

2021 Boston Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

-As a BPS teacher, BPS parent, one of my priorities will be lifting up our students, educators, and schools. The achievement gap was significant before—it's so much worse now. As Mayor, I will reform our Boston Public Schools using my experience as a teacher, a parent, and a BPS graduate to ensure every school provides a high quality education. A large part of this is coming up with a strategic plan for Madison Park Technical Vocational High School.

-Reconvening the PILOT Task Force. Approximately 70% of the City budget is made up of property taxes from Boston residents despite the fact that our non-profit institutions own half the land in Boston. Since convening the PILOT Task Force in 2009, the City has not conducted a new assessment of property value to account for significant institutional growth and landownership for the institutions of PILOT. Upon my first hundred days, I will reconvene the PILOT Task Force, update our PILOT agreements, and build an office dedicated to institutional compliance and transparency to ensure equity for the tax paying residents of Boston.

-Building a Cabinet and Administration that is diverse and reflective of Boston to best tackle systemic inequities in our housing, education, transportation, health and justice systems.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

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Along with being an At-Large City Councilor that has represented the entire city, I am a former teacher in the Boston Public Schools and taught for thirteen years, daughter of immigrants, the former president of a Dorchester civic association, small business owner, and the mom of four boys that my husband and I have chosen to raise in the city.

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

Our technical vocational education programs must improve and many other cities and regions across the Commonwealth and country have really developed programs that successfully prepare students for their careers and feed that pipeline. We desperately need that here in Boston. Madison Park should be the gem of Boston's school district.

4. Which of the following groups have you chosen to reject / would reject campaign contributions from: For-profit developers, Fossil fuel executives or lobbyists, Charter school advocates and lobbyists, Police officers?

Fossil fuel executives or lobbyists, Charter school advocates and lobbyists.

(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement

1. Name three policy changes you've been able to accomplish to advance racial justice and/or equity in the city of Boston.

-As a BPS teacher, I have first hand experience with the crisis of student homelessness in our schools. On the Council, I collaborated with family shelter providers to address the impact of housing on the racial and socioeconomic disparities in the opportunity and achievement gap in BPS. Due to my advocacy, BPS expanded the Homeless Student Education Resource Network to provide a homeless student liaison in every school. In addition, I co founded the Family Led Stability Pilot to identify housing opportunities for students in the schools with the largest population of homeless students. I also enacted a Special Commission to End Family Homelessness in the City of Boston.

-As Chair of Education, I pushed the district to reform school policies driving the school to prison pipeline for our students of color, with a specific focus on young boys. Through my advocacy to improve special education services, I pushed BPS to change their disciplinary policies to address disproportionate placement of black and brown boys in sub-separate classrooms due to racist stereotypes.

-I pushed the City's housing departments to strengthen measures to prevent income based and raced discrimination against Section 8 Voucher holders and to increase the enforcement of the Fair Housing Ordinance.

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

I'm a convener and collaborator and I know that representation matters. Along with building a diverse Cabinet and Administration, I also believe that the Mayor and staff have to be on the ground in our neighborhoods and hear directly from our communities what they need and what they're struggling with. Too often, elected officials govern from the top down and that needs to end to ensure City initiatives and policies are reflective of the needs, wants and realities of our communities.

(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power

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

While the Boston City Council's primary role is to vote on the City budget, the responsibilities are so much more. I am proud of what I've done to hold the Administration accountable on issues ranging from the selection of the Superintendent and decisions of the School Committee, accounting for unfilled affordable ownership and rental units, and attending every budget hearing to determine where all of our tax dollars are going.

2. The City Council currently has very little ability to influence the budgeting process. Would you support legislation to enable line-item budgetary changes? YES/ NO

Yes.

3. Would you support Charter Change to allow for Ranked Choice Voting in Boston? YES/ NO

Yes.

4. Would you support changing the city charter to impose term limits for the office of Mayor in Boston? YES/ NO

No.

5. What, if any, other changes to the City Charter would you like to see?

I believe the ideal model for the Boston School Committee would be a nine-member body with five members selected by the Mayor and four members appointed by the City Council. I also believe we should have a conversation about voting rights for the student member. That student member should receive the same stipend as the adult members of the body. [More info below under (E)]. I also Increase transparency of the Citizens

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Nominating Panel and Process by establishing publicly available guidelines detailing the nomination process and improving awareness of the selection of candidates

(D) Revenue

- 1. Do you support the PILOT Action Group's recommendations for a standing PILOT commission with community representation? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 2. Given state law, Boston is limited in its taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue?**

Since arriving on the Council, I have been a strong advocate for PILOT reform to improve equity for the tax paying residents of Boston. Today, our institutions are not living up to their requirements despite owning almost half of the land in Boston. On the Council, I have partnered with Councilor Edwards on PILOT reform to update the payment formula and community benefits requirements for our institutions. We co-wrote a City Ordinance on PILOT reform and hope to pass this legislative calendar. The ordinance will establish measures to improve institutional compliance, reevaluate real estate valuation standards, reconvene the PILOT task force, strengthen enforcement measures, and improve the contribution of community benefits.

Take advantage of the Community Preservation Act to generate additional affordable housing.

I believe that we do need to take a hard look at city waste and reallocate wasteful spending to programs and initiatives that will bring results to this city. There is definitely room for improvement here.

(E) Education

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

Closing the opportunity and achievement gap must begin with establishing equitable baseline standards and resources in every school. We must ensure that every school has appropriate staffing ratios for nurses and school psychologists, a full-time social worker, a full-time school counselor, a full-time family liaison, a full-time homeless advocate, strong literacy services, arts programming, athletic opportunities, a library/media center, strong academic resources, English Language Learners (ELL) translators, inclusion done right, and high quality buildings. We also need to implement consistent, district wide curriculum standards to reduce disparities between schools and ensure that every BPS school is providing high quality academics. This also starts by establishing a structured literacy program for every child from pre K-3, and expanding

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and strengthening literacy testing, detection, and early intervention strategies to identify student literacy needs and increase the distribution of reading specialists in our schools.

2. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools in Boston? YES/ NO

Yes.

3. Do you support a change in BPS governance to allow Boston voters the right to elect school committee members, like every other city in Massachusetts? YES/ NO If so, what would your ideal structure be? If not, why not?

No. I believe the ideal model for the Boston School Committee would be a

nine-member body with five members selected by the Mayor and four members appointed by the City Council. This structure would create a more independent body that would better reflect the needs of our Boston Public Schools and give the City Council more authority over the body and help to create a better balance of power. The process to change the governance structure of the School Committee is a long one to undertake and the Council, especially those that play a more active role in education, and the State legislature process. We do have to proceed with care. In the meantime I continue to call attention to the school committee and the Mayor for the current body to be more transparent, engaged with our students, families and school communities. I also believe we should have a conversation about voting rights for the student member. That student member should receive the same stipend as the adult members of the body.

4. Do you support removing police from Boston public schools? YES/ NO

No.

5. Do you support making a permanent change to the admissions process for Boston's exam schools? YES/ NO And if so, what would your proposed alternative system be?

Yes. I support an entrance exam, but we must use an exam that matches the standard curriculum of Boston Public Schools to ensure that the material on the exam has been taught to all children. I also support opening up the summer learning prep to all students, regardless of the advanced work placement courses to ensure that all students interested in taking the entrance exam have access to equitable tutoring programs. Finally, I would like to start a voucher program for testing preparation courses and tutoring for our low-income students.

6. What steps would you take to make universal pre-K a reality in Boston?

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Offer universal child care and early education to all children in Boston ages 0 to 5 by leveraging Commonwealth and community partnerships, City investment, federal block grants, social impact bonds, private providers and development funds.

Fiercely advocate for the Commonwealth to implement the proposed Common Start framework that funds universal childcare through bedrock funding and family subsidies; and then build upon that framework through City initiatives to make universal child care a reality for all Boston families.

Put together a board of educators, providers, families and experts for Child Care & Early Education Advisory Board to create a two-way conversation between the City and the important early education stakeholders including community-based providers, home providers, and private providers.

(F) Public Safety

- 1. Do you support requiring the police department and other city agencies to get City Council approval before acquiring new surveillance technologies or military equipment? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 2. Do you support the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office's do-not-prosecute list and expanded approach to dealing with such low-level offenses? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 3. Do you support ending information sharing between the Boston Police Department and ICE? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 4. Do you support closing the loopholes in Boston's Trust Act which allow BPD to inquire about immigration status or pass information along to ICE? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 5. Do you support shuttering the Boston Police gang database? YES/ NO**

No. We must reform it.

- 6. Would you support a hard cap on overtime for individual officers? If so, what percentage of an officer's salary? YES/ NO**

Yes. It's hard to say because to actually do to this, and keep to our OT budget, we'd have to hire more officers overall.

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7. What changes to the 2017 Boston Police Patrolman's Association (BPPA) contract would you advocate for in the latest round of contract negotiations?

In the upcoming contract negotiations, I will advocate for the following amendments:

Establishing provisions to include paid parental leave

Expand conditions for body cameras to allow for second body cameras and include requirements for body cameras during parades,

Expand educational incentive benefits beyond solely criminal justice programs to encourage degrees in social work, languages; increase opportunities for professional development

Increase benefits for mental health and wellness services

Enforce uniform standards of review and Improve accountability and transparency for BPD's system of career evaluation, development, and tracking

8. What current functions of the Boston Police Department should be transferred to agencies under civilian control, and what governance would you propose for them?

Our police officers should not be responding to all calls. We must decriminalize homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and substance use disorder, and to do that, we must ensure that we expand our programs that provide mental health clinicians and social workers on our streets and in response to calls for help. We also can expand opportunities for civilians to fulfill details and traffic flagging to decrease BPD overtime hours.

9. Would you advocate for the reallocation of money from the Boston Police Department budget to reinvestment in communities? YES/ NO If so, how much?

Yes. I will ensure that money is appropriately allocated to community programs—we can be a city that is both just and safe. We must invest in community programs that address the root causes of how individuals enter our justice system—youth prevention programs, summer jobs program, programs that address the impact of trauma and violence in our neighborhoods, and reentry programs. We also must work to decriminalize mental illness, poverty, homelessness, and substance use disorder. We must increase funding to our BEST clinicians (social workers) to best respond to calls for help that don't need a police presence.

10. Which of the following would you support banning the use of by the Boston Police Department: Tear gas and other chemical weapons, Rubber bullets, Attack dogs?

Attack dogs. I believe that chemical spray/rubber bullets should not be a fundamental part of everyday policing and should only be used sparingly, if at all, such as when necessary to control a riot.

But I think it is critical to allow less lethal alternatives to firearms in these high pressure situations. We do not want to take away rungs of the ladder when we are dealing with escalation of force.

11. Do you believe that affiliation or sympathies with white supremacist organizations among officers is a problem with BPD? YES/ NO If so, what measures would you take as mayor to combat that issue?

Yes. I was very dismayed to hear that a BPD officer attended the insurrection of the US Capitol this winter, and believe that the BPD should release records of all those involved. We must hold our police department to the high standard of ethics. As a City Councilor, I am committed to holding our police department accountable and ensuring transparency to the residents of Boston and will continue to do so as Mayor.

12. Do you support safe consumption sites? YES/ NO

No.

(G) Environment & Transportation

1. Do you believe Boston needs to reduce its dependence on cars, and if so, how would you propose to do so?

Yes, the MBTA is in a terrible state and we have to act fast and intentionally if we are going to improve our transportation system here in Boston. If we are serious about reducing CO2 emissions from cars, reducing traffic congestion, and encouraging the use of public transit, we need a system that is effective, affordable, and reliable.

We must center transportation policy around equity and justice by advocating for better transit options for all residents, such as expanding bus lanes, urging the MBTA to expand service hours to benefit overnight workers, increasing CharlieCard access across the City of Boston, implementing programs to decrease the cost of transportation and improve transit options for disadvantaged groups, and connecting essential workers, students, and seniors to existing programs for free or reduced transit fares.

2. What are your top three policy priorities for making Boston a climate-resilient city, and how would you ensure that equity is at the center of any such efforts?

Center frontline communities in climate and other policy conversations because too many conversations surrounding climate policy have neglected to address the real,

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everyday environmental injustices that disproportionately impact our communities of color and low-income communities. I will lead on climate action with a community-based approach to ensure each and every resident in every neighborhood has the opportunity to shape the policy and initiatives to tackle climate change and environmental injustice.

Invest in a Green Economy and a Green Workforce. In order to realize our carbon neutral goals, we need to ensure our workforce is prepared to take advantage of future job opportunities in clean energy. Almost 80,000 of jobs in the Greater Boston Area are in clean energy. On the Council, I have been a strong advocate for expanding technical and vocational education in clean energy at Madison Park Technical Vocational High Schools. In addition to expanding workforce development in BPS, I will partner with high schools, colleges, unions and vocational tech training to address climate workforce demands.

Increase energy efficiency in buildings and our transportation system by prioritizing the reduction of carbon emissions of Boston's buildings, expanding Renew Boston Trust, investing in deep energy and efficiency retrofits, and building a new Transportation Office of Information & Innovation to find practical, data-driven solutions to boost equity, energy efficiency, predictability, and safety across all modes of transportation.

3. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Boston? YES/ NO

Yes.

4. Do you support fare-free public transit? What steps would you take to achieve this goal? YES/ NO

Yes. As Mayor, I'll continue advocating for a mayor appointed seat on the MBTA Fiscal & Management Control Board so our City has a say when it comes to transit reforms, planning, and service delivery. But even then - that's only one vote out of the five seats on the Board. We must leverage federal, regional, and state partnerships across the board to secure progressive transit solutions and direct funding directly to cities.

The next mayor's transportation policy must be centered around equity and justice.

I'm committed to increasing access to CharlieCards, exploring fare-free bus routes, advocating for additional service on the Fairmount Line, connecting essential workers, students, and seniors to existing programs for free or reduced transit fares, and mitigating the climate crisis through public transit.

5. Do you support the adoption of a curbside composting pickup program? YES/ NO

Yes.

(H) Housing

1. How would you expand affordable housing in Boston and ensure development without displacement?

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I strongly support the creation of more affordable and workforce housing for working families, seniors, and those living in poverty. Right now, Boston's housing stock is lacking, and we need to be sure that we are building housing that will enable Bostonians to live in the city they have contributed so much to. More must be done to encourage the creation of senior-specific housing, so seniors can remain in their communities. Additionally, I support efforts that require developers to build more multi-bedroom affordable units that families can actually live in.

2. What opportunities do you see for leveraging city-owned land for expanding affordable housing?

The City of Boston should leverage public land for public good, whether that be building affordable housing, investing in public spaces, or creating facilities that can be accessed by all of our residents.

3. Do you support a real estate transfer tax for commercial and residential sales, with the revenue going to an affordable housing trust? YES/ NO What exemption threshold, if any, would you advocate for?

Yes. I support authorizing a real estate transfer tax of up to 6% on multi-million dollar properties and was proud to support the Council's Home Rule Petition in 2019 to raise the transfer tax. I believe that the \$2 million dollar threshold combined with a 6% transfer fee will provide the City with the funds we need to meet our affordable housing needs and address the housing crisis.

4. Do you support rent control? YES/ NO If so, how would you structure such a policy? If not, why not?

No. If we want our city to grow and thrive, and I certainly do, we need to directly address the housing shortage and AMI standards. While rent control appears to help current tenants in the short term, in the long term, it decreases affordability, fuels gentrification, and hurts surrounding neighborhoods. Studies have shown that while rent control sometimes benefits existing tenants short term, prices of surrounding units will increase, which puts low-income renters at a disadvantage. This pushes them further and further out away from job centers and public transit. That's the opposite of what we want to do! Rent control also constricts our rental market supply, because landlords take advantage of loopholes in the policy, such as converting properties into new developments and/or owner-occupied condos.

5. Do you support the renewal of Boston's condo conversion law, which affords residents of covered properties a notice period, right of first refusal to purchase their unit, relocation assistance, just cause eviction, and relocation benefits if their unit is converted to a condominium? YES/ NO

Yes.

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- 6. Would 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/ NO**

Yes.

- 7. Boston's inclusionary development policy (IDP) requires that 13 percent of the units in a building need to be affordable. Do you support increasing this number? YES/ NO If so, to what? Please List %**

Yes. 20%.

- 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/ NO**

Yes.

- 9. Do you support breaking up the BPDA and creating an independent public office of planning? YES/ NO If so, how will you make it happen?**

Yes. I support the creation of a separate planning office that follows a forward-thinking but

inclusive plan to the development of our city. I've introduced legislation calling to reform the notification to ensure that residents have advanced notice of developments to express their concerns and participate in the development of their neighborhoods. A planning office will prioritize the needs, wants, and realities of our neighborhoods and its employees reflective of our city and its neighborhoods.

- 10. Do you support increasing the number of units that are ADA compliant in projects that receive City funds? YES/ NO**

Yes.

(I) Economic Opportunity

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

Create the first-ever City of Boston department for Economic Justice & Workers' Rights to advocate for the city's hardworking residents and fight for fair wages and benefits, work to close the wage gap, stand up for our marginalized workers, and be a partner to Boston's labor unions.

Tackle the barriers to wealth building for communities of color and women including educational opportunities, homeownership, small business loans and access to capital, equitable transportation options, and affordable housing.

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Expand and increase investments in the City's workforce development programs, prioritize Madison Park Technical Vocational High School and vocational education programs in BPS, and increase school to career pipelines for individuals living, studying, and working in the city.

Continue to grow and expand the City of Boston's free community college and workforce training programs to increase access to postsecondary education options for all of Boston's students.

Continue fighting for state legislation to make the City of Boston's procurement process more equitable and giving women and minority-owned businesses the opportunity to compete for more public contracts.

- 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/ NO**

Yes.

- 3. Do you support ending subminimum wages for tipped workers in Boston? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 4. How would you *enforce* the hiring goals set forth in the Boston Jobs Residency Policy (which requires that least 50 percent of the total work hours in each trade must go to *Boston* residents, at least 25 percent of the total employee work hours in each trade must go to people of color, and at least 10 percent of the total employee work hours in each trade must go to women)?**

I will believe enforcement of the Boston Jobs Residency Policy requires transparency. As Mayor, I will expand the Office of Economic Development's Equity and Inclusion Unit to include more individuals responsible for monitoring our compliance with the BJRP and delivering regular updates to the public about our progress. One is just not enough.

- 5. What targets in city contracting would you commit to for minority-owned businesses as well as Black-owned businesses in particular, and what steps would you take to realize such targets?**

We need to get at the root of the problem. My Home Rule Petition proposal makes actual legislative changes to this process at the state level to ensure that women and minority-owned businesses have a fair shot at our City contracts. This is a necessary step, since in order to make these structural changes, we are required to change state law. Only then are we going to make a real impact.

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HOME RULE PETITION

Create an amendment under MA General Law, Title III, Chapter 30B, Section 12 that stipulates:

Prior to being awarded said contract, the bidder must disclose to the municipality a list of subcontractors who will be employed through the duration of said project. This list will include the service each subcontractor will be providing, the estimated amount they will be paid for their services, and if said subcontractor is:

A Women-owned Business Enterprise (“WBE”)

A Minority Business Enterprise (“MBE”)

A Business Enterprise primarily based in the City of Boston

The goals of participation when it comes to subcontractors will be as follows:

25% of City spending going to businesses owned by people of color and women:

15% to be a Women-owned Business Enterprise (“WBE”)

10% to be a A Minority Business Enterprise (“MBE”)

Create an amendment under MA General Law, Title III, Chapter 30B, Section 5, (1).(g) which stipulates that:

While the lowest bid will continue to take priority, the municipality has the right to negotiate with:

A Women-owned Business Enterprise (“WBE”)

A Minority Business Enterprise (“MBE”)

A Business Enterprise primarily based in the City of Boston

Or those other Business Enterprises that have met the requirements laid out above

Who has also submitted a bid proposal that is within 5% of the low bid to allow them the opportunity to match that bid.

The opportunity will also be given to the original lowest bidder to revise his/her proposal to meet the subcontractor participation goals laid out above.

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- a. **Will you commit to immediately directing all City departments and quasi-city agencies to unbundle large contracts that are set to become available in 2021 and beyond in order to facilitate this? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- b. **Will you commit to regular reporting to track progress toward and beyond this goal? YES/ NO**

Yes.

6. **The cannabis industry is expected to be a major source of growth in Boston 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?**

The legalization of marijuana represents an opportunity to mitigate the damage of the war on drugs by ensuring the profits of the cannabis industry are directly reinvested in communities of color. I was proud to vote in support of the Ordinance Establishing Equity in the Cannabis Industry, because I believe the City has an obligation to support and promote economic opportunities for candidates of color. I also support licensing preferences to city residents from these communities to ensure the conditions of the cannabis industry in Boston is grounded in economic equity. Since the passage of the Ordinance, I have been proud to offer public letters of support to cannabis applicants of color through my capacity as an At-Large City Councilor.

7. **Would you support the creation of a municipal broadband network? YES/ NO**

Yes.

(J) Democracy

1. **Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? YES/ NO**

No.

2. **Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections? YES/ NO**

No.

3. **In 2022, Boston will engage in redistricting on the municipal level. What would an equitable redistricting process look like to you?**

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Boston is home to the most diverse city in the Commonwealth, and it is critical that our redistricting process maintains fair representation of our neighborhoods to ensure their voices and their interests are properly represented in government. Historically, the redistricting process has disenfranchised minority and low-income communities. In 2022, it is critical that our redistricting process is centered in community engagement and a strong commitment to transparency. I believe the process must include robust public meetings in every neighborhood throughout the process to ensure all stakeholders have an opportunity to weigh in and provide feedback on the changes to the map.

- 4. Would you support the redrawing of Boston’s wards and precincts (“reprecincting”), which has not happened in more than 100 years -- and which happens decennially in other MA cities and towns? YES/ NO**

Yes.

(K) Additional Comments