**2021 Cambridge City Council Questionnaire – August 9, 2021**

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1. **Housing is an important issue for the City of Cambridge.** 
   1. **How would you describe our housing challenges?** 
      1. Cambridge has become too expensive even for people who make a decent living
      2. Cambridge is racially segregated partially as a byproduct of exclusionary zoning
   2. **What do you think are the major factors causing our housing challenges?** 
      1. People love Cambridge and they want to live here, bringing up prices.
      2. Speculation and low interest rates have increased housing prices
   3. **What do you think is stopping us from addressing those challenges?**
      1. Cambridge is trying to address these challenges through ending exclusionary zoning, increasing the affordable housing trust fund, and the affordable housing overlay. We can do more here. What’s stopping us is that people feel that Cambridge can’t solve the housing crisis by itself – which is true – but we should do our part and then some because we are such a wealthy city.
   4. **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.**
      1. We have reached grid capacity in recent years and in general our infrastructure needs renewal. We should invest in ensuring it can support present and future housing stock.
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?** 
   1. 40% of emissions come from transportation, we should make it easier for people live low-carbon lifestyles by investing in public transit, making it easier to bike & walk, and live near transit.
   2. We should address environmental equity by ensuring our poorest neighborhoods have good access to green spaces and meet public safety standards.
   3. Trees are wonderful and make our city feel more alive. They eat carbon and keep us shaded. Each situation is different but we should balance the desire for trees with the benefits of development.
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.**
   1. 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?
      1. This is a complex question and I need more context. In general taxes business at a higher rate so we can keep taxes low on regular citizens seems like a progressive thing to do.
   2. 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?
      1. In general I would say that Cambridge is a wealthy city and we need to focus municipal policy on making sure that no one is left behind. For example, making sure that all CRLS grads can find a good opportunities in Cambridge.
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.**
   1. Cambridge is one of the oldest cities in the U.S. There’s a lot to preserve in this city as a memory of our history. We just need to balance that against the benefits of new affordable housing and other things we want in the city. None of these organizations are bad, we just need to make sure they are balanced to reflect the community and appropriately balance all our priorities.
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?**
   1. The city should have its own proposals but we are also a highly educated city and so if citizens want to propose their own plans, the city should consider those as well.
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?**
   1. Planning is a hard task and one that is incredibly difficult for volunteers. I think we should focus planning with the city’s full-time urban planners and ensure we have enough funding to hire as many as needed.
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?**
   1. To the first question, I would say that Cambridge does try to be welcoming. We have people from all over the world and the city prints official papers in a whole host of languages. We generously fund our affordable housing programs and are now trying a UBI. We do try. At the same time, we can and must do better as we have a lot of low-income residents in the city who need support.
   2. As for youth gun violence, its very much a tale of two cities. We have some kids who are not connected to the city they grew up in and don’t feel like they belong. This is a gun violence problem where we need to better control guns in our city. It’s an opportunity problem where we need to make sure every kid in Cambridge has a fair shot. And it’s a community problem, we need to let every kid in Cambridge know they are not alone and show them we have their back.
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?**
   1. I support the charter amendments proposed on the ballot this year.
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?**
   1. The most important quality is accountability. We need a city manager that will respond to the needs to residents (even if they disagree) and not ignore them and brush them under the table.
10. **Recent estimates declare that over 60% of Cambridge residents are renters. How should Cambridge government address the needs of renters?**
    1. By electing renters to city council and passing tenant protections.
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?**
    1. There are many types of support that the city can provide. One example is to expand and clear up sidewalks to make sure that all are ADA accessible and you can get around the city with ease if you have mobility issues.
12. **What question do you wish we had asked you but did not? How would you answer it?**
    1. I wished you had asked, “How could someone support you in this campaign?” The answer would be visit voteburhan.com and donate or sign up to volunteer!