

**2021 Cambridge City Council Questionnaire – August 10, 2021 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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1. Housing is an important issue for the City of Cambridge.

**a.** How would you describe our housing challenges?

**Our housing issues are complex and regional in nature. Cambridge is a leader in providing affordable housing options. Cambridge has built 16% affordable housing, while many surrounding communities have not met their required 10% minimum. OUr challenge is that we have priced out middle income and working class families which in my opinion has been detrimental to our city. While our city is remarkably dense in some areas, the restrictions on building multi-family housing in others limits our ability to offer more housing opportunities to residents across the city. I would like to address this issue through zoning while ensuring that the character of our neighborhoods are preserved and the views of community members are taken into consideration when a new development is proposed. I also want to engage with regional partners like the Massachusetts Area Planning Council to get other communities to meet their housing obligations to take some of the pressure off of Cambridge because we can not meet all of the housing needs in Greater Boston.**

**b.** What do you think are the major factors causing our housing challenges?

**The major issues surrounding housing are that the high cost of land, cost of construction, and meeting all the zoning requirements for construction has led to sky high housing costs allowing only those in the highest income brackets to enter the housing market which has further driven up prices of housing through bidding wars. In order to provide more affordable options for lower and middle income residents, we need to provide more multi family housing options. This is challenging because of the competing needs of creating more housing stock while also preserving the character and livability of our neighborhoods and addressing further traffic congestion.**

**c.** What do you think is stopping us from addressing those challenges?

**I think the discourse on the issue has become polarized and is part of what lies at the heart of our inability to address our housing needs. Housing is a complex issue involving many stakeholders, including residents, small businesses, community organizations, and developers. I think there are a lot of well meaning people who are coming at things from different perspectives but need to take a step back and reengage where there may be common ground to advance the development of more housing opportunities while taking in the concerns of the community.**

**d.** Describe concerns you might have about existing and needed infrastructure to serve our present and future housing stock, for example: aging sewer lines, electrical grid and most importantly water.

**Given the underinvestment by federal and state resources over the past four decades Cambridge , as well as the rest of the state, needs to address these infrastructure issues. The reality for all of the state is that we need more housing and infrastructure needs to be addressed regionally. I agree that much of Cambridge’s infrastructure is in need of repair. I believe we should take the opportunity of the federal government's current focus on funding infrastructure to improve our infrastructure. In addition, new housing and developments should be held to a higher energy and water efficiency standard so that they become part of the solution to our climate and energy needs moving forward.**

2. Climate Change is real. What changes would you like to see the city undertake to address these concerns locally? How do your views address environmental equity? How do you reconcile the issue of tree conservation and the environment when discussing development?

**Climate change is real and we have to focus on transit centered development, providing residents with more transportation alternatives, such as improving bike infrastructure, creating priority bus lanes, working with our state legislative delegation to improve and expand the MBTA and more. I also believe we should continue our efforts to expand tree canopy and build more green spaces in Cambridge.**

3. “Development” is a commonly used term of public policy. Notions of economic development evolve over time. In the current moment, ideas about development must address concerns about climate change, global capital flows and rapidly growing economic inequality.

a. The City for decades developed commercial property to increase taxable income that allows residential tax rates to remain low compared to many other cities. Has that strategy reached its limit? If so, what should replace it?

 **In my view, this strategy has worked well; Cantabrigians enjoy low residential taxes and high quality public services. The city’s fiscal situation is very strong; it maintains a triple AAA bond rating. We have the resources to support our residents and businesses in times of crisis as witnessed this year. Keeping low residential taxes is in and of itself one strategy for promoting affordable housing for elderly residents on fixed incomes so that they may age in place in their own homes.**

b. What is your view on economic development for the City of Cambridge in 2021? What kind of economic development do we need or not need?

**As a result of the world-class universities and growing tech and biological research industries, Cambridge has become a hub of innovation and research. It has led to increased tourism, business travel, a thriving restaurant and hospitality sector and more. I would like to see Cambridge continue to be able to lead in these areas but also to diversify into new areas by creating innovation and incubator zones to support entrepreneurs in developing new new products and services.**

4. In recent months the Cambridge Historical Commission, Conservation Districts and Neighborhood Organizations have been criticized as obstacles to more affordable housing as well as to racial and economic diversity. Do you agree with this criticism? Please explain why.

**While I don’t know enough about the history of these disagreements to agree or disagree that criticism, I do think we should look at updating and revising the policy around membership on these committees to make sure that there is a diverse and broad set of perspectives. I think that the CHC and CDs play an important role in preserving the character of our neighborhoods but should not serve as a roadblock to otherwise reasonable housing proposals that respect the character of a given neighborhood.**

5. In recent months there has been an upsurge in citizen petitions (including the Donovan petition supported by the CCC and the Missing Middle Housing (MMH) petition supported by ABC) that attempt to formulate zoning, housing and related public policy. Developer upzoning - also known as contract zoning - has also been in regular use. Please describe your opinion about governing through the use of citizen petitions and contract zoning. Are there changes to the petition process that should be introduced?

**I respect the right of residents to petition the City Council on various issues. Zoning petitions are non-binding documents that recommend the council take one action or another. I think petitions are an important way for citizens to engage with the council and impact policymaking, and I think it’s the job of the council to recommend changes to a petition in order for it to be adopted. However, I actually would like to see all of our zoning done in a more methodical , long term planning process led by the City Manager and City Council with engagement from all stakeholders. I am concerned that we are not providing stable, consistent direction in our zoning and planning processes and moving forward would like to see the city be more proactive in creating a long term vision that we can all get behind and support.**

6. Members of the Cambridge Planning Board have expressed frustration with existing constraints on their ability to plan. As volunteers meeting several times a month to process individual cases, members have little time and resources to engage in planning. The absence of planning guidance from this committee is likely related to the increased use of citizen petitions. How should this problem be addressed?

**I’d have to know more about the number of current members and the resources at their disposal before I committed myself to a given reform. That said, I believe there are ways this could be fixed. Expanding the size of the Planning Board to accommodate the larger number of petitions or increasing the number of resources they have could improve this process going forward**

7. Cambridge has long been celebrated as a city that promotes racial and economic diversity. Do you believe this reputation is currently well deserved? If not, what measures would you take to promote genuine racial and economic diversity? How would you address recent issues of youth gun violence?

**With regard to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, I think Cambridge is better than most communities but we have a long way to go. I think it really needs to start with more community dialogue across the city between white residents and people of color. I’m open to discussing the creation of an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to help drive these conversations and to develop action steps for moving us forward as a city.**

**Youth gun violence is an unacceptable problem in our city. As a teacher and parent I believe the solution is developing stronger individual relationships with our youth and providing mentor programs and opportunities for them to seek out guidance. I believe we should engage and support successful youth groups, community organizations, and our school and public safety officials to develop solutions to this problem. We need to local community organizations like MBK, community policing initiatives, more after-school enrichment activities, incentives to create more jobs for young people, and gun buybacks.**

8. How would you increase transparency both by the City Manager and departments that report to her/him? How would you increase transparency by City Councilors?

**I would improve transparency by encouraging more frequent communication between councillors, city staff, community organizations, residents, and businesses. That said, it’s not enough to say “my door is always open.” I believe we should continue to livestream council meetings post-pandemic, and I think the council and city staff need to work on better communication with residents about major initiatives in the city.**

9. Cambridge is about to hire a new City Manager. Describe your ideal City Manager for this time in Cambridge history. What qualities will you look for?

**One of the most important jobs of the next council will be to choose a new City Manager. I want to cast a wide net and find candidates who have a wealth of experience and skills in board management, labor relations, municipal finance, strategic planning, urban planning, business development, and community engagement. I also want someone who takes a collaborative, solutions-oriented approach to leadership.**

10. Recent estimates declare that over 60% of Cambridge residents are renters. How should Cambridge government address the needs of renters?

**There are many things Cambridge can do to protect renters. First, we should ensure that rental assistance is available during times of crisis. Second, we should ensure that renters have access to legal representation during eviction proceedings; I strongly support a right to counsel in these instances. Third, we should be pushing for more tenants rights education so that residents are aware of their rights as renters. Fourth, I believe we should pay for accurate housing data in order for councillors and residents to better understand the scope of the problem and create more tailored reforms.**

11. There is always room for improvement however senior citizens in public housing receive reasonable public support. What is your plan to enable and support seniors living independent of public senior housing settings?

**One of the reasons I’m running for City Council is my belief that residential taxes should stay low. Having low property taxes helps our senior citizens afford to stay in their homes. I also want to work with the city staff to look at other ways to help seniors engage with the rest of our community, such as expanded educational programs through the universities, participation in community organizations and events, at home support services and opportunities to connect with our young people.**

12. What question do you wish we had asked you but did not? How would you answer it?

**One of the most important issues facing the City Council is how to allocate the $88 million in federal relief money that Cambridge received through the American Rescue Plan. Councillors should talk to residents, community organizations, and businesses to discuss various ways of using this money. Personally, I think we should expand access to pre-K education and child care as both are some of the highest expenses for families with young children. I think all of our young people deserve the opportunity to succeed.**

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