



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 Holly Ryan

Candidate for Ward Councilor Ward 8

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

I have spoken about this many times on the ZAP Committee: To move forward, we should look back to a time when village centers had grocery stores, Pharmacies, restaurants etc. within walking distance of residences. VC's should be mixed use with retail on the first floor, housing above and outside meeting space. These features make our villages both vibrant to be in and vibrant commercially.

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

We are on the right track with the VC Overlay and MBTA Communities Act compliance, but there are still some details to iron out. Strengths: The proposal will add more housing and multi-use to our village centers, which will grow the customer base and opportunities for local business. It also will encourage transit ridership due to proximity to stations. Shortcomings: The present version faces some difficulties due to

the state regulations that are focused only on housing and not on mixed-use, and we should continue as a municipality to lobby the state.

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

One key to promoting varied, local, small businesses is having small-footprint commercial spaces, rather than exclusively large-footprint spaces that primarily serve chain establishments. The proposed Village Center overlay does account for this difference and in many cases would make it more affordable to open and run a local business.

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

I am part of an unofficial working group with some other City Councilors on exploring policy reforms in Newton that would make it easier to build deeply-affordable projects that qualify for Low-Income Housing Tax Credit financing. I also supported the creation of the Affordable Housing Trust. We also need to study the implications of square footage requirements on the affordability of housing units, but this is a separate line of inquiry from the current effort to reach MBTA Communities compliance. I also believe that Newton needs to continue to strengthen its human services offerings to ensure wraparound support for lower-income populations that we wish to welcome to our community.

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

I am a supporter of Newton's Climate Action Plan and the development of a comprehensive Bike/Pedestrian plan for the whole city. I also believe that we need to be making new construction and renovations much greener, both for commercial buildings and residential homes. Reuse and adaptation are better than new construction, but both new and old construction should be as energy efficient as possible.

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 grew up in Ward 8, raised my children here, and have always been a voice for this community. As Newton changes, you can be certain I will make well-informed, thoughtful decisions so that our city remains the place we know and love.