

Cambridge Residents Alliance 2023 Platform:

Who we are

The Cambridge Residents Alliance was formed in 2012 to advocate for a livable, affordable, and diverse city by fighting the displacement and gentrification that have accompanied the city's rapidly rising housing prices. As neighbors and volunteer community activists, we seek to create local impacts in the fields of affordable housing, human rights, urban land use, community development, civic engagement, environmental justice, education, new concepts of public safety, privacy, and more.

What we believe

Our platform asserts everyone should have a voice to shape every aspect of their environment, especially those people with historic roots in Cambridge and those communities which have been historically marginalized by class or race. We advocate for a city government that offers support throughout a resident's lifespan, from early childhood to old age.

- 1) **We believe** in a commitment to safe, stable and **AFFORDABLE HOUSING** options citywide driven by need, as opposed to real estate market forces that see housing as a commodity to be created and sold for profit.
- 2) **We believe** in a strong **PARTICIPATORY MUNICIPAL DEMOCRACY** built on electoral representation and grassroots engagement in which all residents have full access to information about and influence on the important decisions that shape our lives, with a special focus on historically under-represented voices. The city's leadership must encourage local efforts to empower residents' voices and strengthen their capacity to self-organize community-based responses to needs that are not being met.
- 3) **We believe** that the health and quality of life of all residents depends on a planned **SUSTAINABLE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT** that includes citywide outdoor public spaces and trees and that reduces the city's contribution to climate change.
- 4) **We believe** that a thriving city requires planning for and implementation of dependable, accessible, balanced and varied modes of **TRANSPORTATION, TRANSIT AND MOBILITY**, including more local investment in public forms of mass transit based on a range of needs.
- 5) **We believe in PUBLIC SAFETY** programs for all residents and neighborhoods that prioritize new models of demilitarized/unarmed policing and the creation and support of civilian responses to crises, all of which minimize surveillance and promote civilian oversight.
- 6) **We believe** that Cambridge deserves robust **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES** that nurture all members of the community throughout their life cycle and throughout the year, including deep investment in universal access to age zero to five full day education, after-school and out-of-school-time options for all students and maximize adult and elder learning opportunities. We oppose the high-stakes MCAS test.
- 7) **We believe** that all families in Cambridge, particularly at-risk families, should have access to **CARE SYSTEMS AND INCOME ENHANCEMENT** throughout the life cycle. Universal access to high-quality and enriching childcare is essential for the flourishing of younger generations in Cambridge, and a prerequisite for economic contributions by working parents. Support for quality of care should extend to affordable elder care.

POLICIES:

1. **We believe** in a commitment to safe, stable and **AFFORDABLE HOUSING** options citywide that are driven by need, not by real estate market forces that see housing as a commodity to be created and sold for profit.

- A. Offer city subsidies such as zoning changes only to support development projects that have a majority of neighborhood resident support, have an enforceable Community Benefits Agreement negotiated with residents, and provide living wage jobs.
 - B. Reject adding density and height to create 80% luxury housing without significant additional community benefits.
 - C. Create additional stable public and non-profit low, moderate and middle-income affordable housing, including through limited-equity co-ops and community land trusts.
 - D. Support the creation of public "Social Housing" that is publicly -financed, publicly owned permanent housing and that is affordable to a range of incomes.
 - E. Enable the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) to develop a locally-based voucher plan and expand the AHT Board to include people impacted by the lack of affordable housing.
 - F. Increase funding for affordable housing, including by passing a real estate transfer fee on commercial and residential sales.
 - G. Use public land only for 100% affordable housing and green or open space.
 - H. Pass and enforce regulations to reduce displacement of tenants caused by condo conversion, AirBnB usage, unreasonable rent increases, and no-fault evictions.
 - I. Support tenant organizing efforts for protections and rights such as rent control/stabilization and the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act.
 - J. Establish a fully staffed and funded Office of Housing Stability to research, collect data, develop and implement anti-displacement policies and services, including the needed support for eligible individuals to actually access Section 8 Housing or an inclusionary unit.
 - K. Require universities and colleges, particularly MIT, to provide meaningful increases in grad student and post-doctoral housing as a condition for zoning increases, in addition to contributing a higher Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) share to support affordable housing.
 - L. Refocus the Community Development Dept. to prioritize creative solutions to housing and land use that benefit the city's residents, rather than enabling and promoting the plans of developers.
 - M. Support unhoused people's efforts for recognition and to create permanent non-congregate housing options with no preconditions for entry, voluntary supportive services and comprehensively trained staff.
 - N. Add affected community members to the Board of the Affordable Housing Trust and enable the AHT to fund city vouchers.
 - O. Because lab development outcompetes market and affordable housing, prevent lab development in our squares and major corridors to reduce displacement, increase housing, and maintain small businesses.
2. **We believe** in a strong **PARTICIPATORY MUNICIPAL DEMOCRACY** built on electoral representation and grassroots engagement in which all residents have full access to information about and influence on the important decisions that shape our lives, with a special focus on historically under-represented voices. The city's leadership must encourage local efforts to empower residents' voices and strengthen their capacity to self-organize community-based responses to needs that are not being met.
- A. All candidates for City Council must pledge to refuse campaign contributions from any large corporate or real estate interests that are seeking zoning changes or other benefits from the Cambridge City Council or city boards. This will enable voters to be more confident that councillors prioritize residents' interests.

- B. Plan, fund and build the infrastructure for affordable access to high-speed internet for all residents and small businesses; a digital equity-only response does not create true equal access for all.
 - C. Maintain virtual access to all municipal meetings and create methods for residents to express their views in a variety of ways that encourage engagement and a wide range of voices.
 - D. Establish a data-driven approach to community outreach, and track which approaches work best, such as establishing regular city-funded, city-wide "community canvass" outreach methods to households to surface issues, and forums representing many community voices.
 - E. Invest substantially in outreach methods that assist and support neighborhood and other groups with outreach to diverse residents to broaden and increase participation.
3. **We believe** that the health and quality of life of all residents depends on a planned **SUSTAINABLE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT** that includes citywide outdoor public spaces and trees, that recognizes the importance of environmental justice, and that reduces the city's contribution to climate change.
- A. Take the next steps toward net zero carbon emissions in Cambridge, including passing a proposed amendment to BEUDO requiring new commercial buildings to achieve net zero by 2030 instead of 2050; and creating standards and assistance for decarbonizing new and existing residential buildings.
 - B. Reduce emissions from vehicular traffic by promoting use of public transit, walking, and biking; promoting electric vehicles (private and public, including trucks and buses); and enforcing anti-idling laws.
 - C. Establish forward thinking infrastructure standards and plans to protect residents from flooding and predicted sea-level rise.
 - D. Protect residents from escalating heat through implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan and the updated Tree Protection Ordinance, including increasing the fine for removing trees on private property that shade public spaces and protecting the tree canopy with state-of-the-art irrigation systems.
 - E. Build more heat protection structures such as the "CloudHouse Shade Pavilion" in Greene-Rose Heritage Park and continue Cambridge's commitments to creating more Miyawaki Forests.
 - F. Support and promote a city Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) and Electrify Cambridge.
4. **We believe** that a thriving city requires planning for and implementation of dependable, accessible, balanced and varied modes of **TRANSPORTATION, TRANSIT AND MOBILITY**, including more local investment in public forms of mass transit based on a range of needs.
- A. Work with statewide advocates and our elected Representatives and Senators to pressure the state to fully fund, modernize, and expand the services of the MBTA, including a new commuter rail stop at Alewife.
 - B. Develop a plan that creates a balance among the many transportation and mobility needs of residents including bicyclists, walkers, and those needing to drive, which can also support small local businesses dependent on parking, through consultation with neighborhoods and comprehensive planning.
 - C. Provide city-funded transportation in areas of Cambridge underserved by the MBTA.
5. **We believe in PUBLIC SAFETY** programs for all residents and neighborhoods that prioritize new models of demilitarized/unarmed policing and the creation and support of civilian responses to crises, all of which minimize surveillance and promote civilian oversight.
- A. Provide city contracts and dispatch opportunities to implement the Cambridge Holistic Emergency Alternative Response Team (HEART), a community-based and staffed non-police-based emergency response team.

- B. Remove all military grade equipment (weapons and tools) from police, including tear gas.
 - C. Reject stationary cameras and surveillance methods which target impacted communities.
 - D. Shift non-criminal police-based work (crossing guards, traffic and parking enforcement, construction site details, school resource officers) to well-paying civilian jobs.
 - E. Implement a new independent police review board accountable to civil society, where complaints that are evaluated and reported out by resident members, not police.
 - F. Enforce police accountability through the collective bargaining process by such measures as requiring individual officers to carry professional liability insurance.
6. **We believe** that Cambridge deserves robust **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES** that nurture all members of the community throughout their life cycle and throughout the year, including deep investment in universal access to age zero to five full day education, after-school and out-of-school-time options for all students and maximize adult and elder learning opportunities. We oppose the high-stakes MCAS test, especially as a graduation requirement, because it narrows curriculum, promotes rote learning, undermines rather than supports struggling students, and has been exposed for its failure to close the "achievement" gap.
- A. Work through DHSP to support and develop free full day universal Pre-K and to support private daycare for infants and very young children, ensuring adequate enrichment.
 - B. Expand municipal funding and organizational support for free high-quality after-school and out-of-school-time options for all school-aged children.
 - C. Expand community-based education and opportunities for learning for adults, especially culturally and linguistically diverse communities and elderly residents.
 - D. Support coordination between Cambridge Public Libraries and other institutions for adult and childhood education on STEAM and other educational activities.
 - E. Increase access to the variety of university campus resources for Cambridge residents, including cultural and intellectual offerings and some access to academic courses, and incentivize university participation in city-wide enrichment and after-school programs.
7. **We believe** that all families in Cambridge, particularly at-risk families, should have access to **CARE SYSTEMS AND INCOME ENHANCEMENT** throughout the life cycle. Universal access to high-quality and enriching childcare is essential for the flourishing of younger generations in Cambridge, and a prerequisite for economic contributions by working parents. Support for quality of care should extend to affordable elder care.
- A. Offer supplemental assistance to support family resiliency and healthy child development for families at risk of interacting with the child protection system.
 - B. Improve timely access to community-based behavioral health supports to address effects of domestic violence and childhood trauma.
 - C. Strengthen community-based resources for families to access locally designed supports outside the child welfare system (such as home visiting programs, 2-1-1 service navigators, family resource centers), and ensure the most at-risk families are connected to these resources.
 - D. Design and implement municipal supplemental financial support for elder care, whether in the home or in community settings.
 - E. Evaluate and expand the Mayor's Rise Up Cambridge program, which provides \$500 per month for 18 months to Cambridge families living below 250% of the Federal Poverty Line.