

Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Please submit completed questionnaires by Saturday, May 4.

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PUBLIC SECTION

The public part of the questionnaire contains a mix of yes/no and open-ended questions. Please keep all answers to open-ended questions to no more than 150 words.

(A) Your Candidacy

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?
 1. Constituent engagement-civic accountability and Transparency in City government.
 2. Increasing access to Affordable Housing via higher mandatory minimum % of affordable units required with new buildings and a reduction/elimination of the offsets currently allowed
 3. Public School Education - both in terms of funding and community engagement

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

For the past 20 years I've committed my life as a community organizer to activating groups of underrepresented families and individuals to step into their power. Ever since childhood I've had to learn quickly to push past the barriers of bureaucracies and to navigate the complicated pathways to access government services. My lived experiences has provided the impetus for my my career in community organizing and advocacy. This includes creating *Determined Divas*, an initiative that was cultivated and led by women to engage low income communities in the electoral process. I saw a need for women to advance their own civic engagement, where we began hosting voter registration drives for communities of color. Determined Divas host forums with elected officials and constituents to work together to explore and codesign solutions tackling public safety, housing, education and other issues impacting our community. Over 1000

people from across the city have attended our forums over the years and we have registered hundreds of new voters thus far.

As a community organizer and advocate for public school education, I started the Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network (CPLAN) in 2016 to give voice to underrepresented families in Boston who want the best for their children regardless of where they go to school. CPLAN started while I was at the Mass Charter Association. Charter parents did not have a body like the City Wide Parent Council in BPS to meet to discuss issues that were similar across schools. We quickly discovered that many families had children in both charter and district schools and the issues were often related. So our work expanded beyond the charter space. The majority of our families, most of who are people of color, often do not have the financial means or time necessary to navigate a complex bureaucracy to ensure that their children get a coveted seat at a top-tier school so our network works together to educate our fellow parents on our rights, the rights of our children and how to work together to meet our children's needs.

Because of CPLAN's work, parents were directly involved in the act of influencing legislation, helping influence legislation related to education funding and accountability. And last year, for the very first time, we had local parents -- parent leaders from CPLAN -- involved in designing 9 questions that were implemented in every single survey that was distributed to Boston parents. There are now parents serving on statewide initiatives for the Department of Education, in parent councils, and are sought after for their input in citywide coalitions and conferences. Because of the work I've done with CPLAN, I was appointed to the Accountability and Assessment Committee at the State Department of Education. There I work to ensure that we look beyond test scores to evaluate how students, teachers and schools are evaluated and considered successful. I am proud to give a voice to Boston families so they partner in their children's education and work with leaders to help solve the education inequities in our city. The more that families, schools, and city government can work together, the closer we'll be to achieving an accessible, excellent public education for all Boston students.

I look forward to bringing my community organizing background to the Boston City Council. I'm excited to begin working alongside the current city councilors who are seeking ways to meaningfully engage with Boston residents and to further the work they have begun in creating structural changes to the City government's policy-making processes.

3. What do you see as the role of the City Council in our strong-mayor system?

The City Council ought to be the arm in city government that goes beyond the usual check on Mayoral governance and on the actions carried out by the administration's various agencies. The Council has the opportunity to hold the Mayor and colleagues in the city council accountable everyday to Boston constituents. The City Council must be

that mouthpiece and outspoken advocate for closer, consistent, and constant engagement with all Boston residents. In addition, the City Council has the ability to advance policies that will benefit residents regardless of their zip code. While the Jim Brooks Stabilization Act did not get approval in the State House, it demonstrated the way in which the City Council can advocate for our most vulnerable residents. I look forward to working with our communities and other Councilors to continue to take bold positions like this Act that will start to dismantle the broad inequities facing Boston.

(B) The Budget

1. What programs would you focus your budget advocacy on?

- Building an infrastructure that provides stronger civic engagement, transparency and accountability to all Boston residents.
- Creation of more affordable housing and programs offering more opportunities for homeownership.
- Public school funding to support the academic needs of students and ensure our teachers have the resources in every classroom throughout the city.
- Youth programs that involve career preparedness and civic-engagement leadership development.
- Resources for more multilingual translation services.
- Collection of unpaid PILOT payment commitment
- Create a multi-city agency budget approach to fully fund wrap around services for Boston Public schools to more effectively support the social-emotional learning needs of our most vulnerable students.

2. The City Council currently has very little ability to influence the budgeting process. Would you support legislation to enable line-item budgetary changes? Are there other measures you would propose to give the City Council more influence over the budget?

Yes. I support enabling the city council with more ability to influence the budget process, which would include an adjustment to the allocation of budgetary control set in our current city charter.

I would institute a real *participatory budget* process, opening the process for neighborhood meetings to discuss and review the city budget, with input from local neighborhood residents. As well, I would create a set of metrics that will measure the impact of legislation and policies within each of our 22 neighborhoods.

3. More than \$60 MILLION of the requested Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) contributions have been left unpaid. What would you do to improve Boston's tax base regarding PILOT fees?

I will work with the Pilot Action Group and my colleagues in the City Council to hold private universities/colleges and hospitals publicly accountable for their agreed upon payment plan. When PILOT was first introduced the majority of the nonprofits participate more fully than they currently do. I will call for a full assessment of the actual tax-relief-to-alternative-payments ratio and hold these institutions to their agreement to pay their fair share generating much needed city revenue.

(C) Education

1. What would be your top three priorities for improving the equity and quality of education in the Boston Public Schools?
 1. Create a set of standards so that no matter the zip code, the city council could hold the Mayor and city agencies accountable to distributing services on a truly equitable basis to every school in each neighborhood, and is held regularly to those set of standards. I will advocate for a shift from Weighted Student funding to a foundation of resources that every school would have to operate at its highest level - nurse, counselor, librarian, robust arts program, science in every school, healthy, whole foods-based meals, and access to safe facilities.
 2. I will push for early access to full-day pre-kindergarten education with a certified teacher in a Boston Public School or in a community-based program, the formation of a Universal Pre-Kindergarten Advisory Committee, and an increase of vocational pathways.
 3. I would work with my colleagues in the city council to find solutions on the ever present issue of the cradle-to-prison pipeline.
2. BuildBPS could significantly change the footprint and configuration of BPS, and possibly trigger the sale of BPS real estate assets. As a City Councilor, what will you do to make sure this process is transparent and driven by improving school quality and equity as the primary outcome?

I will advocate for a moratorium on any closures until an equity analysis can be completed to assess impact along racial and economic demographics. We need to ensure school design is driven by pedagogy and needs of our students. There must be involvement and transparency of decision-making between the Superintendent, the School Committee, the Boston Teachers Union and parents/students. I oppose closures that result in stressful transitions contributing to confusion and anxiety for parents and

students. If there is a need for a building closure, I will advocate with the BTU and school communities to ensure measures are taken to keep communities intact.

BuildBPS can not be just about facilities. Boston must work to ensure we center our school system on quality instruction, professional development for educators, support for certified English Language Learners and students with special needs, and robust resources to ensure we improve the overall quality of instruction and experiences for all students.

3. Do you support changes to the current structure of the school committee? If so, what would be your ideal structure? If not, why not?

Yes. I support an elected school board committee, with provisions for controlling the influence of interest groups and money in the election process, as well as ensure that racial and economic barriers do not prevent many from vying for a seat on the committee.

4. What would your priorities be for youth development efforts outside of school time?

- Create a pipeline for the next wave of civically engaged young leaders with the development of a Civic Engagement Institute. Our young people should be integrated into Council sub-committees. City Councilors can appoint such youth via an interview process, and I will commit to doing so on the committees on which I am seated.
- Increase paid career opportunities for youth -- in city government or working with businesses to create private sector jobs.
- Support programs designed to address student homelessness.
- Increase community access and on-site workplace child care for working students.
- Enhance programs that support our LGBTQ+ youth.

(D) Public Safety

1. Do you support requiring the police department and other city agencies to get City Council approval before acquiring new surveillance technologies? **Yes.**
2. Do you support District Attorney Rachael Rollins's do-not-prosecute list and expanded approach to dealing with those low-level offenses? **Yes.**

3. Do you support ending information sharing between the Boston Police Department and ICE? What steps would you take to address the commingling of data? **Yes**.

I would call for strengthening the Trust Act to ensure that the Boston PD has no contact whatsoever with ICE. As well, I would call for limits on ICE intervention in schools and city agencies – so that all Bostonians can interact with the police/criminal justice systems without fear of criminal retaliation or deportation.

4. Do you support shuttering the Boston Police gang database, which tracks the associations and activities of thousands of Boston residents, 98 percent of them Black or Brown? **Yes**. In addition to infringing on our civil liberties, it's been proven that these types of programs can result in racial profiling.

5. What are your ideas for addressing the opioid crisis, and what would you plan to do to build support for such ideas?

I would call for the expansion of the number of needle exchange locations, beyond Boston's only needle exchange located in the South End. I would support Safe Injection Centers (around a dozen cities across the country are vying to be the first in the U.S. to have safe-injection centers). Safe injection centers offer easy access to safe environments with caretakers for those entering the first stage of treatment known as harm reduction.

I'd like to place more focus into prevention measures as well. I'd call for the expansion of resources to fund education and public announcement initiatives that inform all communities on the responsibilities of working within our communities to prevent the spread and effects opioid and other substances have on families and on the very individuals with substance addiction.

I would work with the Office of Recovery Services to conduct studies on substance abuse among subpopulations and marginalized communities.

(E) Transportation

- 1) What are your top priorities for advancing efficient, equitable, and environmentally sustainable transportation in the city?

I support the introduction and expansion of bus-only lanes and median-separated bike lanes throughout all of Boston. This will help remove our public transit from our hyper-congested traffic, improving travel times and rider experience. Median-separated bike lanes will help improve pedestrian safety and enable more residents to have a more efficient and green commute.

I want to expand student and senior passes and introduce new, more inclusive policies - low income passes, fare-free days/routes, etc. I want to study the disparity of commute times and transit accessibility across Boston's neighborhoods and work to expand the T and other services into underserved communities.

I support parking permit fees, congestion pricing and higher taxes on rideshare apps such as Uber and Lyft. We will gain new streams of revenue that we can invest in the 'green-ification' of our public transit infrastructure.

- 2) Do you support the goal of fare-free public transit? **Yes**.

One of the largest barriers to access public transit in Boston is financial hardship. The continuous rise of fare prices, in addition to inequitable service and accessibility across Boston's communities has dissuaded many working class people from relying on the T and instead opting to switch to a personal vehicle. This is an unsustainable model and will result in many negative environmental and health impacts, primarily felt again by the working class, if allowed to continue. That's why as a City Councilor I will work to expand existing subsidized fare programs, and introduce that they be more inclusive and expansive.

- 3) Do you support bringing back late-night T service?

Yes. It is my belief that if Boston wants to move forward as both an equitable and just city as well as a financial/cultural/academic hub, then it needs to expand its public transit service. By extending hours we are enabling more folks, especially our students and our working class who often tend to be out/work later to have more and safer options when it comes to mobility in the city. This is a common sense measure to encourage and expand the use of the T for all Bostonians.

I will work with the MBTA unions to ensure that the impact on workers is addressed equitably, mindful of transit workers and relative pay/schedule.

- 4) Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. What steps would you advocate to help Boston to achieve this goal?

I will embrace and execute 'pedestrians first policies'. I would like to increase the number of median-protected bike lanes. I also want to see our crosswalks give more time to pedestrians to cross so that our disabled and elderly communities need not risk their life when they simply want to cross the street.

The most efficient way to reduce road fatalities is to get people off of the roads and onto our public transit. I want to prioritize increasing financial access to public transit as well as expand our T lines and bus routes into communities that do not yet have easy access. I will make use of local revenue and resources to effect change on the municipal level as well as use the platform of city council to demand action and accountability from the MBTA and our state government.

(F) Environment

1. What are your top three priorities for making Boston a more environmentally sustainable city?

1) Climate resilient waterfront: As the sea level rises, we need to invest in innovative waterfront designs to protect Boston from flooding. I intend to advocate for the use of both artificial and nature-based flood defense mechanisms to keep our city safe and above water.

2) 21st Century Emerald Necklace: I believe we need to expand and improve our current green space to ensure our city is sustainable. I will support measures such as rain gardens, tree canopies etc to combat heat waves and prevent storm floods among other climate disasters. I will give extra focus to historically lower income communities and communities of color as we often bear the brunt of the consequences of climate change.

2. Climate change will have a disproportionate impact on communities of color in Boston. What steps would you propose to make sure that equity is prioritized in Boston's climate mitigation and adaptation planning?

Climate change is an existential threat to our city but it is also an opportunity. As we transition to a green city, I will work to make sure people from historically marginalized communities are given priority in employment at all levels with respect to the various climate projects we roll out. As we move towards an eco-friendly Boston, we can also begin to mend the historical inequities that have plagued our cities.

3. Do you support a municipal commitment to power all publicly owned or operated facilities with 100% renewable energy by 2025? **Yes.**
4. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Boston? **Yes.**
5. Do you support the adoption of a curbside composting pickup program? **Yes.**

(G) Housing

1. What are the most important changes you would support to make Boston a place where people can afford to live -- and thrive -- at any stage of their life?

- Urge for additional pathways to ownership to prevent high concentrations of poverty.
 - Require developers to earmark money to affordable housing and job training based on the size of their project.
 - Enforcing 20% mandatory minimum on units without the option to offset with park money.
 - Strengthen tax credits to incentivize and reward small mom-and-pop landlord owners who keep rents below market.
 - Support cooperative ownership, land trusts, rent-to-own programs, homeowner classes.
 - Streamline the understaffed city bureaucracy and process for screening tenants and awarding low-income units.
 - Provide free representation to low-income families during eviction hearings.
 - Support providing rent-relief, particularly for the elderly.
 - Ban no-fault evictions for those over the age of 75, and require landlords to raise rent only by 5% per year on renters over 75.
 - Will push to make it mandatory that all large-size developers build affordable housing.
2. Do you support the creation of a city-funded housing voucher program to provide rental assistance for homeless families and individuals in Boston in the face of continued funding cuts and long wait lists? **Yes.**
3. Boston's inclusionary development policy (IDP) requires that 13 percent of the units in a building need to be affordable. (a) Do you support increasing this number? If so, to what? (b) Do you support requiring that a majority of new affordable units be built on-site, in order to ensure communities are diverse and integrated?

Yes. I would increase the number to 20%, and would earmark a percentage of dollars raised in this fund and reinvest it into the community in which this development is being built.

4. Would you support the City of Boston building a database that tracks what is being built, where it is being built, and who can afford it in order to ensure that housing policies enacted yield their intended results, and that tracks demographic data on the beneficiaries of housing programs to ensure equity in program design?

Yes. And I will urge that we not just track the *demographics*, but also the *money*, keeping track of every single dollar, with a full assessment of how these dollars are being allocated in these developments.

5. By the 1970s, many cities separated the functions of development and planning/zoning into separate offices. Boston remains a notable exception. (a) What concerns do you

have about the current operation of the Boston Planning and Development Agency? (b) Do you support breaking up the BPDA and creating an independent public office of planning? **Yes.** I will call for a publicly independent oversight committee with representation from local residents across the economic demographics. Because my concern is the current structure has not resulted in a cohesive plan for development across the city that incorporates the voice of community members impacted by the development.

(H) Economic Opportunity

1. Boston routinely ranks as one of the most unequal cities in the US. What steps would you propose to reduce our steep income and wealth inequality?

The primary purpose for my candidacy is to speak out on the issue of income and wealth inequality. As someone who immigrated to this City with a mother who was undocumented, and navigating the welfare system and Section 8 subsidies, I've had a clear perspective of what it's like to be treated poorly because I was poor. In the end, I believe it's not just about changing policy but about how we do business in city government. We have to change how we engage communities of color and low-income residents in the city. We need to build the infrastructure that will include new voices to participate in the decisions of our City's future. We need to have a local government that is going to stand up to our most vulnerable and lift the voices of the thousands of diverse communities that represent Boston.

2. Do you support requiring city contractors to give their employees at least two weeks' notice before changing their schedules and to compensate workers for late schedule changes?

Yes. But employees should get at least 4 weeks notice, because of the challenges for many parents of rescheduling their and their family's life. I also support the Fair Scheduling bill under consideration in the State House right now.

3. The cannabis industry is expected to be a major source of growth in Boston in the coming years. Do you support giving licensing preference to city residents and individuals from communities that have been most impacted by the war on drugs over large companies from outside the city? **Yes.**
4. According to a November 2018 report, only 0.72% of over 14,000 city contracts were awarded to minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) (approximately \$4.3 million of \$646 million spent). What strategies would you use to hold the city accountable and dramatically increase the city's investment in MBEs?

I would work to improve the reporting system highlighting where our city contracts and work to better engage MBE's. I would advocate for funding to ensure that MBE's have support navigating the process from start to finish of applying for contracts.

5. What steps would you take to support artists and the creative economy as a driver of culture and opportunity in Boston?

My campaign is already practicing this, by encouraging local artists to feature their art in our campaign office space. I would urge that all local business open their spaces/walls for artists, and provide incentives for businesses to do so.

6. Boston has 13 designated "opportunity zones," where investors can get significant tax breaks for developing property. What steps would you propose to ensure that such development yields shared prosperity, rather than displacement?

I would urge that the city offer low-income communities with first option to buy, much like the approach to cannabis. I will also work to disincentivize building owners that let buildings sit empty. I will also work to develop a program to encourage these underused buildings to develop a network of incubators that help new small business owners get their businesses up and running.

(I) Democracy

1. What steps would you take to increase participation in city government, particularly among voices not currently engaged?

We should all be involved in a larger movement in our city government that calls for structural changes to its policy-making processes. I look forward to bringing my community organizing background to the Boston City Council and working alongside the current city councilors who are seeking ways to meaningfully engage with Boston residents.

I will propose that the city council institute a constituent engagement and civic accountability infrastructure with certain measures, which will include the following:

- an accountability scorecard for constituents to monitor how I, as your city council representative At-Large, keep to my campaign promises;
- a neighborhood services rating system for the city council to rate the frequency and quality of city services per each neighborhood;
- and improved assessments of how we use technology as a tool for engagement to routinely reach constituencies, including holding public hearings regularly in the various neighborhoods of Boston.

2. Do you support requiring landlords to provide voter registration forms in the packets provided to new tenants? **Yes.**
3. Cities across Massachusetts and the US have taken steps to engage new constituencies in municipal elections. (a) Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? (b) Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections? (a) **Yes.** (b) **Yes.**
4. Sixteen of the twenty-five largest cities in the United States have term limits for the office of the mayor. Term limits for executive office help deter the over-centralization of power. Would you support changing the city charter to impose term limits for the office in Boston? **Yes.**
5. Elections are a central component of democratic accountability. Do you support keeping the City Council's current two-year terms instead of shifting to four-year terms? **Yes.**

(J) Additional Comments

(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)

I am still deeply rooted in the experiences of the people I seek to represent. My lived experiences growing up in Boston as a Afro-Latina, a woman, an immigrant, and as a community organizer, closely reflects the core values of representative democracy that's represented in my candidacy.

I reflect the changing face of Boston and American politics. But I also represent a Boston that is so often invisible: I grew up poor. I've lived through the injustices that come with growing up in poverty in this city. From members of my family who were cut down by gun violence and stricken by heroin overdose, to the everyday struggle to make sure my daughter can get home from school safely, the symptoms of poverty are reality for me.

This is why it is not enough to talk about racial equity in our City without also talking about poverty...and that the opportunity gap in our schools is directly related in the lack of affordable housing in Boston and that gentrification of our neighborhoods destabilizes poor families and leads to interrupted education.

My journey in advocacy has allowed me to work alongside many people from various cultures and generations who every day call up their strength to speak up for themselves and for others.

I am having conversations with my neighbors all across the city about how each of us can be involved in the city budget approval process, oversight of city agencies, land use designation, and other legislative actions in City Hall.

I believe that to engage fully in the process of seeking solutions we should all be involved in a larger movement in our city government that calls for structural changes to its policy-making processes. I look forward to bringing my community organizing background to the Boston City Council and working alongside the current city councilors who are seeking ways to meaningfully engage with Boston residents.

Now more than ever we need bold, transformative leadership on all levels of government. And I will bring that leadership to the city council -- and speak out for all Boston residents to have a fair shot in their city and a voice in the future of our City.