



Voters for a Vibrant Newton PAC 2023 City Council Questionnaire

Thank you for completing the 2023 Voters for a Vibrant Newton PAC candidate questionnaire. To submit your answers, email a PDF of your answers by **August 15th**. Responses to this questionnaire will inform our endorsement decisions and will be posted online. Please limit each answer to 150 words.

Candidate Name **Andreae Downs**

Candidate for **Councilor-at-Large, Ward 5**

1. What do you see as the key elements of a vibrant village center?

A variety of uses. Parking once (or not at all) for many errands. Essential trips all within walking distance. Housing over businesses. Small, unique establishments. Centrally-accessible parks with interesting programming. Options. Neighborhood schools. Car-free gathering (“third”) spaces.

2. What do you think of the current proposal for Village Center Zoning Redesign? (Please specify strengths and shortcomings.)

This is a strong proposal that I support. Having a way for smaller property owners to create what we have been allowing through the special permit process will make it more affordable for them to do the unique, in-fill development we want in the villages. I strongly support removing costly parking mandates in the centers, particularly near transit, so that historic development patterns—known for their beauty and success—

can remain, and to discourage the ugly, barren spaces that are often created for such mandates.

The underlying MR zoning in the MRT districts needs to be amended or it will not be used. I question the placement of much MRT zoning along Route 9--not a great walking or biking location, and where emissions (fuel and tire dust) are unhealthy for families. I would prefer such density on bikeable walkable streets.

3. What steps would you take to encourage more varied and locally owned businesses in Newton?

I supported the requirement in the Northland special permit to set aside a number of business spaces for mom & pop, independent businesses. This is unfortunately more difficult to do in a by-right situation, but if we can find a way, I would support that. On-street parking needs to be better managed, and I have advocated using demand-based pricing to encourage folks who plan to stay longer to walk a little distance to their ultimate destination(s) in the villages. And making it safer and more pleasant to walk and bike will help as well.

4. What are your ideas for increasing economic and racial diversity in Newton?

We should allow for more housing at all price points, and work with the subsidies we can secure to encourage more affordability.

5. What actions would you support on the City Council to make Newton more environmentally sustainable?

Allowing more new housing in village centers, especially those near transit, is probably the most effective climate adaptation/mitigation measure we have. Making all development Net Zero to the extent possible; ensuring that we address flooding impacts for structures and infrastructure; reducing heat islands and addressing the need to shelter people from smoke and heat are also impactful. I would like to see Newton move to a pay-as-you-throw model for trash, to both reduce waste and save the city funding as the state's landfill and incinerator "solutions" diminish. Making it safer, easier, and more pleasant to walk, bike, roll and use transit will address both traffic and emissions.

6. Please add anything you have not mentioned that you would like us to know about your experience, vision for Newton, etc. (150 words maximum)

I chair the Public Safety & Transportation Committee. I have advanced road safety, bike and pedestrian connections, and safe school routes. I have established new, car-free parks and trails.

- With local initiatives, I believe we can make room for more neighbors AND reduce traffic congestion.
- That our kids can safely get themselves to school AND our seniors can access shopping and services.
- That we can adapt to new weather conditions AND reduce energy consumption;
- That we can increase our quality of life AND reduce waste.
- That we can retain best-in-class status for fire & police departments AND protect civil rights.

Please visit my website at www.andrae4newton.org