

2021 Boston Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Jon Santiago

Office Sought: Mayor

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

1. A COVID recovery plan that is centered around an equitable economic recovery, increasing access to affordable housing, creating pathways to home ownership, ensuring community driven development.
2. Tackling the biggest issues facing the Boston Public Schools to close the achievement gap and make our neighborhood schools more equitable, accessible, and responsive to every Boston family.
3. Mitigating the climate crisis through climate resiliency projects, sustainable development, increased use of transit and bike lanes, and expanded tree canopy.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

My life has been dedicated to public service. From volunteering in the Peace Corps and the Army Reserve to working in the ER and serving on Beacon Hill, I am dedicated to giving back to my community. I believe I am qualified for this office because of the crisis leadership skills that I have learned throughout my years of public service. I will be the mayor that will lead us through this crisis to a recovery rooted in equity and opportunity.

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

I have been most inspired by the CAHOOTS model of community policing that has been pioneered in Eugene, Oregon. The program integrates mental health clinicians and

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supportive staff to address issues that have historically required a police response. The program has resulted in better outcomes for those calling 9-1-1 and has saved municipal dollars. One of my top priorities as mayor will be to reduce the over-reliance on our police officers and the CAHOOTS is a model that will move us toward that goal.

- 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?**

[None selected]

(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.**

1. I have been a staunch advocate for racial justice throughout the COVID pandemic, working tirelessly to pass a bill to document racial disparities during COVID. I also took interest to ensure vaccine equity. Working with my colleagues in the medical field, I brought together partners to create GOTVax, using community organizing strategies to bring vaccinations to vulnerable communities. Through this program, we have vaccinated almost 2,000 residents throughout Boston.

2. I am also proud to have led on the police reform bill passed last session, joining my colleagues in the Black and Latino Caucus to pass the most progressive and comprehensive police reform package in the country.

3. Voting to pass the 2050 Climate Roadmap bill that codifies and defines 'Environmental Justice' and 'Environmental Justice Principles', allowing us to begin ameliorating the disproportionate and adverse effects of climate change and pollution in our communities of color.

- 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 believe that every stakeholder deserves a place at the table when developing policy, making decisions, and implementing plans. In fact, it's the reason that I got into politics in the first place. It became clear to me that the low-income and communities of color in my neighborhood weren't being heard, so I ran for the legislature to be their voice in government. My administration will view every issue through a racial justice lens. I believe that we must ensure our communities of color are empowered and have opportunity.

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I stood up for racial justice and equity to revise the Crisis Standards of Care guidance. When guidance was issued that unintentionally would have led to disproportionate deaths and denial of treatment to Black, Latino, and vulnerable communities, I stepped up to advocate for a revision. As mayor, I am committed to continuing to be the voice of those communities.

(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power

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

The City Council plays a critically important role in helping the mayor to govern the City of Boston. As mayor, I am dedicated to partnering with the City Council to make sure our city's most pressing needs are addressed. They currently play an important role in the budget process and I remain committed to ensuring that role remains while exploring other options.

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

No.

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 that our City Charter is in need of nuanced updates and reforms. As mayor, I am committed to working with the City Council and stakeholders across the city to determine what changes should be implemented.

(D) Revenue

1. Do you support the PILOT Action Group's [recommendations](#) for a standing PILOT commission with community representation? YES/ NO

Yes.

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

I see a great opportunity to partner with the state government to advocate for progressive revenue that will benefit our City and have the voting record to prove it. I was proud to vote on a bill to increase the corporate minimum tax rate for the first time in three decades. I was also proud to vote for the Fair Share amendment twice. I also believe that PILOT reform is necessary.

(E) Education

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

My top priorities for addressing the racial, economic, and educational achievement gap in BPS include: guaranteeing staffing ratios, expanding public-private partnerships, accelerating deferred maintenance in our most underserved schools, investing in parent engagement, and recruiting, retaining, and supporting strong, innovative school leadership.

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

Yes. As mayor, my priority is to fix the Boston Public School system and that will be my focus. Charter schools in Boston play an important role in educating our youth. I very much look forward to partnering with our existing, successful charter schools to make sure that every child in Boston has access to a world class education.

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. Right now, it is clear that our current school committee model does not serve the parents, students, or teachers at BPS. We need to take a hard look at the school committee system and develop new processes to ensure a responsive, transparent, and accountable school committee. To that end, I am committed to reforming the school committee to implement a hybrid model. While I have not committed to a model yet, I will be exploring different ideas over the course of this campaign.

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

Yes.

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. The Boston Public Schools have some of the top public schools in the country and we must ensure that every student has the opportunity to attend one of those schools. As mayor my primary goal is to address the achievement gap. I am advocating for universal pre-k for every Boston family. We need to build our neighborhood schools from the ground up, ensuring that our students are being adequately prepared for their chance at admissions. We do that through adequate staffing, providing safe schools, hiring the best educators, and supporting our students. We also need to take a hard look at the entrance exam, moving to an exam that reflects the BPS curriculum and providing students an opportunity to take the exam during class. I will also invest in making sure that our most diverse and low-income students have sufficient resources and tutoring to prepare them for the entrance exam.

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

Universal pre-K is a public good and should be treated as such. A central problem to achieving universal pre-K is a lack of funding. I will prioritize universal pre-k in my first budget as well as forcefully advocate from the state legislature to fully fund it. Furthermore, I am committed to working with BPS leadership and our network of community-based programming in Boston to create innovative models that will serve every Boston family. That's why on the state level, I co-sponsored a bill which would create a publicly funded pre-k program in Massachusetts. This budget cycle, I also secured \$100,000 in state funding for early education programs that serve predominantly Black and Latino children. As a short term measure, I would explore using BPS buildings to house early education programs.

(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

No. I believe that accountability and transparency are critical for our public safety. However, I also believe that in order to guarantee the peace and safety of all of the residents of Boston, our public safety officials must have adequate access to resources to respond to violent and dangerous actions, including situations like the Boston Marathon Bombing. I believe the Mayor of Boston should make the decision on acquiring new technology or equipment based on the existing need and state of public safety in our city.

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

No. I agree with the approach in general but do not agree with everything. Our criminal justice system has disproportionately impacted communities of color for far too long. The War on Drugs and other targeted efforts have created a sense of distrust between communities of color and the police. I believe that arrests for non-violent and low-level offenses play a role in that. Instead of an 'arrest first' methodology, I support primarily addressing these issues using a public health lens. Diversionary programs are central and have proved to be more effective in certain cases.

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

No. The Boston Trust Act currently prohibits information sharing between the Boston Police and ICE. However, I believe there are certain circumstances that require coordination and collaboration with federal law enforcement, including drug interdiction and human trafficking.

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. Gang violence is a daily reality in the city of Boston. It has impacted my neighborhood, my constituents, and my patients. As an ER doctor, I have cared for countless victims of gang violence and I have come to learn that the vast majority of violence stems from a small group of individuals. The Boston Police gang database plays an important role in preventing the violent crime that plagues our neighborhoods and has only increased during COVID.

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

No. A hard cap for individual officers currently exists at 90 hours per week. I support maintaining that hard cap but would be open to lowering it to reduce the amount of possible overtime.

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

I would advocate to include data-driven minimum staffing levels, ensuring that the department is transparent in its staffing. Additionally, I would support ensuring that the

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BPPA contract recognizes and follows the recent regulations put forth by the Office of Police Accountability. I believe that we need to take a hard look at the issues including retirement plan submission requirements and the current medical leave system. Lastly, I believe that we should be looking at ways to expand the body camera requirements to increase transparency.

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?

As mayor, I am committed to decreasing police demand by exploring a more comprehensive and public health approach to the increasing demand for substance use and mental health illness issues. While I would still advocate for 9-1-1 to be supervised by police dispatch, as mayor I would advocate for reforming dispatch center training to encourage dispatchers to utilize BTD, ISD, and EMT's when more appropriate. I am currently creating a tailored alternative policing model based on successful community policing efforts throughout the country and am committed to exploring other ways of reducing reliance on armed police officers.

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?

No. I believe that we do need to reallocate money within the Boston Police Department. The police budget should reflect our city's priorities for public safety. It should also be emblematic of a department committed to professionalism, equity, and respect. I interact with BPD officers every night as an ER doctor. They do tremendous work responding to substance use and psychiatric cases that other professionals would be better suited to respond to. I see ways we can improve our system of serving the public safety by adjusting the way we do business.

As Mayor, I will support and direct the BPD to build on their current community policing practices that adapts lessons learned through the national racial reckoning experienced this past year.

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?

[None selected]

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?

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Yes. If there is evidence to suggest that a Boston Police officer has an affiliation with a white supremacist group, I will order an independent investigation to uncover what that affiliation is and any details surrounding it.

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

Yes.

(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?

I believe we need to reduce our reliance on single occupancy vehicles and expand our public transit. As mayor, I would advocate for more accessible and reliable public transportation and infrastructure. As someone who does not own a car and relies on public transportation, I take very seriously this issue. I have worked in the state legislature to increase MBTA spending and also led the movement to prevent MBTA buses from being cut in my neighborhood. Lastly, I believe that the city of Boston should have representation on the Fiscal Management and Control Board. As the only candidate with a track record of success working with the MBTA and Governor, I am in a unique position to accomplish securing Boston a seat on the FCMB.

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?

We must beat the benchmark of carbon neutrality by 2050. We need to focus on net-zero emissions while getting to 100% renewable energy to mitigate coastal flooding, achieve cleaner water and air quality, and ameliorate the impact on our environmental justice communities.

Our climate future must prioritize equity and reverse the impacts of climate change on communities of color. Sustainable infrastructure investments, expansion of green spaces, inclusion of these communities in the green workforce, and policies actively countering environmental racism are required to take on this challenge.

My administration will target the largest contributors to our city's carbon footprint: transit and development. To curb their impact on the environment, I will reimagine the use of space and will promote the installation of solar and wind energy generating devices throughout our city. I am committed to incentivizing development using sustainable and efficient materials to reduce the carbon footprint of new construction.

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

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Yes. Like many Boston residents, I know firsthand how important public transit is to our city, especially for those most vulnerable. I rely on the MBTA to go to work, buy groceries, and run important errands.

As a state Representative, I've voted for and cosponsored legislation to preserve, expand, and fund better transportation infrastructure. I also led the fight to save bus #43 from being eliminated by the MBTA.

Our focus must be in creating a more comprehensive, equitable, and sustainable transportation policy. I am committed to working with federal and state partners to do

just that and move in direction of a more accessible MBTA. Identifying ways to lower bus fares, particularly on major thoroughfares in underserved communities, will be my first step.

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?

As someone who grew up in subsidized housing in Roxbury, I know the importance of affordable housing. First, I believe in protecting, preserving, and expanding our current stock of affordable housing. I will leverage the City of Boston's credit rating to support homeowners and renters. Boston can use its triple A bond rating as lender or borrower to finance low-cost mortgages for new home ownership, providing funds to non-profit organizations for the preservation of affordable housing or homebuyers. Additionally, the city's credit rating could allow for hundreds of millions of dollars in authorized bonding to incentivize developers to build transit-oriented, income-restricted, and sustainable housing.

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

As mayor, I am committed to working with community partners to identify sites for affordable housing and to work with neighbors to realize a vision for each specific site. I will also explore supporting Community Land Trusts and partnering with non-profit organizations to create affordable housing. I also support authorizing the Department of Neighborhood Development to purchase foreclosed property and designate them for affordable housing.

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?

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Yes. As mayor I will undergo conversations with the legislature, stakeholders, and residents to discuss what the threshold should be. As of now, I believe that \$2 million is a reasonable starting point.

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

No. As mayor, I would prioritize keeping families in their neighborhoods by preserving and expanding affordable housing opportunities, doubling down on anti-displacement programs, and encouraging homeownership. I do not believe that rent control is a sustainable solution to the housing crisis in our city. Rent control can be viewed as a one size fits all panacea, but it does not take into consideration the diversity of our neighborhoods and what works in one community might not work in another.

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.

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. I was proud to vote to pass the IDP/linkage fee bill on the state level. I am committed to bringing stakeholders together to have a community led discussion on how to proceed in increasing the IDP percentage.

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?

No. I believe that the BPDA must have a stronger planning department that focuses on equity, affordability, and anti-displacement measures. Instead of development dictating planning, our planning should dictate development. I will create a recalibrated BPDA that

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emphasizes equity and anti-displacement as core tenets of its planning process. I will further strengthen the planning by staffing up the planning department and implementing training to promote equity and environmental justice issues.

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?

As mayor, I will empower communities of color by making sure that my administration reflects the community it serves, are engaged with every sector of civil society, and that they have access to capital and opportunity. I'll provide ownership opportunities so that communities of color can own more homes, start more businesses, and participate in our economy to create wealth.

I believe that many of the issues we face here in Boston are the direct result of the social determinants of health that serve only to exacerbate the racial wealth gap. To really close the racial wealth and justice gap, we need to get at the underlying issues - education, access to healthcare, economic opportunity, stable housing and homeownership.

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 believe in maintaining that requirement and will explore enforcement mechanisms with the Inspectional Services Department to actively monitor and verify these goals are hit. I

will provide ISD with the staffing and resources necessary to ramp up compliance enforcement.

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?

Business owners in communities of color and women owned businesses are too often overlooked and underserved. In addition, our city contracting and procurement process is prohibitive to many businesses. I will commit to streamlining the City contracting process to ensure it is accessible to all businesses and mandate that at least 20% of all city contracts will be awarded to minority or women owned businesses. As your mayor, I would take steps to achieve 20% in my first 4 years in office, but will provide the resources and staffing necessary to increase small businesses participation in the contracting process by hiring specialized, equity-focused personnel committed to recruiting minority and women owned businesses. I am committed to unbundling contracts to ensure that more businesses have the opportunity to access City Hall. I will explore tying performance evaluations bonuses to staff across citywide departments to achieve equity and diversity goals.

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?

I believe that this process should be open, transparent, and accessible to all applicants. Additionally, I believe that we should be heavily weighting the applications from our equity applicant pool. I also believe in thorough vetting to ensure that Big Cannabis cannot use residents as fronts to secure a license.

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

Yes.

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(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**

Yes.

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

An equitably redistricting process starts and ends with community conversations with our most underserved communities. The conversation must be led by them and as mayor I will do so.

- 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

became an ER doctor because my uncle was infected with HIV and later died of AIDS; his only crime was that he was a poor Latino man who couldn't access care. As a result of that experience, I committed my life to service - I went on to serve in the Peace Corps and as a captain in the Army. I first ran for my office in 2018 because I felt that my patients and my community were not being represented in a manner that was deserving to them. After this very difficult year, I decided that in order for Boston to climb out of this crisis, we are going to need strong public leadership. I'm running for mayor not just to bring Boston back stronger than ever, but to lead us through this crisis and to a recovery rooted in equity and opportunity.

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