



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?

1. Zoning –increasing allowed housing types (smaller=more affordable), tighter development standards to achieve climate change mitigation (stormwater/flooding) and help depress emissions
2. Transportation – to respond to climate change, reduce emissions and improve equity of access.
3. Police reform –the department needs to be more transparent to build trust in the community. Its responses and protections also need to treat different members of the community equitably, and with more transparency this can be verified.

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

A variety of housing options, independent businesses, a sense of place (wide sidewalks, places to gather without spending \$\$), shade and good edges, good design, and good access for those on foot or on a bike or wheelchair. Making NewMo more available to more people will also allow more people access to our villages.

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

Online deliveries, streets designed for fast car throughput and lack of customers are all barriers. Newton should continue to design better public spaces, benches, bike and pedestrian safety, add shade trees, add apartments and small living units. Locating people near stores helps stores—it is faster and easier for customers living nearby to come to the store rather than order online. Newton also needs to find ways to ease the rent burdens of both retailers/service providers at street level.

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.

A supporter—I both voted for and promoted Northland. I advocated for Austin St. and Trio as Chair of the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) and with Bike Newton. I have worked to make Dunstan East better connected to transit and street crossing options, pushed for bike storage at Riverdale and Dunstan East. I support Riverside and voted for it, and support the change to lab sciences.

I think mixed-use developments with smaller units and units connected to more transportation options—particularly where rent and parking rents are separated—reduce trips and improve our climate resilience. I supported increased insulation and performance standards for all of these developments, as well as stormwater mitigation and better walking and biking options for them. I also pushed for reduced parking for all projects since Trio to better reflect actual parking usage and reduce the footprint (environmental as well as physical) of these developments.

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

At Northland we pioneered the small-business (under 1,000 sf) subsidized commercial rents. I would like to see how this plays out. I would like to find other ways to support independent retailers—we did put in 15-minute parking for takeout at restaurants during COVID as well as parking space dining. I would like to streamline permitting for independent businesses, and advocate for reducing the “red tape” for businesses.

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

Our Planning Department’s housing report of 2019 shows that those municipalities that added multifamily housing, esp. rental housing had more success in adding diverse households. Outside of being unaffordable for many middle-class households, I don’t know why Newton isn’t attracting more diverse families and individuals. This is something I would support our Planning Department looking into more.

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

Hard to specify a percentage, as there’s a balance between supporting people with disabled/elderly family members who want a way to stay in the community and encouraging more diversity. I am awaiting more research on this.

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

As chair of Public Safety, I am in close communication with our police chief on sharing data and instituting regular reviews of police practices to ensure that NPD is not profiling when patrolling. The department is also looking at increasing the diversity of the force, which may require Newton to leave Civil Service. I support the Newton Police Reform Task Force’s recommendations to examine a move out of Civil Service to promote increased officer diversity.

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

I have been actively working to further an Accessibility Plan that prioritizes those sidewalks/crossings/bike accommodations that would unlock the most non-car trips for Newton residents and visitors.

I support the actions of the Public Facilities Committee and the mayor to assure higher building standards, including increased insulation and building sealing and to encourage electrification of new construction of public and private buildings. I would also like to explore local microgrids and alternative energy delivery systems (hot water in the gas pipes? Capturing and digesting sewage onsite in larger developments to harvest energy & heat?).

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

I think Land Use spends too much time examining individual home changes—this should be made an administrative approval.

I am fine with Council review of larger projects such as Riverside and support community visioning like Needham Street and Washington Street—but I would like to see the already-passed Vision Plans for Needham & Washington streets written into our zoning so that they can start to be implemented.

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 am active on TAG and the School Transportation Working Group with a focus on fostering children's independent access to school, after-school activities and more. By creating safe connections, Newton can lower its transportation emissions and also make it easier for the children of working parents to take part in a wide variety of community and school activities independently and inexpensively. I am particularly interested in ways we can extend the school

bus system, bike share and NewMo to allow children and others to bridge some of the larger distances in Newton.