

# 2023 Salem City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Progressive Salem

Name: Filipe Zamborlini

Office Sought: City Councilor At-Large

Website: [www.filipeforsalem.com](http://www.filipeforsalem.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/filipeforsalem](https://www.facebook.com/filipeforsalem)

Email: [info@filipeforsalem.com](mailto:info@filipeforsalem.com)

Phone: (978) 219-4787

Twitter:

Instagram:

## **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 non-response to a yes/no question will be treated as a no.*

### **(A) Your Candidacy**

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

Housing, infrastructure, and our economy. We must produce more housing for people of all incomes to afford living in Salem. This will require political will to fight for real solutions to tackle our housing crisis. We must promote complete streets, walkable neighborhoods, and make sure we improve our aging water and sewer infrastructure before water mains break. Salem can be an affordable community to live, work, and play, and we must have an economy that works for all Salem residents by incentivizing good jobs and a broad diversity of small business. While these are my top three priorities, I recognize that protecting the environment is a key value that must underpin our decision making as we tackle each issue. Our housing must be sustainable, our infrastructure must promote zero-emissions, and we must promote people's ability to get to and from work without relying on cars.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I am the only candidate who has the combination of lived experiences, policy expertise, and a record of creating solutions for people. As a formerly undocumented immigrant from Brazil, I have experienced displacement, poverty, and many of the challenges Salem residents face today. I overcame

these challenges by working with my community as we lifted each other up. I have 13 years of policy experience as an organizer, advocate at the federal, state, and local levels, and successfully seeing policies become reality. I will bring constituent services skills that I have developed as a direct service provider, as a public servant who prioritizes helping people find resources, and as someone who has worked to bring people up at every point that I could in my career. I can write ordinances AND help people find solutions. From potholes to policy, I am ready and able to serve on day one.

3. What do you see as the role of the City Council in Salem?

Our City Charter clearly states the role of the City Council; it is the City's legislative body. While its responsibilities are enumerated, including approving the budget, making appointments, and generally representing resident's interests, I believe the council must step up its role as a body that creates ordinances to be enacted. As Councilor, I will work with our mayor, city boards, other councilors, advocates, and city staff to write and enact ordinances. I will also use my skills building coalitions to partner with our neighboring cities and towns, and others whenever possible to coordinate regional solutions. As Councilor, I believe it would be my role to be a voice for creative and bold policy creation. I believe it is imperative to have a more policy involved and driven Council to fully fulfil all our enumerated responsibilities as a body and help actively lead the city forward.

4. What is the one policy you've seen pioneered in another city that you'd most like to see Salem adopt?

I believe the most important thing we can tackle that other cities and towns in Massachusetts have also been tackling is to undertake a complete overhaul of our zoning codes. I understand some might interpret this as a pie-in-the-sky idea. However, this is the most important thing I see other communities tackle when they want to get serious about solving their housing crisis. This includes considering a city-wide Form Based Code, reducing or eliminating parking minimums, simplifying our permitting processes, eliminating minimum lot sizes, upzoning, and making multi-family developments by-right city-wide. We can learn from places like Portland (both Oregon's and Maine's) and Vancouver who have successfully implemented city-wide Form Based Zoning, and look to the many communities right here in MA who are currently working to overhaul their zoning codes as models.

5. What does community service mean to you?

To me, community service means promoting the greatest good for the least advantaged members of society, while promoting equity and equality through various acts of service. This can take several forms; specific acts of community

service depend on what a person can share of themselves with others to advance a more just and fair society. For some this means volunteering at a shelter, cleaning neighborhood streets, and volunteering to bake a cake for a foster child. For others, this means volunteering to be a member of a city board, helping write city ordinances as a community advocate, or help a non-profit raise funds to build a new affordable housing development. No matter the action, genuine community service comes through when the intent is one of service to others, rather than self, with the end goal of promoting equity, justice, and fairness.

## **(B) Civil Rights & Community Engagement**

1. Name an accomplishment you're particularly proud of that helped to achieve and advance racial justice or equity.

In 2007 I joined both the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) and the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM – now Stories Inspiring Movements) looking for a place that understood me as a then undocumented immigrant trying to figure out what my future would look like after high school. This led me to join them as a volunteer, and eventually a community organizer for immigrants' rights. A very important piece of policy that myself and many of my peers fought for was in-state tuition for all MA high school students. I led lobby days, met with hundreds of legislators over the years, empowered individuals to advocate for themselves and their community, and recently, Governor Healey signed the Tuition Equity Act as part of the FY23 state budget. Today all MA high school graduates have equal access to in-state tuition, and I am honored to have been a part of that victory.

2. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all the diverse communities of Salem in policymaking, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?

I plan to create a public policy newsletter to make sure all Salem residents have access to information about what goes on in and around Council chambers. Many councilors already share information about things happening in Salem. I will focus on opening the doors to “behind the scenes” of city government through a policy focused newsletters and developing an “access to city hall” program to show interested residents how their government works. I can follow through on this because access to government has always been a personal priority. When I worked in the MA Senate, the office I worked for was the first in decades to have voter registration forms for any visitor to register to vote, and many did. I have created programs in every advocate position I've held to help people understand government, teaching hundreds

of volunteers, community leaders, and general public how to successfully navigate their government.

3. The future of democracy depends on robust youth engagement. Describe how you engage youth formally in your work as city councilor, or would plan to do so if elected.

As someone who was not engaged by local officials in my youth, I wish elected officials had a greater focus on youth engagement. I believe that part of the reason that is the case is because high school aged students can't vote. I would like to see that change to allow 16 to 17-year-olds be able to vote in municipal elections, especially as the school committee, council, and mayor significantly impact their lives and academic future. We allow 16-year-olds to get a driving permit, a job, and even consider going into debt to pursue higher education. Yet, we do not let them help make decisions about how their lives are governed by their city. I believe this is the biggest change to systematically engage youth; by allowing them to make local decisions and vote.

4. What do you think it means to be an ally of the LGBTQ+ community?

To me, being an ally of the LGBTQ community begins by recognizing that implicit bias exists towards members of the community. Most of us who are of voting age have grown up during times of extreme and often accepted homophobia and transphobia. Recognizing that we can carry some of those implicit biases is important to consistently push ourselves to always be better allies. To me, being that ally is constant work; it's regularly educating myself about the challenges and experiences of members of the LGBTQ community, it's using inclusive language and the desired pronouns of individuals, it's speaking up against hate, supporting LGBTQ organizations and being an ally in my personal and public life. It also means there are times to step up and times to step back and hand off the stage to a member of the community to take charge of speaking truth to power themselves.

5. If a resolution had come before the council to support access to driver's licenses and extending in-state tuition rates & aid to undocumented residents how would you have voted and why?

I would have voted yes if a city ordinance, resolution, or any other type of vote were to have come before me as a councilor or a voter related to tuition & aid and driver licenses. Similarly, while I neither lived nor could vote in Salem during the 2016 fight for Sanctuary for Peace ordinance, I would have voted for it and advocated that it go further as a Sanctuary ordinance to prohibit all city agencies and staff from cooperating with federal immigration authorities. I would have voted this way because I know firsthand what it feels like being overly scrutinized by government due to my prior immigration status. I know

firsthand how police can abuse their power when dealing with immigrant families. And, I know firsthand that, as an immigrant, if I know to trust all city employees, I can have greater access to my municipal government.

### **(C) Budget & Revenue**

1. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue?

We have a missed opportunity before us by not having a targeted tourism-based tax. I highly doubt that a tax that would likely be pennies to the dollar for tourists would decrease our city's attraction as a tourist destination. However, even raising \$1M a year would be meaningful to maintain our Commons, infrastructure, and make improvements that are meaningful to residents and tourists alike. There are many tourist destinations in the U.S. and abroad that have some form of tourist targeted tax. I believe Salem needs to have a serious conversation about our tourism economy, missed opportunities for municipal revenue to fund a variety of local needs, a real discussion on the risks and benefits of expanded tourism, and how we can use various types of tourism tax as a way to educate tourists about their impact to our city.

### **(D) Education**

1. What are your top priorities for reducing persistent racial and economic achievement gaps in the Salem Public Schools?

Our City Charter clearly states the City Council does not have significant authority over our schools, that role belongs to the School Committee. However, the Council can impact our schools and committee through the budget, that is, approving the city budget, reducing line items, and approving the pay that School Committee members receive. To that end, I would support school committee members with an annual pay commensurate with that of the City Council, and work with our School Committee members to advocate for a well-funded and equitable school budget that meets the needs of all our children. I will also send my own Brazilian-American, Latin, child to SPS. I am eager for the day my daughter is ready to attend SPS, and I look forward to be an engaged parent because I know that parental engagement is instrumental for the wellbeing of all school children.

2. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools in Salem? **YES**

3. What steps would you take to raise the school rating for the Salem Public School System as a whole?

I would work with our School Committee to make sure that we are equitably allocating our Chapter 40 funds and local revenues to make sure that all our

students have equitable access to opportunities they need to thrive. I believe the state and federal government also need to do more to better fund our schools and I would be an advocate to our state and federal delegation to make sure they hear the stories from teachers, students, and parents on ways we should be doing better by them. I also believe that supporting our teachers is paramount to the success of our schools and students. I would advocate to see a union contract that recognizes that teachers are the builders of our future and that provides them with enough support to be those builders to the best of their abilities.

## **(E) Public Safety**

1. Would you advocate for the reallocation of money from the Salem Police Department budget to be reinvested in communities? **YES**

**a. If Yes, how would you “refund” the police and reallocate resources?**

We should consider reallocation of funds away from police details and moving and restructuring the Community Impact Unit (CIU). There is zero data backed evidence to support the pervasive use of police detail. In fact, studies show there is no evidence that police details deter crime or improve safety but are often expensive and disruptive. While this accounts to about \$100k in the FY24 budget, these funds are better suited for our housing stability services. Having met some of the officers in the CIU I know they are trying to do good work, but that work could be even more effective if done by trained and licensed public health professionals rather than law enforcement professionals. . I would support moving the CIU to another department, or reconfiguring the entire unit to be non-uniformed public health staff shared by SPD and another department.

2. Do you support the legalization of overdose prevention centers? **YES**

3. What steps would you take to address homelessness in Salem?

Homelessness must be addressed through the lens of public health and housing our unhoused neighbors. As someone who has worked in a homeless shelter, I have heard first-hand from unhoused peers that access to a home and then resources through a housing-first model is essential to support their independence and stability. We need to incentivize the creation of low to no barrier housing options that are modeled after a housing first strategy to house, not just shelter, our unhoused neighbors. We must explore the feasibility of using bond capital funds to fund this work. Once housed, we must provide connections to jobs, healthcare, and other services. I understand that the issue is a statewide one. We must work collaboratively with our

neighboring municipalities and state agencies addressing homelessness. While we cannot solve this issue alone, we cannot also sit by the wayside.

4. What steps can the city take to address pedestrian safety?

We must re-envision our street calming approach, prioritize complete streets, and make all our streets more walkable. We currently implement calming measures on an as-demanded basis. That's not effective or equitable. We must have a coordinated, data driven, central approach to when and where we implement street calming measures. We need to re-plan our streetscape to create complete streets and safer sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and find ways to improve our streets by fixing our broken sidewalks, increasing the number of pedestrian refuge islands near intersections, improving our crosswalks, and conducting pedestrian safety campaigns during peak walkable months. As a policy approach, I am willing to consider banning the practice of allowing right turn on red to allow pedestrians the full time allotted them to cross sidewalks without the risk of an inattentive driver causing a major accident.

5. (Did you) Would you have voted in favor of the sanctuary for peace ordinance?  
**YES**

## **(F) Environment & Transportation**

1. What steps would you take to reduce dependence on cars and better facilitate the ability of Salemites to get around by walking, biking, or using public transit?

Salem is a growing and desirable community with an active tourist economy, but also a city in a region with less than reliable public transit. That means we must regularly tackle traffic and parking issues, as these will be constant in a city like ours. I believe we must improve street calming to make streets safer, improve our sidewalks, bike paths, and make more of our streets complete to promote multi-modal transit options. But that will not be enough to reduce reliance on private cars. As a Councilor, I believe I must be an advocate at the state level to demand increased public transit options, because reliable options are missing today. Simultaneously, I believe in increasing the Salem Skipper usage to partner with our neighboring municipalities, and in finding ways to make the Salem Trolley, or similar service, a permanent transit option for Salem residents year-round.

2. What are your plans long term to address the city's aging water pipe infrastructure?

This is one of the most challenging and costly issues in Salem. I know what it feels like to spend whole days without water thanks to-water main breaks while taking care of a baby at home, it's a nightmare. We must start by

making sure every development in Salem seeks state funding to support rebuilding our and aging infrastructure. We must work with our state and federal delegation to bring additional dollars to repair our water and sewer infrastructure, and we must plan to fix our aging pipes before there are main breaks and conduct a city-wide risk assessment to pinpoint possible risk areas and find ways to finance replacements before pipes break. For that we can continue to tap into funding from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, especially since we get an 0.5% interest rate reduction for being a Housing Choice Community.

3. What are your top three policy priorities for making Salem a climate-resilient city, and how would you ensure that equity is at the center of any such efforts? We must prioritize reducing carbon emissions, invest in our resiliency, and improve our greenspaces and tree canopy city-wide. We are already doing some work with businesses to reduce their emissions, and we must enact ordinance that requires new businesses and homes to be emission-free. We have several plans addressing our resiliency needs and must make sure those plans' recommendations are implemented or updated to meet today's challenges. Our 2014 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan includes 43 recommendations, and many have not been fully addressed. We must take these plans seriously and do the work we plan in them. Trees and greenspace are important to improve stormwater runoff, reduce heat areas, and improve air quality and general quality of life. We must improve our green spaces, including those in sidewalks, and ensure that our streets have a strong tree canopy to meet those goals city-wide.
4. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Salem? **YES**
5. Do you support the fare-free trolley program? **YES**
6. Do you support the expansion of the City's curbside composting pickup program? **YES**
7. Do you support the offshore wind project? **YES**
8. Do you support continuing the existing Blue Bikes program? **Expand**
9. Do you support the City's partnership with Boston Harbor Cruises offering ferry service to and from Boston? **YES**
10. Do you support Salem adopting Vision Zero, which guides our transportation policy towards eliminating all traffic fatalities and making our roads safer for all users? **YES**

## **(G) Housing**



1. Do you agree or disagree that Salem should do more to encourage housing production of all types, including both market rate and income-restricted? If so, how can the City encourage housing production?

I wholeheartedly agree and actively support housing production of all types of housing throughout the city. We are very close to adopting an inclusionary zoning policy that will likely be for 10% at 60% AMI. I would love for that to be greater, but that requires greater density bonuses or lowered restrictions on parking and other requirements which is currently not part of the drafted ordinance before the City Council. I would support those changes to gain even more affordability. We recently completed a housing production plan (Salem Housing Road Map) with several strategies to increase production, including removing exclusionary zoning policies. I would prioritize making sure all those goals are implemented in the coming years. I am already doing that work as the Chair of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board, and as Councilor, I would be able to bring greater focus to implement those strategies.

2. What opportunities do you see for leveraging city-owned land for expanding market rate and Affordable housing?

I was glad to play a small role in drafting and enacting a municipal land disposition ordinance through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board that requires disposition of public land to prioritize affordable housing. However, Salem has not yet completed a study to count all publicly owned land and the feasibility of creating affordable housing in them. As Councilor, I would push to complete that study to consider how to meet the goal of building new affordable housing on publicly owned land. I would be supportive of converting flat city-owned parking lots into affordable mixed-use with housing and public parking including partnering with SSU to do the same in their vast parking lots, and finding ways to build affordable housing in important publicly owned areas like Salem High and Collins Middle School if we can feasibly find a way to build in the unbuilt areas near these important public buildings.

3. Do you support rent stabilization? **YES** if yes how would you help stabilize it? Nearly every policy I support is a policy that addresses stabilization in at least one way. State law prevents us from having rent control. I would support a home rule petition asking the state to allow Salem to enact controls that meet our needs. Building more affordable housing gives renters more stable housing choices. Increasing tenant protections through condo conversions can help people not face sudden displacement. Improved public transit can increase access to affordable transportation options. Zoning reform can remove exclusionary and expensive policies and increase production options, especially of affordable housing with reasonable rents. Although home

ownership is not desired by all, I personally know that can prevent inhumane rent hikes, give families stability, and improve generational wealth. I would support strengthening Salem's homeownership programs, and help connect local residents who can and want to own with additional resources to become homeowners.

4. How do you plan to address the intersection of homelessness and soaring housing price

Soaring prices lead to high rents, which leads to displacement, which creates a path to instability and for some homelessness. To tackle this, we must address the challenges of low housing stock and increase opportunity for affordable growth and establish policies and programs to assist tenants avoid displacement. We must tackle our exclusionary zoning rules to increase and incentivize the production of affordable housing, and tackle displacement policies through increased tenant protections during condo conversions and strengthen our Housing Stability Office by making sure the services we currently provide and are making significant impact keeping people housed and stable are made permanent and expanded. We must also shift the mindset of treating homelessness as a public safety issue to a housing and public health one and make sure our resources are aligned with that mindset.

5. Do you support a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase ordinance, enabling tenants to purchase a building if the owner seeks to put it on the market? **YES**
6. Do you support implementing an inclusionary development policy (IDP) in Salem at 10% as has been discussed to date? **Yes at least at 10% at 60% AMI, or more depending on what our Economic Feasibility Study for MBTA Communities compliance tells us is possible to achieve by-right.**
7. Do you Support the ending of mandatory minimum parking requirements for new construction? **YES**
8. 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**
9. Across the city, there are projects for large-scale supportive housing that are being fought by local communities, such as Lee Fort Terrace, Lifebridge, etc. Do you support pushing forward with these specific projects and others like them? **YES**

## **(H) Economic Opportunity**

1. What steps would you propose to reduce Salem's income and wealth inequality, especially the racial wealth gap?

Salem's unemployment rate is lower than pre-pandemic levels and storefront vacancy rate is at an all-time low. We must promote small business diversity and add options for storefronts. I believe in complete neighborhoods, where people can live, work, and play. Salem must prioritize mixed use city growth that includes rental, homeownership, and small business opportunities beyond downtown, investing in our opportunity corridors such as Highland Ave., Jefferson Ave., and Shetland Park. We must also start planning to invest in no-to-low-cost childcare options for families. This is an income and wealth inequality solution because families with children work and plan for making life investments best when they have safe and affordable childcare. I would be a champion to make plans to create a universal child-care program to ensure our workforce has the full ability to access good jobs and invest in their lives in our city.

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**

3. What steps can the Council take to achieve greater diversity in City contracting?

We've already done some work in this area in Salem including requiring contractors to have a diversity plan, offering technical assistance, and developing a supplier diversity database listing contract-eligible diversity business. I believe we need to analyze where our efforts have taken us and come up with new strategies, or fine tune our existing ones to improve Salem's ability to be an inclusive city at all levels. As part of those efforts, we must consider streamlining our procurement process by removing red tape that can slow down our procurements and create more opportunities for pre-qualification of contractors modeling after efforts the state already takes every few years to create procurement tools for vendors to find contractors for specific markets and needs through a simplified and user-friendly procurement process. Creating pre-approved contractors that include diverse options will allow us to more effectively deploy contracts and increase diversity in contracting.

4. The cannabis industry is expected to grow in Salem in the coming years. What steps should the city take to make sure that it grows in an equitable way, in which the communities most impacted by the drug war are able to benefit?

I believe Salem has already been doing good work on this area and we need to wait until early 2024 to see what the current plan to give 25% of our licenses as social equity licenses will yield in the city. However, what we can do now and beyond is make sure that our cannabis businesses are equitably positioned throughout the city. We must make sure that those good jobs are available to those marginalized by the failed war on drugs, but also to make sure there isn't extreme concentration near neighborhoods whose residents have been historically marginalized and criminalized due to cannabis use. We must aim for a balanced approach as the industry grows so we avoid segregating the industry to specific areas of the city, but also don't leave out these good jobs from certain neighborhoods.

## **(I) Democracy**

1. How can Salem increase turnout in municipal elections?  
The most effective policies that can be implemented to increase voter turnout are needed to be implemented at the state level and I support policies such as same day registration, early voting, vote-by-mail, automatic voter registration and address change, and making election day a holiday. At the City level, we can give power to 16-to-17-year-old residents to vote, and we can make sure that additional central voting locations are available beyond our ward polling locations such as voting at City Hall on election day, and partnering with the USPS to allow voting at Salem's post office for all Salem residents. I am also a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting for all our elections as well as the elimination of preliminary elections through the Implementation of RCV and would work diligently as Councilor to come up with the best system possible to meet Salem voters' needs.
2. How can the council increase transparency?  
In a time when meetings are held remotely, our ability to share knowledge and information is widespread, and access to nearly all things are right on our phones. I believe the Council must improve its public record access. We've done some good work to establish hybrid access, and, despite occasional challenges, this is mostly working. But we must do more. I would work to improve access to ordinances online, similar as to how the state has bills and budgets online. I believe votes must be recorded online in an easy-to-search manner. This will likely require an evaluation of our current technology shortfalls, followed by action steps to address them including finding best available solutions to be deployed. I would support funding this type of assessment and finding ways to implement changes effectively and expeditiously.

3. What are you personally doing to increase turnout in this upcoming election?  
The work I can and am doing to increase voter turnout is focusing on the issues I know are pressing in people's lives, using VoteBuilder to reach out to both likely voters and people who recently voted for the first time, and doing my best to be present and accessible to encourage people to vote. As an advocate who has registered thousands of people to vote across the state and successfully increased voter turnout in historically disenfranchised communities, I know that organizing and strengthening your base is one of the most effective ways to increase turnout in addition to inclusive voting policies (which I support). So, I am happy to participate in this Progressive Salem questionnaire even with the knowledge that you will not make an endorsement this year as you focus on your grassroots efforts. If elected, I look forward to being held accountable to the policies outlined here.
4. Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? **YES**
5. Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections? **YES**
6. Would you support Charter Change to allow for Ranked Choice Voting in Salem? **YES**
7. Do you support making hybrid access to public meetings permanent? **YES**

**(J) Additional Comments**

Salem is at a crossroads today and we have two possible paths before us; an inclusive path that believes the best is yet to come and that we can continue to grow and protect those most vulnerable, **or**, an exclusionary path that wishes to maintain the status quo and ensure that only those who have access to wealth and equity already can thrive in our city. I believe in the first path and I will fight for policies that will drive us towards a more equitable and more just future for all Salem residents. Come November 7, you can cast 4 votes for candidates for City Councilor At-Large. If you believe in that same path as I do, I hope I can count on your vote and your support for a better Salem.