidate Questionnaire

1. DIVERSITY: ABC is committed to strengthening the social, cultural, and economic diversity of our neighborhoods.

If elected, what policies will you support or propose to help strengthen the diversity of our community through increased affordable housing and greater economic opportunity for all residents?

RESPONSE: Affordable housing must be a priority in Cambridge in order for the city to retain the diversity that makes it great. We should raise the percentage of units that developers must set aside as affordable housing from 15% to 20% on projects with at least 10 units. We should increase the availability of affordable housing options for the elderly and ensure that priority goes to longtime Cambridge residents. In addition, the city should create a revolving fund for affordable housing that can be used to build low-income and middle-income housing. I began my career by designing and building low and middle-income housing. As a registered professional engineer and registered construction supervisor, I have the experience necessary to ensure affordable housing options are maintained. Cambridge belongs to all residents irrespective of their race, religion, color, national origin, and income and I will work to ensure that remains true.

2. SUSTAINABILITY: ABC wants to build a strong and sustainable community where current and future residents will be able to work, shop, and play near their homes.

If elected, what policies or initiatives will you support to ensure that there is adequate housing near public transportation that supports sufficient retail to meet neighborhood needs, meets the needs of current and future residents, reduces auto usage and encourages energy efficiency?

RESPONSE: As a professional environmental engineer, neighborhood sustainability is extremely important to me. Cambridge must create a master plan that takes into account the needs of all Cambridge residents and analyzes the effects of future growth and development. All development projects should be analyzed together to ensure that the overall needs of the city for housing, transportation, parking, and open spaces are met. Future development should include all parts of a complete neighborhood including housing, retail, restaurants, and community spaces, as opposed to primarily office space like in Kendall Square. I support using the Foundry Building as a space for the community. I would advocate for increased open space, both at street level and by creating more green roofs, I would strongly promote the use of alternative energy, and I would encourage the expansion of public-transportation and bike and car sharing programs that lead to less crowded roads and less pollution.

3. GROWTH: ABC is working to preserve and expand the diversity of our community by supporting sustainable growth and appropriate density.

Do you agree that in order to support diversity and meet the housing needs of sustainable growth in Cambridge, increased density may be necessary? If elected, what specific policies or initiatives will you support to achieve sustainable urban growth and to increase low and moderate income housing for all populations, including families?

RESPONSE: Yes, I believe Cambridge will increase in density as it grows; however, the city should work hard to ensure its character is maintained. I am committed to increasing the availability of affordable housing in Cambridge both by designating more space in new developments as affordable housing and by building more housing stock total. I believe there should be housing built for low-income and middle-income families. There should be more low-rise apartment buildings in West Cambridge where there is more space available. There should be more 2 or 3 story mixed-use buildings on Mass Ave. Central Square should offer a combination of retail, residential, and office space that allows Cantabrigians to live, work, shop, and relax in the same place. This type of development is a more efficient use of our limited space and will help keep Cambridge's community strong while the city grows.

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4. **LIVABILITY: We want to reinforce the distinctive character of our neighborhoods, ensuring that new development builds upon and enhances their defining traits.**

What traits of Cambridge neighborhoods do you find most distinctive? If elected, what policies or initiatives will you support to help reinforce these characteristics through new development, public and open spaces and other means?

RESPONSE: Cambridge is at its best when it blends old and new. The distinctive character of Cambridge is its ability to be a leader in the modern world while retaining its history. As Cambridge continues to grow, this will become more and more challenging, but it is essential that the city achieve this balance. Cambridge's universities are a great example of successful blending of old and new structures and the city should emulate them. I will support zoning plans that ensure Cambridge's historic character is preserved while allowing the city to evolve as needed to keep our economy strong and make good jobs available for Cambridge residents. I support a master plan that ensures the city's needs for housing, business, transportation, and open spaces are met.

5. **DIALOGUE: We want to support open and constructive engagement between all parties to the planning process, based on mutual respect for differing views.**

In your opinion, do public planning processes in Cambridge support open and constructive engagement between stakeholders? If elected, how will you help ensure transparent and mutually respectful planning for the future of Cambridge?

RESPONSE: I believe that the City Council should be completely transparent in all of its business. The city council must also strive to be inclusionary and take into consideration the needs and desires of all stakeholders of proposals. The council should hold public hearings before taking votes on all issues that will affect the community. In addition to seriously taking public opinion into account, the council should also seek expert opinions on issues before making pragmatic decisions on what is in the best of interest of all of Cambridge. Furthermore, the rationale for the council's decisions should be published so that the public has an opportunity to see all sides of the issue and judge whether the council has made the appropriate decision for the city.

6. **Earlier this year the Central Square and Kendall Square Advisory Committees (K2C2) proposed recommendations to guide the future development of these key residential and commercial districts in Cambridge.**

Which three K2C2 recommendations do you believe should be top priorities for the City of Cambridge over the next few years? What specific policies or initiatives recommended will you support to ensure these priorities are achieved during the next City Council term? Are there policies and recommendations that you oppose?

RESPONSE: I support many of the recommendations of K2C2. One of my top priorities is promoting environmental sustainability. I will work to increase alternative energy sources. I will promote public transportation, biking and walking as alternatives to driving. Another priority is increasing housing stock, in particular the availability of affordable housing. There should be more variety in housing choices to support low-income and middle-income families. Finally, it is essential to create complete neighborhoods where residents can live, work, shop, and play in the same area. These neighborhoods should have robust public transportation options that are the focal point of the neighborhood.