

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

There are many important issues facing the City that need our attention. My three top choices would be:

1. Continued infrastructure improvements, i.e. replacement of old and damaged water, sewer and stormwater pipes, fixing our roads and sidewalks, adding ADA compliant aids and attention to crumbling waterway walls.
2. Continued close attention to our COVID response. This pandemic will not go away. It needs to be managed by the Administration with the assistance of City Council.
3. Zoning Reform. It has been thirty years since the last major zoning overhaul. Since then the world has become more environmentally aware and conscious of the need to reduce private auto use, among other things. Our historic homes and buildings need to be protected, preserved. Our zoning code must reflect our values and encourage them.

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

First, I see housing in and near our village centers, providing vibrancy by the presence of people and ready customers for our local businesses and restaurants.

I see continued and increased outdoor dining options playing an important part in village vibrancy. Outdoor dining options brought by Covid have forced Newton to accelerate its adoption of outdoor dining and use of former parking spaces for restaurant goers. Having more people in the streets gives the City a vibrant feel.

Better pedestrian and bike safety (more "bump-outs" and well-marked crosswalks, etc.) so that people can feel safer walking and biking.

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

Our current zoning is overly restrictive re the addition of housing to support local business. Businesses need customers. Local residents tend to shop and do business where it is convenient, so we need to add housing in and near our villages for businesses and restaurants to thrive.

Since 1953, our zoning allows only one story by right in our villages. We need to increase the height allowance by right to three stories in villages to encourage housing over commercial use.

We also have an onerous parking requirement in our villages. We need to reduce the parking requirement for businesses so more businesses can open their doors. Concern with reducing parking hurting our village businesses has proven largely unfounded in allowing restaurants to occupy street parking for outdoor dining.

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

I have been a consistent supporter of mixed-use developments. I have supported all of the above (we are still discussing the Riverside project, so we may not form an opinion until ready to take a vote). I voted yes on all projects that were before City Council for a vote.

I feel that mixed-use projects make good use of space, are generally more energy efficient than single home construction, afford residents the ability to fulfill many of their daily needs in nearby businesses and the affordability requirement of larger projects helps the City move toward its affordability goal of at least ten per cent affordable housing.

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

A major challenge to locally owned and diverse businesses is the high cost of "setting up shop" in Newton. To attract more local businesses that are more diverse in both business type and in the race, ethnicity and gender of their owners, we need to be proactive in our marketing and outreach to the types of businesses we wish to attract.

The City needs to maintain a current list of all available commercial spaces in the City. I would market the City with some "success stories" of local businesses that have succeeded in Newton. We can help to connect prospects with local banks and other sources of capital and set up a mentoring system to help new business owners succeed.

I would reach out to university programs, churches, synagogues, advocacy groups and the Charles River Chamber of Commerce announcing our desire to attract businesses of many types and the assistance we offer to help them. I would encourage the administration to use ARPA funds to subsidize rents for the first year of new businesses to help them get established.

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

Furthering economic and racial equity is both important and challenging. There are numerous avenues that can help, none of which would work alone.

Our Inclusionary Zoning ordinance requires that all projects over a certain size provide a minimum of twenty per cent affordable units. This combined with a fair local preference percentage can help attract residents of color.

Increasing the density allowed in certain areas helps reduce the overall cost of housing, whether rental or home ownership. Zoning policy that allows and encourages smaller units, increasing height limits in certain areas and production of compact units and cluster homes can all help toward this goal. CDBG and CPA funding (not controlled by City Council, although we can advocate for it) are other resources.

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

This will be a topic of discussion in the Zoning and Planning Committee in October. Currently, we have no definite policy. The Planning and Development Department has made a recommendation of between thirty-five and fifty per cent. We have received another letter supporting a twenty-five per cent local preference. I lean toward the lower mid-range of these suggestions but have not yet formed an opinion of a definite percentage.

Not all applicants qualify for units for a variety of reasons. They may not have income within the ranges, fail due to credit deficiencies or poor rental history. To ensure a racial and economic mix of tenants that we strive for, we need to find ways to support worthy applicants both financially and socially/emotionally.

Stable housing is an essential foundation for success in life, We should seek ways to provide the help needed for people to succeed as occupants.

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

In addition to increasing affordable housing, we need to improve education of police and first responders regarding unconscious bias. We need to advocate for the cessation of unfair lending practices, enforce fair housing laws re discrimination against families with children (regardless of color), and also not assume that all families of color who might want to locate in Newton are poor. We need to ask ourselves what we can do to make families of color in all socio- economic groups feel welcome.

In the past year, I think we have begun some needed self-examination and made some progress. We need to continue this process so that people of color from all nationalities and walks of life feel welcome in our City.

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

Our Climate Action Plan shows that carbon emissions in Newton from residential buildings total 35% of the total, residential vehicles 24%, commercial and industrial buildings 26%, and utilities 7%, with other smaller percentages.

Our goal is to be carbon neutral by 2050. To get there, we must take every opportunity to reduce the amount of energy consumed by and embodied in buildings and transit by reducing travel, insulating our homes and reducing consumption.

City Council can help by creating ordinances to encourage good behavior on many fronts. We can allow for increased density (three stories by right) in our villages, add bike lanes, advocate for a more energy-efficient building code, require more "Passive House" construction and energy efficient HVAC in residential and commercial buildings and incentivize residents to switch to EVs with a goal of having 10% EV, BHEV, ZEM, PHEV by 2024.

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

Although I have no issue with the great job that our hardworking Land Use Committee does, I do not think it is necessary that every small project go through the Land Use process. I would support having smaller projects be permitted by our able staff and let the Land Use Committee concentrate on larger projects that require more vetting and public input.

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)

I recently read an article that said that by 2050 the weight of plastic trash in our oceans and waterways would be greater than the weight of all of the fish in our oceans and waters.

Several years ago I led the successful effort to ban the use of polystyrene containers for takeout drink cups and food, disposable polystyrene coolers, and the ubiquitous polystyrene packing peanuts that collect under bushes and in every crevice.

This term I hope to work on a ban of black plastic takeout containers, which must be trashed because our recycle facilities do not have the ability to read the recycle codes on black plastic.