



## A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 At-Large City Council Candidates

### JOBS

*What would you do to ensure that Boston's economy is growing and that jobs are being created and maintained? Of the development tools available to the City, which would you emphasize to create and retain jobs in Boston? What would you do to enable Boston's residents to participate in the region's economy?*



#### **Felix Arroyo**

To ensure that there are good jobs available for the residents of Boston, we must create, attract, support and retain the businesses that provide them. We must support our small businesses so that they can thrive and hire local residents. Of course, it is also essential that Boston improve its public schools, especially our vocational programs, to ensure that students graduate from high school with the skills need to perform the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Finally, reforming the state's CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) system would also have an enormous impact on unemployment and job disparities in Boston. Under the current system, ex-offenders have to wait up to 15 years for their criminal record to be sealed. As a result, they are unable to find employment. A reformed CORI system that allows records to be sealed sooner and eliminates questions about criminal background on initial job applications, making it easier for ex-offenders to re-enter society and become productive citizens.

#### **John Connolly**

In these challenging economic times, we must consider many strategies for economic development. We need to look at all of our available development tools, including ways to retain our current base of business and our existing labor force.

I believe that many of Boston's future jobs will come from the expanding green job market. We must train our residents, no matter what their socio-economic background, to be scientists, lab technicians, home weatherization specialists, and electricians.

I plan to increase workforce skills through educational attainment. Specifically, I am leading an effort on the City Council to create a cutting edge K-12 Environmental Science Academy in the Boston Public Schools. The school would set a national standard for how best to prepare our children to compete in the green economy and to live a sustainable and environmentally responsible lifestyle. The school should be open to all students and offer a rigorous math and science curriculum, as well as educational opportunities for students interested in building or utility trades. The building itself should be a model of energy efficiency and sustainable building practices.

#### **Tomas Gonzalez**

It is now time to work with our world class museums, universities, cultural institutions, and schools of the arts to outline a plan to reinvent Boston as a creative city with a focus on invigorating our urban spaces. By developing affordable neighborhoods steeped in culture, we also open the door to the creative economy. There are opportunities that range from designing computer games to performing arts, all of which touch the lives of all Bostonians and represent cutting edge job opportunities. As a City Councilor I will leverage financial resources in the City

to provide more quality services and programs through responsible fiscal management and I will foster economic and community development by encouraging the city of Boston to develop abandoned and underutilized city-owned properties. Affordable artist live/work space is another approach to stimulate job creation. I will also examine the city's tax and zoning code to identify both incentives and barriers to the development of the creative economy.

In addition, I will be a strong advocate for the President's Green Jobs program which was developed as part of the stimulus package. This program will help local workers get trained on skills in emerging industries such as weatherization and retrofitting.

## **Tito Jackson**

Boston residents deserve jobs that provide wages that support a family, that provide opportunities for growth and learning, and that contribute to the economy while sustaining the environment. As an At-Large City Councilor, my primary emphasis would be ensuring that our workforce is prepared for these jobs. As Industry Director for Information Technology, I had a first-hand view of the value that employers placed on our highly educated workforce. We need to ensure that Boston workers are prepared to work in tomorrow's skilled jobs in the trades, retrofitting and installing green technology to meet current energy efficiency targets. I would apply funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to vocational training centers and summer youth employment programs. I would work not only to make these programs available, but also to highlight these efforts to private sector employers seeking to create jobs in Boston.

In many cases, employers choose to relocate or expand their businesses in Massachusetts cities outside of Boston in response to cumbersome permitting and regulatory processes. As a second emphasis, I would advocate for streamlining our city processes and providing employers with a single point of contact at City Hall to manage their job-creating expansions or relocations.

## **Andrew Kenneally**

In this current economic climate, I would support the current loan fund that has been set up to jumpstart stalled development projects around the city. By providing these developments with the financing they need to move forward, you will help to employ thousands of workers, create a local economic stimulus for small businesses that surround the development, and create more taxable property.

Given we are facing the highest unemployment in decades, we need to consolidate job training resources among private, public and non-profit agencies while creating more vocational schools in Boston to focus on the jobs of the future, such as *green* manufacturing and life sciences.

## **Ayanna Pressley**

I believe that we need to both attract employers to Boston and ensure that Boston residents are sharing in new jobs. Improving educational attainment is one of the keys to addressing both these needs. Our employers need qualified, educated workers, and our education system must address at least two persistent problems – dropout rate and achievement gap.

Cities can work to become more attractive to new businesses in a number of ways. They can provide better services to make businesses more efficient, better transportation both for product delivery and employee convenience. They can make themselves more appealing with more open spaces and cleaner well-maintained streets. They can ensure access to quality education by making it easier for parents to get a great public education for their kids. They can make sure that streets are always safe. The basic things that are the responsibility of the City of Boston are the very things that if done right, will attract more business.

There are times when we may be forced to compete for jobs with other communities and incentives will have to be considered, but I would have to be shown compelling reasons to support such incentives.