



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: Martha Bixby

Candidate for Ward 6 City Councilor

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

- A space for people - people having meetings, people having fun, people running errands, people relaxing;
- Small and locally owned businesses - Restaurants, cafes, places to buy treats, destination shops, and markets to buy essentials (hardware, pharmacy, groceries);
- Gathering spaces with natural elements such as trees and flowers as well as benches, picnic tables, and/or chairs;
- Access for immediate neighbors and visitors, including public transportation (bus, commuter rail, trolley lines), parking, wide and safe sidewalks, safe bike access and bike parking, safe access for deliveries and for emergency response;
- Homes - diverse options places for people to live nearby;
- Beautification elements - public art, gardens, etc.;
- Sense of place - feeling local, feeling connected to history and the future - a sense that this isn't just anywhere but this is somewhere unique.

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

I am supportive of the overarching efforts for increasing and diversifying housing options through the zoning redesign proposals, and I look forward to seeing the plans improved as they are finalized. I support an emphasis on affordable housing, protecting and supporting our small businesses, encouraging a variety of diverse retail options, safe and complete streets design, environmental protections - especially limiting pavement - and establishing and protecting existing accessible and low-cost public spaces. I will continue to promote these areas of emphasis over the remaining months of this village center zoning process, and I also believe that once new zoning is passed there are productive ways to support these goals such as through ordinances, public awareness and advocacy, and negotiations with developers.

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

There are a number of tools at our disposal. I believe we should consider set-asides for small and independent businesses as well as a business diversity ordinance. We must continue to work hard to keep existing small businesses open during any potential future construction. Public pressure and awareness campaigns are also often effective to keep businesses our community depends upon open and thriving. We can look at the example of the Shoe Barn staying open and in Newton and keeping an essential service available to our community (trying on shoes is so much better than ordering online!)

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

A few policies I'd like to see:

- Emphasize creating affordable housing opportunities for families, including making sure affordable units in new big projects have 2 / 3 bedrooms for families;
- Support projects like the proposed FamilyAid supportive shelter;
- Consider establishing a housing voucher mobility program which would facilitate a connection between voucher holders and housing

in Newton. This could include landlord outreach, moving-cost assistance, tenant guidance, coaching, and translation as needed;

- Increase diversity on the city council and other decision-making bodies.

Ward 6 regularly hosts celebrations of our diverse community and the many cultures that make up Newton, including Taiwan Day, Juneteenth, 4th of July festivities, India Day, and the WinterFest performances. Supporting and spreading the word about these celebrations helps members of our community feel a sense of belonging, connect to others and to community organizations, and honors Newton's growing diversity.

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

Reducing oil and natural gas: I support neighbor to neighbor efforts like sustainable street tours, and Green Newton's induction stove tops. I would advocate for Newton banning new natural gas connections in new construction and for aggregating projects such as geothermal and adding solar over municipal buildings and parking as appropriate.

Holding the companies accountable: Eliminating natural gas leaks and making utilities repave the roads to a complete streets standard so that it is safe for bikes, pedestrians and vehicles.

Open space & transit options: make a difference locally by protecting our open spaces and advocating for public transit and bike and pedestrian safety.

The next generation: students at Newton South are innovating incredible sustainability programs and we must make sure these efforts are integrated into our city programs. Elementary students are learning about composting and waste diversion and bringing that information home to their families. We can increase and amplify these efforts.

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'm running for Newton City Council to bring an inclusive, community-focused voice to our local government. You can learn more about my campaign at marthabixby.org