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| Candidate name (first and last): | Joe McGuirk |
| How do you see transportation, housing, and climate issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit] | A robust, green public transit system, reaching each of our neighborhoods, especially lower income neighborhoods, is mandatory as we try to mitigate human impact on climate change. Creating housing density around the hubs of that public transit allows for more energy efficient homes, less reliance on cars and will also create more stock which will (hopefully) reduce the skyrocketing costs of housing. And ultimately, each of these can be tools for creating equity and sustainability or weapons for continuing inequitable policies, widening our wealth gap and perpetuating climate injustice |
| 1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Cambridge? (Check the top 3.) | Car, Bus, Walking |
| 1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.) | Duplex/Triple-decker, As a renter, Housing insecure, Single-family home, Urban, Suburban |
| 1. Often street projects designed to improve traffic safety and public transit involve removing on-street parking or reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes to make space for people walking, biking, and transit infrastructure. How would you advance these projects when there is active opposition to narrowing the roadway and removing parking? [1200 character limit] | I would seek to educate our residents on the need for ending our reliance on fossil fuels. I would advocate for free bike safety classes directed at our youth, in particular those of lower incomes. We should expand bike sharing and make it affordable or free for lower income residents. I would advocate for lower or free public transit fares. I would work with our local small businesses on how we can ensure their viability and success while we make changes they believe will hurt their (already threatened) bottom line. Change often frightens people, who then react defensively. If we make the effort to inform people why we need to make the changes, and how they will benefit, we will build consensus on the changes necessary for a safer, greener future. Citing how other business communities have done after implementing these changes would go a long way towards alleviating their fears. |
| 2. The Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance (a) requires that when streets designated for protected bike lanes in the Cambridge Bicycle Plan are reconstructed they must include those lanes in the project; and (b) sets a mandatory timeline for the installation of approximately 25 miles of protected bike lanes within the next five to seven years. Do you support the goals of the Cycling Safety Ordinance, and would you hold the city accountable to compliance with all its requirements and timelines? [1200 character limit] | There has been overwhelming support for the principle of creating safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists. I support the goals of the ordinance. However, since the Cycling Safety Ordinance was passed, our business community has been through a catastrophic event. There is fear among this community of the potential negative impact of changing our streets. I believe that we can still make our city safer for pedestrians and cyclists, but we must also ensure that our small businesses have a voice as they try to recover from their losses due to the pandemic. I support a study of how the ordinance will impact Cambridge Street, as we did with sections of Massachusetts Ave, to see if there are alternatives to removing much of the parking and all of the open space patios that our residents now desire. While bicycle and pedestrian safety should remain the priority, we must be flexible so that we do not seriously damage our struggling small business community on their road to recovery. I think it is possible to be both pro cyclist safety and pro small business. Our ordinance should be amended to reflect that commitment. |
| 3. Quick-build bike, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure is a fast way to make improvements, while capital investments in street redesign can reshape the street to better accommodate a multi modal future. How do you consider the tradeoffs between capital reconstruction that will meaningfully fix the streets and create high quality infrastructure, and balance this with the short term benefits of quick build infrastructure? [1200 character limit] | I support quick-build immediately, but these should not be considered the final goal. We should make street design changes to replace those quick-builds as soon as we can, and not allow the quick-build to become the permanent solution. I would advocate for prioritizing quick-builds in those places that need them as we plan the street redesign. I would seek to ensure that these quick builds incorporate the vibrant and well loved patios that now have replaced many parking spots, in a way that keeps the cyclists safe and the patios bustling. |
| 4. While the MBTA controls bus service, the City of Cambridge controls the streets the buses operate on. How would you accelerate bus service and bus priority infrastructure? [1200 character limit] | Bus lanes on high traffic streets are necessary to encourage our residents to change their commuting practices, and would also lead to equitable transportation. I support a study to examine our routes to ensure that we are equitably serving our lower income residents with public transportation. |
| 5. The MA state legislature is considering creating a new dedicated governance board for the MBTA, emulating the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB). Given this, how would you utilize the board meetings to advocate on important issues that might be outside the City's control? [1200 character limit] | I would advocate for a seat (or 2) on the board that represents communities that contain MBTA routes and contribute to its funding. Also, the city should monitor the board and alert city residents of important dates of meetings and decisions pending, so that we can advocate for our city. The City of Cambridge Daily Update email should include pertinent information for our residents, so that they can voice their concerns to the board. |
| 6. 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 a different balance of these priorities? [1200 character limit] | New developments are opportunities to create resilient and equitable housing solutions. We must change restrictive zoning laws that are outdated and inequitable. We must end parking spot requirements (and perhaps even attach fees for the creation of new parking spots), since they prevent creating potential green spaces and increasing housing density. Denser housing leads to more efficient energy consumption, which is necessary as we face a changing climate, due to human activity. We must end restrictive zoning ordinances that make it more difficult for lower income families to find housing solutions. To counter the inevitable opposition, I am working towards educating people about the unprecedented challenges facing our city due to climate change, and the benefits of increasing housing density. I believe that with dialogue we can come to the conclusion that one clear path to justice is through our housing policies. |
| 7. According to Envision Cambridge, 72.7% of new housing in 2015 was built within 0.5 miles from an MBTA subway station, with a goal of increasing to 75% by 2030. The plan separately cites declining housing affordability, increasing population, and increasing inequality in Cambridge. How will you ensure that lower-income residents have access to affordable housing near transportation? [1200 character limit] | Cambridge must become more active in pursuing policies for subsidizing non-profit developers to either build more affordable housing, or purchase existing housing to create deed-restricted housing stock close to public transportation. Inclusionary zoning is another way that can lead to creating more affordable housing near public transportation. |
| 8. In addition to increasing the housing supply for low-income households, Envision Cambridge identifies increasing the housing supply for moderate- and middle-income households as a key priority. What approaches would you take to meet these goals? [1200 character limit] | There is no silver bullet for solving the housing question, and virtually every suggestion is met with hysteria and misinformation. But it is undeniable that it is a crisis here, as well as in cities across our region and the country. I support reforming single family home only zoning as one tool for creating more moderate and middle income housing. Allowing up to four units to be built on lots that now only allow one would help alleviate our housing shortage, and rectify zoning laws that were based on racist policies. This may not create enough homes or necessarily bring the prices down to an affordable level, but it is one tool of many we can implement. Right now there are other cities who have changed their single family only zoning to allow for multiple units on parcels previously zoned for single units. We can monitor the impact there, and see if it would be useful here. Zoning reform is key to achieving this. |
| 9. Improvements to affordable housing in Cambridge requires not only increasing production and allocation, but also increasing the amount of housing that will maintain its deed-restricted affordability status. How would you try to reach Envision Cambridge's goal of making 25% of Cambridge's new housing production deed-restricted affordable by 2030? [1200 character limit] | Inclusionary zoning on new housing is one method I support. There is fair criticism that this may lead to less stock being built as the developer naturally wants to make as much as they can. Another way is through subsidizing the purchase of existing housing by non-profit developers and then deed-restricting it. Also, we should aggressively pursue a policy of subsidizing non-profit housing developers' efforts to build more deed-restricted new housing. |
| 10. 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] | Creation of a Tenants' Services Office for our city. This office would catalog available rental properties, complete ongoing audits to ensure fair housing practices, enforce compliance, issue fines for violations and mediate disputes between tenants and landlords, and offer free legal services to tenants facing evictions. A method of testing compliance would be by sending actors to apply for housing to see if there is discrimination based on race or socioeconomic status. I support issuing mobile vouchers to residents who qualify. For example, people under 60% AMI can apply for a voucher to support their rent up to fair market rate if their rent is over 30% of their income. Also, we should change existing, outdated zoning laws, so that we can increase our housing stock. Cambridge should use its resources to purchase existing home through subsidizing non-profit developers to create more deed-restricted housing. We should use Chapter 40R along with the Massworks Infrastructure Fund to develop sustainable, multi-use neighborhoods near public transportation. |

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| <p>1. The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition supports the removal of direct policing from Vision Zero goals, citing issues of 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>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> <p>I cannot answer this with certainty, but after reading the progress report, I believe I would support it. I would like to learn more about it before I commit 100%.</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 unfulfilled entirely. Do you support reducing police involvement in streets-related projects and events?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> <p>While I am reluctant to take jobs away from anyone, this seems a fair goal. A civilian flagger corps would ensure that all details are filled and our streets are safer. Also, as it saves the city from paying overtime, it has the added bonus of leaving us more money to address other pressing issues.</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). The MA Vision Zero Coalition is specifically supportive of the following bills due to their strong protections around equity and data privacy, H.2426, H.2532, S.1545. If the State House passes this automated enforcement legislation and allows cities & towns to opt-in to a speed or red-light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>I support automated traffic enforcement for Cambridge. However, we must adhere to the protections guaranteed regarding equity and data privacy.</p> |
| <p>4. 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>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>5. Mode shift occurs when people get out of their cars and choose other ways of getting around. Do you support improving bus service through Cambridge as a way to increase mode shift?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>6. Do you support the rapid construction of quick-build protected bike lanes on the streets listed in the Cambridge Bicycle Plan?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> <p>Creating working groups to allow for our small businesses to have a voice and a chance to understand how this will be beneficial would help ease the tension as we redesign our streets.</p> |
| <p>7. 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 receive deliveries quickly and safely. Do you support conducting a city-wide parking study to evaluate how effectively curb space is being used?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>Fully support this. I believe that we should include data regarding the new practice of outdoor dining spaces that have become a boon for the survival of our restaurant community, and to examine whether we can implement these as a permanent feature of our city, in the places they work best.</p> |
| <p>9. The current price for residential parking permits in Cambridge is \$25 per year, which is approximately \$2.08 a month. For comparison, in Somerville, the annual parking permit fee is \$40/year. Do you support raising the annual fee for residential parking permits?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>Yes, however there should be exemptions for our residents of limited means. Perhaps a sliding scale based on income, neighborhood, home ownership or zip code. Too often in our city, the benefits and services reward the well heeled and leave those of us lower income renters out.</p> |
| <p>8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>I do, and I think Cambridge should look into creating its own free electric vehicle mass transit system that can connect various squares to neighborhoods, that would lessen our reliance on cars and parking spaces.</p> |
| <p>10. Adding parking to housing developments is expensive and increases the cost of housing. While mandatory parking minimums have been eliminated for low-income housing, many standards are still in place throughout the city for new developments. In order to create more moderately priced housing, do you support eliminating all requirements for a minimum number of parking spaces for new development?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>There is no need for parking minimum requirements, especially as we strive to eliminate our reliance on fossil fuels. In fact, we should penalize the building of parking spaces by requiring a fee to build one.</p> |
| <p>11. Do you support increasing density as a strategy for improving affordability and increasing housing stock?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>I agree with this, but maybe more importantly, increasing housing density has the added benefit of reducing our carbon footprint, as it is more energy efficient. We cannot ignore how enormous and immediate our need for reducing human impact on the environment is.</p> |
| <p>12. The City of Boston and Boston Housing Authority have recently launched a city project-based housing voucher program. Do you support implementing a similar program for the City of Cambridge? Would you support expanding it to include additional funding and/or a mobile voucher program?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>I am very much in favor of a mobile voucher program and am working on how to implement one in Cambridge. I propose that all people under 60% AMI can apply for a voucher to support their rent up to fair market rate if their rent is over 30% of their income.</p> |