



★ ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE ★

Deadline: September 25TH

Candidate Event: October 15TH, 5:30PM

Solidarity Lowell 2023 City Council Questionnaire

Name: Virak Uy

Office Sought: Councilor At-Large

Website: n/a

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Instagram: n/a

Section 1: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1. The city has more work to do in the area of fair, unbiased policing.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? How would you address this issue?

Successful implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices entails leveraging community partnerships to dismantle barriers and increase access for underrepresented populations.

2. The city needs to diversify its hiring practices so that City Hall proportionally represents the ethnic makeup of our city's residents.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What are your proposals to address Lowell city hiring practices?

With 15 years of experience, I prioritize collective impactful initiatives. As part of the Lowell DEI consortium and as Interim Director of TRHT at Middlesex Community College, I'm dedicated to advancing social and racial justice across the community. This involves addressing societal divisions, inequitable laws, and economic disparities. I advocate for open dialogues to foster racial equity in relationships, policies, and practices. DEI efforts necessitate collaboration with various entities including businesses, nonprofits, and educational institutions.

3. Would you support requiring developers in the city to sign community benefit agreements? These might include requirements that their workforce reflect Lowell's diversity, that a certain percentage of their workforce be local hires, and/or that pay be a living wage. (YES/NO)

YES.

4. The city needs to ensure that all marginalized communities are equally protected.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What proposals do you have for ensuring equal protections for all Lowell residents and visitors?

5. Systemic racism is a public health crisis in Lowell.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

If so, why and how do you propose to respond to the crisis in Lowell-specific ways? If not, why not?

Racism is unequivocally a public health crisis that has far-reaching and detrimental effects on individuals, communities, and society at large. It is not merely a matter of interpersonal prejudice; it operates systemically, shaping social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate disparities in health outcomes. Understanding racism as a public health crisis is crucial because it highlights the urgent need for comprehensive action to address its impact on the well-being of marginalized communities. Here's why racism constitutes a public health crisis:

Health Disparities: Racism leads to profound health disparities. People of color, particularly Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities, face higher rates of chronic diseases, maternal mortality, and infant mortality. These disparities are rooted in systemic racism that limits access to quality healthcare, nutritious food, safe housing, and economic opportunities.

Stress and Mental Health: The constant experience of racism contributes to chronic stress, anxiety, and depression among marginalized individuals. This psychological burden can lead to a range of mental health issues, affecting overall well-being and life expectancy.

Discrimination in Healthcare: Racism can manifest within healthcare systems, leading to disparities in treatment and diagnosis. Implicit biases among healthcare providers can result in unequal access to care and inadequate medical attention for people of color.

Socioeconomic Factors: Systemic racism restricts economic mobility for marginalized groups, leading to lower income levels and less access to resources for health and well-being. Socioeconomic factors are directly linked to health outcomes.

Environmental Injustice: Communities of color are often disproportionately affected by environmental hazards, such as pollution and lack of access to clean water. These environmental injustices can lead to a range of health problems.

Action Plan to Address Racism as a Public Health Crisis:

Acknowledge the Crisis: Governments, healthcare institutions, and society as a whole must acknowledge racism as a public health crisis through formal declarations. This recognition will prioritize the issue and stimulate action.

Data Collection and Analysis: Collect and analyze data on health disparities, healthcare access, and outcomes, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. This data will provide insights into the extent of the problem and guide targeted interventions.

Education and Training: Implement mandatory anti-racism education and training for healthcare providers, law enforcement, educators, and public servants. This will help combat implicit biases and discrimination within these systems.

Healthcare Access: Expand access to affordable and quality healthcare services in marginalized communities, addressing both physical and mental health needs.

Economic Equity: Implement policies to promote economic equity, including affordable housing initiatives, increased minimum wage, and support for small businesses in underserved areas.

Environmental Justice: Enforce environmental regulations to protect communities of color from toxic exposures, and invest in sustainable infrastructure in these areas.

Culturally Competent Care: Develop healthcare programs and services that are culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible to diverse populations.

Community Engagement: Involve marginalized communities in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard in the development and implementation of policies and programs.

Police Reform: Address police violence and brutality through comprehensive reform efforts, including community policing, de-escalation training, and increased accountability measures.

Legislative Action: Enact anti-discrimination legislation and policies at federal, state, and local levels to dismantle systemic racism in all sectors, including healthcare, education, criminal justice, and employment.

Racism is a deeply entrenched problem with far-reaching consequences, but it can be dismantled through collective efforts that prioritize equity, justice, and the well-being of all individuals and communities. Recognizing racism as a public health crisis is the first step toward meaningful change.

6. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all of the diverse communities of Lowell in policy-making, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?

I have over 15 years of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work experience. To me, DEI best practices are about leveraging community partnerships to increase access and dismantle barriers for underrepresented populations. It is about implementing collective initiatives that are impactful. As a member of the Lowell DEI consortium and the Interim Director of The Center for Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) at Middlesex Community College, I am committed to advancing social and racial justice in all aspects of our community. We need to address the ways society separates groups, how the law impacts groups inequitably, and how the economic structures and practices create inequality and barriers to opportunity.

We need to create more opportunities for our community to have dialogues that build deeper capacity towards racial equity and justice in relationships, structures, policy, and practice. DEI work is a collective effort that requires collaboration with local businesses, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, health, educational and cultural institutions that will help us build stronger connections with diverse communities, and create a more equitable, inclusive community for all of our Lowell residents. I am passionate about engaging with stakeholders from all backgrounds to establish innovative approaches to DEI work that create lasting impact.

Section II: Housing, Labor, and Development

1. Lowell’s code enforcement should do more to protect tenants from evictions and/or penalties for previous evictions.

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

If so, why and how do you propose to strengthen tenant rights? If not, why not?

Strengthen tenant protection laws to prevent unjust evictions and increase rent control measures to maintain affordability for existing residents.

2. How would you expand affordable housing in Lowell and ensure development without displacement of established communities?

Engage with community members through public forums, town hall meetings, and surveys to gather input on development plans and ensure that the interests of all residents are considered. Establish affordable housing trust funds that generate revenue through fees and contributions from developers. These funds can be used to finance affordable housing projects.

3. How would you address the needs of the unhoused population of Lowell?

Establish programs that provide financial assistance to individuals and families at risk of becoming unhoused, helping them stay in their current homes.

4. Do you agree with a Housing First approach? (YES/NO)

YES.

5. Do you agree with the city's unhoused encampment sweeps? (YES/NO)

YES.

6. Would you agree with establishing legal camping areas for those unhoused persons for whom no other accommodations are available? (YES/NO)

YES.

7. How would you ensure there are adequate services for all unhoused persons?

Develop strategies to counter gentrification, such as offering tax incentives to long-term residents or providing financial assistance to help them stay in their homes.

8. Would you support a city wage theft ordinance that would set up structures to protect workers from wage theft violations such as failure to make wage payments; failure to abide by minimum wage, prevailing wage and overtime laws; and independent contractor misclassification? (YES/NO)

YES.

9. How would you fill the empty downtown storefronts?

Filling empty downtown storefronts in Lowell, Massachusetts, or any city for that matter, requires a combination of strategic planning, community involvement, and creative solutions. Here are some strategies to consider:

Market Analysis:

Conduct a comprehensive market analysis to identify gaps in the local market and consumer needs. Understanding the demand for specific types of businesses can help attract suitable tenants.

Incentives and Tax Breaks:

Offer incentives and tax breaks to attract businesses to downtown Lowell. This could include property tax abatements or grants for façade improvements.

Business Incubators and Co-working Spaces:

Create business incubators or co-working spaces in empty storefronts to support startups and entrepreneurs. These spaces can foster innovation and collaboration.

Pop-up Shops:

Encourage pop-up shops and temporary retail spaces. These can help test the market and bring foot traffic to the area, potentially attracting permanent tenants.

Arts and Culture Spaces:

Promote art galleries, theaters, and cultural spaces. Arts and culture establishments can contribute to a vibrant downtown atmosphere and draw visitors.

Affordable Housing:

Encourage the development of mixed-use properties that include affordable housing units above commercial spaces. This can help create a constant flow of potential customers.

Community Engagement:

Involve the community in the revitalization process. Gather input from residents, business owners, and local organizations to understand their needs and preferences.

Small Business Support:

Offer support and resources to local small businesses, including mentoring, training, and access to capital. A strong network of small businesses can revitalize a downtown area.

Streamlined Permitting and Zoning:

Simplify and expedite the permitting and zoning process for businesses looking to open in vacant storefronts. This can reduce barriers to entry and attract more entrepreneurs.

Events and Festivals:

Organize events and festivals in the downtown area to attract visitors and shoppers. Seasonal markets, street fairs, and cultural events can bring a sense of excitement to the district.

Business Improvement District (BID):

Consider establishing a Business Improvement District to fund initiatives for downtown improvement, marketing, and maintenance.

Online Promotion:

Create an online presence for vacant storefronts through a dedicated website or social media platforms. Showcase available spaces and their potential.

Collaborate with Universities:

Partner with nearby universities or colleges to create internship programs or innovation hubs that can connect students and businesses.

Transportation and Parking:

Ensure that downtown is easily accessible by improving transportation options and parking facilities. Convenient access can attract more visitors.

Adaptive Reuse:

Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, transforming them into modern commercial spaces while preserving their architectural character.

Facade Improvement Programs:

Offer grants or low-interest loans for building owners to update and improve the facades of their properties. An appealing streetscape can attract more businesses.
Local Business Associations:

Support and collaborate with local business associations to promote the downtown area collectively and create a cohesive business community.
Local Food and Breweries:

Encourage the establishment of local restaurants, cafes, and breweries, which can become community gathering spots and draw people to the area.
Regular Maintenance and Safety:

Ensure that the downtown area is well-maintained, clean, and safe. This creates a positive environment for both businesses and customers.
Patience and Long-Term Vision:

Understand that revitalizing downtown areas can take time. Maintain a long-term vision and stay committed to the process.

By implementing a combination of these strategies and adapting them to the specific needs and opportunities in Lowell, you can work towards filling empty downtown storefronts and revitalizing the area. Collaboration among city officials, business owners, and the community will be key to success.

Section III: Environment and Transportation

1. Would you support programs to subsidize retrofitting the old housing stock in Lowell to be more energy efficient, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce energy costs for residents? (YES/NO)

YES.

2. Climate change is causing more days of extreme heat, flooding, damaging storms, and drought; just to name a few of the impacts. Lowell could do more to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

What steps would you recommend that the city take to improve its preparedness?

3. In 2018, the Lowell City Council passed a resolution supporting a goal of 100% renewable energy use in Lowell-- including in buildings and transportation-- by 2035. This year, Massachusetts passed a new climate law that requires significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions across our economy by 2030. What steps would you recommend that Lowell take to accomplish these goals?

Addressing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change is critical for the city of Lowell as it could have a profound impact on public health. Below are some goals and measures that can be implemented to support these efforts:
Community Education and Engagement: is the first and foremost important goal. This goal will have an impact on raising Lowell's awareness and encourage community involvement in climate action.

Measures: Increase the number of hosted workshops, seminars, and campaigns to educate residents about climate change, energy conservation, and sustainable living practices.

Renewable Energy Transition: Lowell can continue to transition a significant portion of the city's energy consumption to renewable sources.

Performance Measures: Increase the number of solar panel installations on municipal buildings, encourage residential solar adoption through incentives, and explore partnerships with wind and hydroelectric projects.

Energy Efficiency Improvements: Encourage residence to reduce overall energy consumption through efficiency upgrades.

Measures: Increase the number of retrofit city buildings with energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems, and promote energy-efficient appliances and practices among residents.

Public Transportation Enhancement: Increase the number of buses and routes to encourage Lowellians to take public transportation and decrease reliance on private vehicles.

Measures: Improve and expand public transit options, create dedicated bike lanes, and incentivize electric vehicle adoption by expanding charging infrastructure.
Urban Green Spaces: Increase urban green spaces and promote sustainable landscaping.

Measures: Plant more trees, establish community gardens, and encourage sustainable landscaping practices that require less water and maintenance.
Building Codes and Standards: Mandate higher energy efficiency standards for new construction and renovations.

Measures: Update building codes to require better insulation, energy-efficient windows, and sustainable design practices.

By setting these goals and implementing these measures, Lowell can make meaningful strides in reducing carbon emissions and addressing climate change, fostering a more sustainable and resilient future for their residents.

Addressing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change is a critical undertaking for cities like Lowell, Massachusetts. Here are some specific goals and measures that can be implemented to support these efforts:

Renewable Energy Transition:

Goal: Transition a significant portion of the city's energy consumption to renewable sources.

Measures: Increase solar panel installations on municipal buildings, encourage residential solar adoption through incentives, and explore partnerships with wind and hydroelectric projects.

Energy Efficiency Improvements:

Goal: Reduce overall energy consumption through efficiency upgrades.

Measures: Retrofit city buildings with energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems, and promote energy-efficient appliances and practices among residents.

Public Transportation Enhancement:

Goal: Increase the use of public transportation and decrease reliance on private vehicles.

Measures: Improve and expand public transit options, create dedicated bike lanes, and incentivize electric vehicle adoption by expanding charging infrastructure.

Waste Management and Recycling:

Goal: Reduce landfill waste and promote recycling and composting.

Measures: Implement city-wide recycling and composting programs, provide education on proper waste separation, and support initiatives for reducing single-use plastics.

Urban Green Spaces:

Goal: Increase urban green spaces and promote sustainable landscaping.

Measures: Plant more trees, establish community gardens, and encourage sustainable landscaping practices that require less water and maintenance.

Building Codes and Standards:

Goal: Mandate higher energy efficiency standards for new construction and renovations.

Measures: Update building codes to require better insulation, energy-efficient windows, and sustainable design practices.

Carbon Neutral Municipal Operations:

Goal: Make city government operations carbon-neutral.

Measures: Offset carbon emissions from municipal facilities through investments in carbon offset projects and renewable energy sources.

Climate Resilience Planning:

Goal: Develop strategies to address the impacts of climate change and enhance resilience.

Measures: Identify vulnerable areas prone to flooding or extreme heat and implement strategies to protect infrastructure and communities.

Community Education and Engagement:

Goal: Raise awareness and encourage community involvement in climate action.

Measures: Host workshops, seminars, and campaigns to educate residents about climate change, energy conservation, and sustainable living practices.

Partnerships and Collaborations:

Goal: Collaborate with neighboring cities, businesses, and organizations for collective impact.

Measures: Join regional climate networks, work with local businesses on sustainable practices, and foster partnerships to share resources and knowledge. By setting these goals and implementing these measures, cities like Lowell can make meaningful strides in reducing carbon emissions and addressing climate change, fostering a more sustainable and resilient future for their residents.

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4. The hours and reach of the LRTA need to be extended.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? If so, what would you recommend in order to reach this goal?

5. Lowell should prioritize policies that make it easier to get around the city without depending on cars.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What policy priorities do you support to achieve this goal?

Section IV: City Management/Council Relations

1. Do you agree that too much of our City Council meetings are spent on discussing items that could have been delegated to the City Manager or the appropriate department ahead of the meeting?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

2. Do you support the five minute speaking time limit being extended to also cover City Council and School Committee members?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

3. Do you agree that there should be a limit on the number of amendments a Councilor can propose on a given motion or ordinance?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Please share any additional thoughts on how our city meetings are run.

Section V: Final Thoughts

1. Communication between the Lowell city government and the people of Lowell needs to be improved.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree

5. Strongly Disagree

If so, what ideas do you have to improve the communication between the Lowell city government and the people of Lowell? If not, why not?

2. What will you do to maintain contact with your constituents while you are in office?

I will make sure that my constituents have my contact information with my phone number and email.

3. Do you commit to ensuring that important city communications are accessible in the main languages (English, Spanish, Khmer) of the city's residents, including City Council meetings and minutes, policy and emergency announcements?

Yes, definitely.

4. What are your top three priorities if elected?

Adequate resources for our K-12 education system, public safety and local economic development.