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| Candidate name (first and last): | John Barros |
| Office the candidate is seeking: | Mayor of Boston |
| In your role as mayor, how do you plan to work with the statewide delegation to advance your policy priorities, and what are your specific state policy priorities related to transportation, housing, and climate? [1200 character limit] | Over the past several decades, I have worked closely with members of our State and Congressional delegation, and the Governor’s administration to develop policies and pass legislation that positively impacts Boston. As Mayor, I will prioritize expanding, improving, and investing in climate resilience measures for Boston’s public transit network. We must be shovel-ready to partner with the Federal infrastructure program. Top transit priorities will be expansion and improvement of bus rapid transit and rail, including the Fairmount Line. Improving transit options, especially in communities of color, is essential to an equitable and robust recovery. I will work with MassDOT on continual improvements to MBTA to make sure public transit is accessible from all neighborhoods of Boston. I will also continue to support, as I did while at City Hall, legislative efforts that guarantee a right to counsel for people at risk of eviction, and establish a tenant’s right to purchase at fair market value any property in which they reside being offered for sale. I will continue to work with the State to enhance Community Choice Electricity and update the stretch code for more net-zero buildings. |
| Transportation, housing, and climate issues are currently siloed in City Hall. How do you see these issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit] | As Mayor, I will build consensus because these three policy areas are interconnected and critical to Boston’s future. I will accelerate carbon reduction by establishing clear goals and timelines to cut emissions in our largest buildings and transit sector. I will strengthen the emissions standards of all new development, and provide more resources to decarbonize. I will advance priorities in Go Boston 2030 for sustainable and active transit, expand bike lane network and dedicated bus lanes, and invest in measures that will make Boston’s neighborhoods more walkable and accessible for all. |
| 1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Boston? (Check the top 3.) | Car, Commuter rail, Walking |
| 1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.) | Duplex/Triple-decker, As a landlord, Home ownership, Single-family home, Urban |
| 1. While the MBTA controls bus service, the City of Boston controls the streets the buses operate on. How would you accelerate bus service and bus priority infrastructure? [1200 character limit] | As mayor, I will expand Boston’s public and active transit network to increase bus service and bus rapid transit, particularly in communities of color. We must start with broad community outreach and engagement, to make sure we are targeting the neighborhoods in transportation desserts and those with long existing bus routes. In order to accelerate bus service, I will increase the number of bus-only lanes throughout the city, including expanding infrastructure and resources for bus rapid transit. I will prioritize communities of color to pilot bus rapid transit routes, because they currently have significantly longer commutes compared to more affluent neighborhoods. As we develop this expansion plan, we must also determine the increased personnel needed to implement. |

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| <p>The MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) makes important decisions regarding MBTA service, projects, and programs. The FMCB is sunseting in July and the MBTA will be without a dedicated governance board. Will you advocate for a new governance board and a seat on it for the City of Boston, and how? [1200 character limit]</p> | <p>As the largest city, economic engine, and biggest job creator in the Commonwealth, the City of Boston absolutely needs to have a seat at the table when it comes to the MBTA. During the work week Boston's population doubles in size due to individuals from the Greater Boston area and beyond commuting into the City for jobs, school, and more. Not only do we shoulder the burden of increased traffic, we are also directly impacted by decaying and failing transit infrastructure that impacts our traffic flow, air quality, economic benefits, and quality of life. We also have a larger population of low-income residents, seniors, LOTE residents, and residents with disabilities. The City of Boston must have a voice at the table to advocate for our unique needs. A new governance board must be established, and should include transit experts, public policy makers, municipalities, and residents.</p> |
| <p>3. The City of Boston's comprehensive transportation plan, Go Boston 2030, includes the implementation of 26 priority Better Bike Corridors and other bike projects. How will you ensure all short-term projects are implemented within three years, and long-term projects are implemented by or before 2030? [1200 character limit]</p> | <p>We are at a unique moment in history where we must be ready to leverage Federal Infrastructure Plan stimulus funds to implement our highest priority transit and climate initiatives. As Mayor, I will work closely with the Federal government and the Commonwealth to be shovel-ready and direct resources to fully fund the establishment of neighborhood mobility hubs, make the city safer and more accessible for cyclists, and make sure more Bostonians are connected and able to easily travel to job centers. This partnership and additional financial resources will also help to implement Vision Zero recommendations, including more protected bike lanes, along with pedestrian-focused safety improvements, on a quicker timeline. And because all transit investments must be climate resilient, the establishment and growth of my proposed Green Jobs team will help built a talent pipeline and grow opportunities for more individuals to receive job training for careers in clean energy, green infrastructure, environmental education, and more to speed up implementation.</p> |
| <p>4. Often street projects designed to improve safety involve removing on-street parking or reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes to make space for people walking and biking. How would you advance safety projects when there is active opposition to narrowing the roadway and removing parking? [1200 character limit]</p> | <p>The safety of all residents is my top priority. As Chief of Economic Development for seven years I served and was responsive to all neighborhoods. The reason I was able to lead growth and support for small businesses, attract over 140,000 jobs to Boston, and set requirements for City spending on MWBEs, is by bringing all voices to the table to facilitate transparent and action-oriented debates to help move Boston forward for everyone. We must be able to find consensus for the greater good, and we have work to do to educate residents that it will take every single one of us to prepare and mitigate the impacts of climate change, and create a safer Boston for all commuters and residents. If we are leading broad community engagement, we will transparently study potential impacts to traffic and quality of life, and make decisions to augment traffic flow or add more bus rapid transit options for local residents.</p> |

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| <p>5. Boston’s inclusionary development policy (IDP) program requires that new developments of 10 units or more include at least 13% of the new units be affordable and income-restricted. There is conversation about increasing the IDP percentage; however, experience and research around the country has shown that setting an IDP percentage too high can actually reduce the total number of new affordable units built. Would you support a new 12 unit building where 50% of the units are affordable over a 60 unit building where 20% of the units are affordable? Why? [1200 character limit]</p> | <p>While providing more affordable homes is one of my top priorities, my answer would depend on location and planning for that neighborhood, as well as community engagement. As Chief of Economic Development, I partnered with the community to create neighborhood plans for Nubian Square and Uphams Corner that captured their vision and desires. Through those processes, we were able to outline clear goals for different types of housing (ownership, market-rate, affordable, deeply affordable), as well as density that was appropriate for that neighborhood. As Mayor, I will continue to strengthen linkage and IDP to capture more value from new developments, which fund critical new affordable housing and job training. I am committed to raising the percentage of the Inclusionary Development obligation of developers to between 15-20%, and to an annual assessment of the program. Raising the threshold to 15-20% is a practical and achievable goal; going too high with a percentage may prove to be a deterrent to the creation of new affordable housing. Additionally, by assessing IDP and Linkage annually, we will be able to consistently adjust to the market.</p> |
| <p>6. Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030 determined that Boston needed 69,000 new homes by 2030. The last public update (Q4 2019) indicated that the city is likely behind schedule. The current lengthy permitting process in Boston is a well-known barrier to meeting this challenge. How would you reduce timelines and unnecessary costs to create more homes for people in neighborhoods across the city? [1200 character limit]</p> | <p>Keeping up with housing demand and increasing affordability is crucial to making sure working people, families, seniors, and everyone can continue to thrive in the communities they love. It’s also a key strategy for wealth building, preventing displacement, and ending chronic homelessness. As Mayor, I will increase housing production in Boston to keep up with demand and stabilize rents and housing costs, in part by supporting zoning reform so that higher-density housing can be built as-of-right near transit, and by building backstops into programs to guard against displacement of existing residents. I will streamline the permitting process to reduce the cost of building affordable housing. I will look to amend the permitting process in a way that improves efficiency, accessibility, and predictability, ensuring that all new development better incorporates the priorities of residents.</p> |
| <p>7. What actions or policies that fall under existing municipal powers (i.e. do not require a home rule petition) do you support to help prevent displacement? [1200 character limit]</p> | <p>This is the central question facing Boston: how do we continue to grow and develop without displacement? I know it’s possible because we’ve done it before at the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, the country’s largest urban land trust, where we build over 225 permanently affordable homes for families. As Mayor, I will secure more resources for affordable homes and public housing options, including more affordable housing for seniors and people with disabilities. I will do this by: using more City-owned land for affordable homes, including leveraging City-owned buildings to create housing adjacent to libraries and community centers; raising IDP and do annual assessment of the program; create a fund that supports the acquisition of land and creation of affordable housing by community land trusts, and support the creation of shared ownership programs like Neighborhood Investment Companies; and continue to support innovative methods of redevelopment for BHA properties, including participation in public/private partnerships and leveraging the new \$40B in HUD funding proposed in President Biden’s American Jobs Plan.</p> |

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| <p>8. In a new housing development where space is limited, and parking adds substantially to the cost, how would you prioritize space/think about tradeoffs (between more units, parking, open space, etc.)? What would you do in the face of community opposition to developments that seek to balance these priorities? [1200 character limit]</p> | |
| <p>1. The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition supports the removal of direct policing from Vision Zero goals, citing issues of safety and equity and a lack of effectiveness in improving safety. You can read about these issues in the Boston Vision Zero Progress Report and the Coalition Statement on Gov. Baker Administration’s Road Safety Legislation. Do you support removing police enforcement from Vision Zero?</p> | <p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | |
| <p>2. Police details are often required for construction projects and open streets events -- it would save money and create jobs if community members were allowed to do this work. Civilian flaggers were first authorized in 2008 to help fill these roles in Massachusetts; nevertheless, these projects and events are still primarily staffed by police on overtime, and detail requests often go unfilled entirely. Do you support reducing police involvement in streets-related projects and events?</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | |
| <p>3. One key strategy that has been proven to effectively reduce speeding, improve safety, and remove racial bias in traffic enforcement in other states and countries is automated enforcement (i.e. speed cameras and red light cameras). If the State House passes automated enforcement legislation that allows cities & towns to opt-in to a speed or red light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool?</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>If the State House passes automated enforcement legislation, as Mayor, I would lead a public discussion with communities, residents, and stakeholders before any implementation.</p> |
| <p>4. The Boston Transportation Department’s Neighborhood Slow Streets program has been very popular when implemented on smaller neighborhood-level streets, but many injuries from traffic crashes happen on busier arterial roads. Do you support traffic calming for high-crash intersections and roadways of arterials to prevent crashes and save lives, even when it means taking away parking or travel lanes?</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Safety is priority, but we must also study quality of life, traffic patterns, and potential impacts to any businesses and residents so that decisions are informed and made in a public and transparent way.</p> |

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| 5. The Go Boston 2030 plan was released in 2017. Do you support updating the plan and working to advance the plan's goals? | Strongly Support |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | I am proud to have served as Boston's Chief of Economic Development when City Hall released the Go Boston 2030 plan. As I said in Question 13, I will advance many of the priorities within the Go Boston 2030 plan relating to sustainable and active transit. |
| 6. Mode shift occurs when people get out of their cars and choose other ways of getting around. Do you support the City's Go Boston 2030 goal of reducing car trips by 50% by 2030? | Strongly Support |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | |
| 7. Do you support reassessing the plans and viability of major capital projects, such as the Northern Avenue Bridge or the Rutherford Avenue redesign? | Neither Support nor Oppose |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | |
| 8. How curb space is managed can impact many different city functions, including bus service, commercial delivery, and residential parking. When used effectively, curb space can speed up bus service with dedicated lanes, create safe biking infrastructure, and/or allow businesses to quickly and safely receive deliveries. Do you support conducting a city-wide parking study to evaluate how effectively curb space is being used? | Strongly Support |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | |
| 9. Do you support charging an annual fee for residential parking permits? | Neither Support nor Oppose |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | |
| 10. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA and a low-income fare option for other public transit options? | Somewhat Support |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | I support fare-free service for low-income riders, while still collecting fares from riders with higher income who can pay for the service. Fares bring in \$700 million of revenue per year that is needed to reinvest in our system, and we do not have an alternative funding mechanism in place yet. |
| 11. Boston has many traffic signals that do not work well for pedestrians. Do you support making signal timing safer and more convenient for people crossing at all speeds, including those walking and using mobility assistive devices? | Strongly Support |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | |
| 12. Do you support ensuring large-scale developments (including Sullivan Square, the Allston I-90 Interchange, and Suffolk Downs) incorporate the community's desire for walkability, connectivity, open space, and resilience? | Strongly Support |
| Please explain. [300 character limit] | |

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| <p>13. Do you support prioritizing and advancing the housing production goals outlined in the 2018 update to Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030?</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | |
| <p>14. Lawsuits filed against two much needed, 100% affordable housing developments in Jamaica Plain have recently underscored how mandatory parking minimums can be weaponized within the legal system to significantly slow or prevent affordable housing. Do you support the proposal by Councilors Matt O'Malley and Kenzie Bok to update the zoning code to eliminate mandatory parking minimums for affordable housing?</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | |
| <p>15. Given the affordability crisis, many are critical of the perceived large amount of new "luxury" construction and would like to see more moderately priced housing options being built. Yet, the city's zoning code mandates strict parking minimums for any new housing development, and parking is expensive (a single structured parking space adds an average of \$50,000 in per-unit costs). This substantial cost often pushes otherwise moderately priced new housing into the "luxury" price range. In order to increase the amount of moderately priced homes in the city, would you support reducing mandatory parking minimums for all new development city-wide?</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | |
| <p>16. The City of Boston has devoted significant resources and conducted extensive community processes to develop neighborhood-based plans (i.e. PLAN: JP/Rox, PLAN: South Boston Dorchester Ave). However, the city has failed to incorporate these plans into the zoning code, perpetuating a system of parcel-by-parcel discretion and diminishing public trust in the planning process. Do you support codifying these and future plans into the city's zoning code within a reasonable time frame (six months of a plan's release)?</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | |
| <p>17. The City of Boston and Boston Housing Authority have recently launched a city project-based housing voucher program. Do you support continued funding for this program, and do you support expanding it to include additional funding and/or a mobile voucher program?</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | |