

**CCC Questionnaire**  
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**1. Housing is an important issue for the City of Cambridge.**

**a. How would you describe our housing challenges?**

- i. Cambridge, like so many other areas around the country, is facing a housing crisis. We are increasingly losing the middle class in Cambridge.
- ii. I believe there are many different contributing factors to this crisis including, but not limited to, gentrification, rising rents and a narrowing pathway to homeownership. Our challenges are threefold: unrealistic and restrictive requirements prevent those experiencing homelessness from gaining services and housing; tenants face rising prices, housing instability, and a lack of protections; and paths to homeownership reside behind a barrier of privilege and generational wealth.

**b. What do you think are the major factors causing our housing challenges?**

- i. At the center of the housing crisis in Cambridge are a few wealthy, multinational corporations that are buying up large swaths of land. The commercialization of Cambridge land contributes to displacement, increased rent, and limits regular people's ability to buy homes. Additional challenges include an inadequate supply of permanently affordable housing to meet growing regional demands, and zoning laws that prevent increased density in transit corridors.

**c. What do you think is stopping us from addressing those challenges?**

- i. We are resistant to recognizing the systemic factors that prevent affordable and accessible housing to be available to all people because doing so demands the harsh and uncomfortable process of grappling with privilege and systemic discrimination.
- ii. Rooted deeply in a centuries-old idealized depiction of capitalism, we also struggle to reject the idea that privatization provides the most natural and efficient solutions. We need to reject the idea that multinational corporations are the solution to the housing crisis, and instead find community-based solutions that partner local government, renters/homeowners, and local businesses.

**d. Describe concerns you might have about existing and needed infrastructure to serve our present and future housing stock, for example: aging sewer lines, electrical grid and most importantly water.**

- i. I believe that our conversations about housing must be cognizant of the impending climate hazards that our city will face. Resilient drainage systems, accessible mass transit, and greener building models, as examples, demonstrate the need for housing justice and environmental justice to be equal parts of the same discussion.
- ii. The City is, as we understand it, actively undertaking sewer separation, but the pace needs to be quickened, given the urgency of the issue.
- iii. Our electrical grid must be updated and expanded.
- iv. We must address the corrosive water supply that contains PFAS chemicals. Dangerous PFAS chemicals are being increasingly detected in our drinking water sources; these chemicals contaminate our water and our blood. We must protect the safety and health of our water supply.
- v. We support the [Green New Deal zoning petition](#) to reduce emissions and energy demands.

**2. Climate Change is real. What changes would you like to see the city undertake to address these concerns locally? How do your views address environmental equity? How do you reconcile the issue of tree conservation and the environment when discussing development?**

- i. It is both our collective and individual responsibility as citizens to work tirelessly against the pressing threat of climate change. At a local level, an increase in eco-friendly modes of transportation such as bikes and the increase in ride sharing could make a substantial difference.
- ii. I believe strongly in shaping our city to be more eco-friendly, and as we struggle against the effects of climate change and demand greener methods, we must be acutely aware of the intersections between climate, racial, and housing justice in Cambridge. As City Councillor, I pledge to create policies that account for these inherent overlaps and develop a more holistic vision of equity.
- iii. In Cambridge, the declining tree canopy and the housing crisis are the two most pressing areas of environmental justice. Cambridge Local First, the nonprofit I direct, works closely with [Green Cambridge](#), a nonprofit that works to create a more sustainable city and to protect the environment for the health and safety of all. We both recognize the critical intersection of environmental and racial justice.
- iv. I believe that working at the intersection of the housing crisis and the environmental crisis is critical. We know that the effects of climate change disproportionately impact lower income communities, and Cambridge is no exception. At the same time, rising housing costs are displacing many people from their homes. As a Councillor, I will invest in low income communities first, as they are the most vulnerable to the most harm. Additionally, I would push back against large, corporate developers in favor of local groups.
- v. In recognition of the critical intersection of environmental and racial justice, I plan to ensure that communities and workers most affected by climate change lead the transition to a green economy. This issue hits home in Cambridge. Our most vulnerable neighborhoods, like the Port, already [regularly experience the adverse effects of climate change](#). This problem is made worse by their lack of tree canopy, and a declining tree canopy in the last 10 years throughout Cambridge. Actions include:
  1. I will push to incentivize the implementation of greener infrastructure and [community initiatives](#) to reverse the rapid decline of our tree canopy, promote the use of mass transit with additional bike lanes, and move the city to net zero carbon emissions by adopting building electrification requirements and increasing building design requirements.
  2. I enthusiastically support the Green New Deal in Cambridge.
  3. We should consider neighborhood demographics, including race, when making decisions around polluting facilities, housing segregation, disparate public health impacts including COVID-19, and access to adequate, reliable, and affordable public transit.
- vi. Ultimately, demographics must be considered to ensure that residents traditionally left out of decisions about their communities can access environmentally-related processes and benefits while holding decision-makers accountable.

3. **“Development” is a commonly used term of public policy. Notions of economic development evolve over time. In the current moment, ideas about development must address concerns about climate change, global capital flows and rapidly growing economic inequality.**
  - a. **The City for decades developed commercial property to increase taxable income that allows residential tax rates to remain low compared to many other cities. Has that strategy reached its limit? If so, what should replace it?**
    - i. I believe this policy should be reviewed so appropriate updates can be made. One strategy to keep residential tax rates low, while sustaining the city’s taxable income is implementing a real estate transfer tax and vacancy tax. I support the adoption of a real estate transfer tax up to 6% on new sales of real estate above the city-wide median sale price of \$1.1 million and directing proceeds to the Cambridge-only Affordable Housing Trust. I also advocate for a vacancy tax on individuals and corporations who buy housing without the intent to occupy those units to discourage commercial speculation- adding additional fees for owners who fail to register their properties as vacant, and for properties that are left vacant for multiple years.
  - b. **What is your view on economic development for the City of Cambridge in 2021? What kind of economic development do we need or not need?**
    - i. As a Councillor, I would push for economic development that creates opportunities for the citizens of Cambridge, and redistributes wealth back into the community. As the Executive Director of Cambridge Local First, I witnessed firsthand the identity and the rich local character that local and independent businesses bring to our city. I would push for more economic resources for existing small businesses, and cut red tape to make it simpler for new local businesses to get up and running.
4. **In recent months the Cambridge Historical Commission, Conservation Districts and Neighborhood Organizations have been criticized as obstacles to more affordable housing as well as to racial and economic diversity. Do you agree with this criticism? Please explain why.**
  - i. Cambridge has a rich history that is beautifully depicted in its architecture, but given the current housing crisis our city faces, which emphasizes discriminatory racial and economic divides, we must prioritize our community members first. I would advocate for a reform in the management of these organizations to ensure that advisory boards feature a diverse range of people and perspectives.
5. **In recent months there has been an upsurge in citizen petitions (including the Donovan petition supported by the CCC and the Missing Middle Housing (MMH) petition supported by ABC) that attempt to formulate zoning, housing and related public policy. Developer upzoning - also known as contract zoning - has also been in regular use. Please describe your opinion about governing through the use of citizen petitions and contract zoning. Are there changes to the petition process that should be introduced?**
  - i. As I understand it, the state law largely governs the zoning petition process, and it is not easy to change state law. While for-profit developers abuse contract zoning, I believe that citizen petitions are a good, underutilized tool for making changes to our zoning code that can facilitate greater justice. I aspire to incorporate the best elements of citizen petitions into our zoning code.

- ii. However, the two tools are variations of the same underlying petition mechanism. So, it is difficult to modify one (say, contract zoning) without affecting the other (citizen petitions).
- 6. Members of the Cambridge Planning Board have expressed frustration with existing constraints on their ability to plan. As volunteers meeting several times a month to process individual cases, members have little time and resources to engage in planning. The absence of planning guidance from this committee is likely related to the increased use of citizen petitions. How should this problem be addressed?**
  - i. I believe that the frustrations of the members of the Cambridge Planning Board with existing constraints are a function of how these boards are structured, which is governed largely by state law, as opposed to citizen petitions. I also believe that the planning board's primary function is not actually to plan the city, but rather to determine whether proposals comply with the existing zoning laws. If we seek different solutions, we should petition to change the zoning law.
- 7. Cambridge has long been celebrated as a city that promotes racial and economic diversity. Do you believe this reputation is currently well deserved? If not, what measures would you take to promote genuine racial and economic diversity? How would you address recent issues of youth gun violence?**
  - i. While I do believe Cambridge is a city that has strived towards greater racial and economic diversity, there are times where this legacy is overstated in order to avoid accountability/action for our current and past shortcomings. I believe that a government's spending reveals its true priorities. To truly achieve greater racial and economic equality, we must substantiate solutions with funding. For example, small business ownership is a major pathway to economic mobility especially for new Americans, women and BIPOC. However, in my work with Cambridge Local First, I've seen too often how certain business owners, particularly Black business owners are over mentored and [underfunded](#). To better address this, I propose the city form partnerships with local banks to offer small business loans and improve access to credit for minority business owners.
  - ii. On addressing the issue of youth gun violence, I believe the city government should be crafting solutions in partnership with the communities impacted. It is extremely important that solutions to problems derive bottom-up from the communities most impacted.
- 8. How would you increase transparency both by the City Manager and departments that report to her/him? How would you increase transparency by City Councilors?**
  - i. For our democracy to truly work, everyone needs to have their voice heard in shaping policies and laws that will impact their communities. If people like you and I do not have our voices heard, then policies end up being crafted by corporate interests who have access to vast sums of money and our politicians. The laws that have been passed over the last 40 years show how the weakening of our democratic institutions has led to policies stacked against working people and the empowerment of dangerous demagogues like Trump.
  - ii. I believe that a lack of transparency and accountability leads to policy outcomes that do not reflect what the majority of Cambridge residents want.

- iii. The City Council's failure to hold the City Manager accountable over a 40 year span has increasingly disempowered our Council. We must break that cycle with the hiring of the next City Manager. Further, I will work to make our city transparent, maximally democratic, and structured to implement the will of the people by:
  - 1. Rejecting the City's current austere approach of endless commercial development, artificially low taxes, and an underutilized emergency fund.
  - 2. Reviewing the charter to ensure that elected officials and the public have meaningful oversight of City Manager appointments and the budget process.
  - 3. Evaluating an elected mayoral role.
- iv. Re. increasing transparency by City Councillors, I believe the open meeting law limits the ability of Councillors to cooperate outside of official meetings. Increasing committee quorums to a simple majority has made it easier for Councillors to collaborate.

**9. Cambridge is about to hire a new City Manager. Describe your ideal City Manager for this time in Cambridge history. What qualities will you look for?**

- i. I would like to see a City Manager who is progressive, responsive to the public dialogue, and is accountable to the people of Cambridge.

**10. Recent estimates declare that over 60% of Cambridge residents are renters. How should the Cambridge government address the needs of renters?**

- i. As a renter myself, I would be a strong ally for renters on the City Council. We need immediate action to lower the rent and prevent mass evictions while planning for long-term housing stability some of my priorities include - mobilizing to lift the statewide ban on rent control to implement local rent control measures, pushing for community funded land trusts and social housing, establishing a Tenant Bill of Rights, and developing a permanent Department of Housing Stability.

**11. There is always room for improvement however senior citizens in public housing receive reasonable public support. What is your plan to enable and support seniors living independent of public senior housing settings?**

- i. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to find alternative healthcare methods to best suit the needs and ensure the safety of our community members. I will encourage the continued use of telehealth care by advocating for ubiquitous municipal broadband so that seniors can age comfortably at home. I also will advocate for the increased access and prominence of the CAPABLE program that allows seniors to receive at-home care from a registered nurse and occupational therapist, as well as in-home repair and safety services, for five months to give them the confidence and tools to age in their homes. The returns of this program have been shown to be well worth the investment, and given that the program is covered in Massachusetts through Medicare, I believe that we should continue to trailblaze the possibilities for this new program.

**12. What question do you wish we had asked you but did not? How would you answer it?**

**a. Question: What is the candidate's personal housing story in Cambridge?**

- i. I have always rented my apartment in Cambridge. I came to Cambridge in 2008 for college and lived in rented undergraduate dormitories.
- ii. Over a ten year period, during college and in the years afterward, I moved approximately once a year. This experience of mobility emphasized the

importance of advocating for security for renters through tenant organizing and tenant unions. This experience will help me better advocate for renters if I am elected to City Council.

- iii. For the past five years, I have been living in a rented apartment at 988 Memorial Drive, Apt. 185, Cambridge MA 02138. My landlords, a married couple, live in Salem and have essentially offered to stabilize our rents for as long as we continue to live here. We really appreciate it!