



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 9th.

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?

- a. Preserve Single Family Zoning. The proposal to put two homes on a single-family lot will not lead to affordable housing. You can't tear down a \$1 million house and build two that cost less than \$1 million each. Any attempt to eliminate single family zoning needs to be defeated to prevent the urbanization of our residential neighborhoods.
- b. Control the proliferation of out-of-scale homes shoe-horned into small lots. This can be done by inserting a clause in the proposed zoning code that would require a special permit when a house is torn down and wants to take advantage of the 25% bump out.
- c. Enhance Newton's tree canopy by eliminating section 5.1.3 F in Newton's Zoning Ordinance, which excludes City property, to allow the placement of trees in City owned parking lots in conformity with rules specified in section 5.1.9 of the Newton City Zoning Ordinances for private development.

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

A vibrant village center needs a variety of businesses that meets the needs of those who live nearby. This includes restaurants, grocery, bakeries and clothing stores, entertainment, pharmacies and banks. It also needs trees, green space and benches to make our village centers more of a destination.

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

Our village centers need to be pleasant places to gather with trees, green spaces and benches. This requires an investment by the City, which I would support in the City Council. A lack of variety in the businesses within the village centers is also a barrier. This can be overcome with tax incentives for grocery stores, etc.

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.

I have been neither a consistent supporter nor opponent of mixed-use developments. I voted for Northland because I felt that the promised affordable housing opportunities, trees and green space represented a better use than a strip mall. Yet, I believe the developer should do more to mitigate traffic by providing shuttle buses into Boston/Seaport.

I like the Trio project because the size is in scale with the building it replaced. Yet, I believe that the housing could have been made more affordable. My feelings are the same regarding Austin Street.

I like the idea of mixed-use development being built on commercial property. Yet, I want Dunstan East and Riverdale to be reduced in size to be in scale with the surrounding neighborhoods.

I am glad that the Riverside developers are speaking with the community and hope that adjustments will be made to better fit in with the surrounding community.

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

I would encourage property tax breaks for more diverse and locally owned businesses. Business loans at affordable interest rates should be provided by local banks. The City should establish a business equity fund to be used as a loan program to encourage more diverse and locally owned businesses.

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

The best approach is to create low-cost ownership opportunities. Some exist in Newton's inventory of modest homes. Unfortunately, our zoning laws incentivize developers to compete for these homes, driving up prices. Once developers buy these houses, they are torn down and rebuilt into expensive luxury homes. The next best opportunity is building sustainable, in scale mixed use condo developments with a certain percentage affordably priced. Developers and the City should provide access to down payment assistance as well as access to affordable credit to our minority communities.

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

As I canvas around Ward 6, I hear stories of adult children, who live in their parent's home because they can't afford to buy a home in Newton. I speak to seniors, who are looking to

downsize but still remain in the city where that they lived their entire life, yet they can't afford to move. When those seniors are unable to move, their homes are unavailable to younger families, who want to move to Newton. Based on what I have heard, I would like to see the percentage of local preference in affordable housing lotteries remain at 70%.

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

I would promote cultural understanding by holding cultural festivals along with establishing more twin city relationships with international cities that represent the cultural diversity of Newton. Multi-cultural dialogues should be created either through local groups or through the City. As I mentioned in question #5, the City should establish a business equity fund to be used as a loan program to encourage more diverse and locally owned businesses.

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

I would support requiring solar panels on all city owned buildings where the roofs are exposed to direct sunlight.

As I stated in response to question 1, I would take steps to enhance Newton's tree canopy by eliminating section 5.1.3 F in Newton's Zoning Ordinance to allow the placement of trees in City owned parking lots in conformity with rules specified in section 5.1.9 of the Newton City Zoning Ordinances for private development.

We should require charging stations in all new parking lots with at least 20 parking spaces and should do the same in our municipal parking lots.

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

Yes. The special permit process allows for community input in what new developments will look like in Newton. There are situations where some developers, in their pursuit of making a large profit, will try to maximize the size of a project. It is only by getting feedback by Newton residents that a project can truly meet the needs of the community.

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)

Environmentally friendly sustainable mixed-use developments that are built in scale with the surrounding neighborhood can be a positive replacement to existing commercial property if they reduce our urban heat island with green roofs, trees and green space. We should discourage any increase in density within our residential neighborhoods as it would only increase our urban heat island, destroy modest homes and increase housing prices.