



## **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 15<sup>th</sup>**. Responses to this questionnaire will inform our endorsement decisions and will be posted online. Please limit each answer to 150 words.

Candidate Name: **Dan Gaynor**

Candidate for **City Council, Ward 2**

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

A vibrant village center is inclusive of all people in our community—that means at all ages, all incomes, and all backgrounds. When it comes to zoning, that means designing villages with multi-family housing mind, so that we can offer a greater diversity of options (and more affordable residences) for families at every phase of life.

It also means protecting our priorities, particularly by embedding the principles of walkability and sustainability into all of our policy decisions. We must preserve the green space in “the Garden City”, as well as fight for smoother roads, safer pedestrian corridors, wider sidewalks, and ground floor retail space for small, independent businesses. Fighting climate change at the local level also means saving our historic trees, connecting bike lanes, and modernizing waste management.

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

The core pillars of my campaign are smarter development, safer streets, and sustainable innovation. The proposed VCOD plan amplifies all three—ensuring that Newton remains the best place to live, at any age. At the same time, the VCOD plan balances the preservation of the green space and historic neighborhoods, while also offering progress in terms expanding greater diversity of housing options for all kinds of families.

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

As I'm local Newton business owner, I'm particularly passionate about this issue. I know firsthand the challenges of working without a paycheck, hiring diverse local talent, and navigating a maze of government paperwork. Our small, local businesses shape the fabric of our community, and we should work to welcome them—not just benefit the big corporations who have the time, money and staff to get through the system.

Having met with several City staffers, I've heard how opening a business here is far too complex overall. We need to reevaluate how to facilitate cross-department collaboration to speed up business licensing, and reduce onerous and outdated regulations that make the process of opening a business very time-consuming and expensive for independent entrepreneurs. It's essential that we have village centers populated with stores like Mochiko Hawaiian (Newtonville), the Dining Car (Newton Highlands), and SALT Patisserie (Newton Centre).

It's important for our City's finances, too, as new businesses are critical revenue-generators powering the growth of our annual budget. Our businesses ensure the financial robustness of the City, enabling us to pay our educators competitive wages, attract and grow City staff, invest in school facilities, and enhance Newton's infrastructure.

With this in mind, there are several avenues to facilitate a smoother path to opening a business here.

- Streamlining faster permitting processes across City departments
- Easier approvals for outdoor seating and community events
- Incentives for developers to “anchor” local businesses as part of mixed-use developments, such as the Barn shoe store as part of Trio
- Transparent “how-to” entrepreneur education materials for business owners
- Additional City staff to support our wonderful Economic Development Director, John Sisson

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

As a former Presidential appointee in the Obama-Biden Administration, I've seen that embracing DE&I in all forms isn't just a nice-to-have – it's the essential expression of our country's and community's core values. Embracing diverse perspectives across economic, ethnic, and educational levels is critical to our evolution of becoming a more welcoming Newton. Indeed, it's part of my day job: I founded a company that helps many corporations see the value in accelerating DE&I initiatives, ranging from promoting diverse executives, to recruiting from underserved communities, to contributing charitable efforts to assist vulnerable populations.

We need to ensure getting around – and to – Newton is cheaper, greener and easier. Emphasizing walkability as a core principle of urban design is critical. I believe in increasing train and bus frequency, supporting NewMo, and extending bike lanes, as well as facilitating density, so that Newton residents can access more schools, services and businesses. As such, and to encourage that, I support:

- Increased residential options in proximity to our daily destinations like nearby stores, workplaces, educational institutions, eateries, parks, etc.
- Enhanced connectivity to employment, amenities, and various sites by promoting easier movement in Village Centers and usage of communal transportation.
- Less dependence on individual vehicle use, contributing to our broader endeavor of addressing the climate emergency.

The proposed VCOD plan is critical to this effort. Newton needs to expand its array of housing options for residents at all stages of life—from young families to senior citizens—I support policies like allowing for an extra story (plus additional 2,500 sf footprint) in exchange for 25% of the units being offered at a permanently affordable rent. It's also important that these affordable units are distributed equitably throughout the building: at a representative array of sizes, on a variety of floors, and with access to the same amenities as all residents.

I also support the development of more fully-affordable housing initiatives like the Armory—which the City acquired for just \$1.00, and is now developing into 43 apartments, all of which will be affordable. This is important in a city where the average price for newly-constructed units is \$1.6 million, as increasing access to lower-priced housing options will ensure families can both grow in Newton and age in place.

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

As a member of Green Newton and Friends of Edmands Park, as well as a sustainability advocate, I feel strongly that we must do more to fight climate change. In addition, at Nike, I led innovation initiatives related to sustainability, green manufacturing, and the use of recycled materials.

In Newton, we must embrace a greener future by:

- Enhancing energy efficiency in older buildings
- Expanding use of renewable energy
- Striving to reach 100% renewable energy for all of Newton
- Installing more EV chargers
- Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels
- Ensuring new buildings incorporate clean technology
- Protecting our historic trees
- Connecting bike lanes
- Modernizing waste management and expanding our composting services

**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)**

My grandfather emigrated to Newton in the 30's, fleeing antisemitism. Nearly a century later, I'm raising the fourth generation of his family on Cabot Street.

As City Councilor, I will bring a pragmatic, common-sense approach to solving Newton's hardest challenges. My approach is about using objective data and facts, not ideology, as the foundation for making smarter decisions. It's about balancing progress and preservation of our neighborhoods. Above all, it's about asking voters and residents informed questions -- and acting on the answers. From potholes to policy, I stand for smarter development, sustainable innovation, safer streets, and stronger schools and businesses.