

Questions for the Candidates

Issues to Consider in the 2023 City Council Election

On November 7, 2023, Boston voters will go to the polls to elect their City Councilors to two-year terms. There are many important issues affecting Boston that the City Council has substantial authority to address. In order to facilitate public discussions and assist voters, the Research Bureau presents a set of questions regarding key concerns. These questions are designed for the [twenty-three candidates](#) for City Council.

- **Affordable Housing** – Greater Boston has been described as facing a “[crippling housing shortage](#),” and Boston’s new housing approvals in 2022 fell to their lowest levels since 2015. Additionally, [42% of all Boston households](#), and 50% of renters, are cost-burdened, paying 30% or more of their income towards housing. Recently, the City has been pursuing initiatives to increase housing supply and expand affordability, like increased Linkage and Inclusionary Development requirements, a real estate transfer fee, rent stabilization, and property tax relief for office to residential conversions. *How would you address Boston’s housing crisis, balancing the need for more units while maintaining affordability in the City?*
- **City Finances** – The City Council has increased budgetary authority due to a charter amendment passed in 2021. Boston’s budget is heavily reliant on the property tax, which makes up 72.4% of the City’s revenue. *How would you ensure that the City’s budget is fiscally sustainable, given concerns about slowing growth in property tax revenue? Are there alternative revenue sources that you would pursue to diversify the City’s revenue mix or spending you would seek to reduce?*
- **City Planning / Economic Development** – Robust development has allowed Boston to increase the tax levy limit well beyond the automatic 2.5% increase for the past ten years. In the third quarter of 2023, the Greater Boston region saw an [office vacancy rate of 19.8%](#), the highest since the Dot-com crash of the early 2000s. *How would you incentivize economic development in the current uncertain economic climate?*
- **Public Safety** – Boston faces many complex public safety issues including maintaining adequate public safety staffing levels. Some have called for shifting some police funding to be used for an alternative approach to public safety, while others have called for more law enforcement staffing and funding to make Boston safer. *What are your goals to increase public safety, and how would you pursue these goals?*
- **Transportation** – A key aspect of the City’s plan to fight climate change includes a transition to a cleaner transportation system. The City has promoted expansion of bicycling infrastructure, including expanding the Bluebikes system and constructing bike lanes throughout the city. Additionally, with Boston now having a representative on the MBTA Board, the City has increased influence in governing the regional transit system. *How should the City balance investment in green modes of transportation such as public transportation, biking, and walking while maintaining existing roads and infrastructure?*