



## **Voters for a Vibrant Newton PAC 2021 City Council Questionnaire**

Thank you for completing the 2021 Voters for a Vibrant Newton PAC candidate questionnaire. To submit your answers, email a PDF copy of this document with your answers by September 9<sup>th</sup>. Answers to this questionnaire will inform our endorsement decisions and will be posted online. Please limit each answer to 150 words.

### **1. What are the three most important issues for the City Council to address in the next term?**

In addition to recovering from the pandemic, I believe that there are many challenges facing the City, and the Council, but my top 3 are:

- Restoring our city services and infrastructure (spanning roadways to facilities like the Gath pool and athletic fields),
- Building increased clarity and a 'connection' between Newton's vision and the actions we take
- Making the necessary adjustments to zoning that will lead to the Newton that we want

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

Each of our village centers are unique, but a few common elements include:

- Combinations of unique retail, restaurant / bar, cafes along with open spaces for gathering and cultural events and programs,
- Ease-of-access for locals and ‘travelers’; what this looks like will vary based on transportation options that are available and practical based on the village, but I would like to see more options than private vehicles.
- Spaces to meet up with friends and family, benches, wide sidewalks, bike parking

**3. What are the barriers to getting/keeping vibrant village centers and how would you overcome them?**

One challenge is that this part of our infrastructure needs to be actively nurtured to remain appealing to businesses and patrons alike:

- Improve the walkability of our village centers (fix sidewalks, crosswalks, etc)
- Consider ‘closing’ the village centers on a scheduled basis to encourage outdoor dining, fairs and ‘restaurant nights’
- Invest in the design aesthetics, artwork, plantings, trees to provide a more ‘welcoming atmosphere’
- Encourage stronger partnerships between Newton’s Economic Development Team and our retail property owners to develop programs improving tenant resiliency and longevity

**4. Have you been a consistent supporter or opponent of mixed-use developments that have been previously approved, including Northland, Austin Street, Trio, Dunstan East, Riverdale and Riverside? Please detail your thinking and your actions to support or oppose each.**

In general, mixed-use developments are important for Newton, offering residents different housing options to choose from. Projects should be evaluated in terms

of walkability, proximity to public transportation; their location and scale compared to surrounding neighborhoods. They should address green building standards and should contribute to the neighborhood.

My thoughts vary by project - they are quite different from each other.

I support Riverside and Riverdale.

I have mixed feelings about Austin Street. I believe it 'fits' in Newtonville, but I would have MUCH preferred a non-profit developer, and the City signed an overly 'developer-friendly' lease for the land.

I am not a supporter of Dunstan East. The project is out of scale with the current neighborhood, and sets a scale that contradicts what neighbors up and down Washington Street want.

I am also not a supporter of Northland. I believe it is too large, too far from public transportation and is going to over-burden that part of town with traffic. I will add that I hope I am pleasantly surprised by the resulting project.

The one element that all of these developments have in common is troubling to me - they are 100% rental units - Newton has created not one opportunity for multi-generational wealth for these residents.

**5. What steps would you take to encourage more diverse and locally owned businesses in our City?**

While I do not know the specific numbers, my impression is that a large percentage of our businesses are already locally owned and employ many Newton residents.

In terms of diversity, Newton is piloting several new partnerships to address diversity in business ownership. The results of these pilots should indicate what additional actions are recommended.

**6. How would you use housing tools to further economic and racial equity in Newton, specifically for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)?**

(I will combine my response here with Q.8)

The challenges of racism in the US require a myriad of solutions that take many forms:

- Creating a Housing trust focused on providing home ownership opportunities. Consider funding sources such as a real estate transfer fee, increasing our CPA assessment from 1 to 2% (creating additional funds for housing) and more.
- Newton is in the process of - and I support - reassessing our approach to attracting, hiring and retaining BIPOC personnel across all city departments including emergency services.
- Investing in programming at home and in schools such as the 'Overdue: Confronting Racism' program offered through the Newton Free Library.

**7. What percentage of local preference in affordable housing lotteries do you support?**

In general I would support significantly lower percentages, but according to 3rd party analysis, there are many other factors that appear to be influencing outcomes of the program.

If we are to change the outcomes of this process, the percentage of local preference is only one lever we will have to adjust.

**8. What actions or measures beyond increasing affordable housing would you take to advance racial equity and promote an inclusive Newton?**

See #6 above.

**9. What actions/changes would you support on the City Council to implement the recommendations of the Climate Action Plan?**

I support:

- Establishing a measurement + feedback loop for all Newton commercial buildings to start reducing their carbon footprints.
- Encourage sustainable or green construction practices like we are seeing at Riverside and 145 Warren St.
- Increase the number of and accessibility to electric charging stations across Newton

I am also looking forward to the conversation surrounding 100% electrification in new construction (and the Home Rule petition); I support this effort but would like to discuss details like exceptions for generators, etc.

**10. Do you support the current role of the City Council in issuing special permits? If not, what changes would you propose?**

In general I do support the Council's role, although there are improvements we can and should be making to our CMPs to address / mitigate negative impacts on abutters, neighborhoods such as pest controls, vibration thresholds (primarily for larger projects).

**11. Use this space to add anything you have not mentioned and that you would like us to know about your experience, vision for Newton, etc. (150 words or fewer)**