

Section 1: BACKGROUND/PERSONAL

1. What is your name, age, and neighborhood where you live?

Marvin Mathelier, 39, Jamaica Plain

2. What is your present occupation? Also, please note any past employment that may be relevant to your candidacy.

I am a father, business owner, Lt. Colonel in the Marines (Reserves). I recently served as the Deputy Chief Engagement Officer for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans Services, and I'm the founder and former Executive Director of the Toussaint Louverture Cultural Center.

3. Please detail your educational background and achievements.

I earned my BA at Norwich University-Military College of Vermont, my Master in Business Administration at Loyola University Chicago, and I recently earned my Masters in Public Administration from Columbia University with a Pat Tillman scholarship.

4. Please list some of your affiliations with non-profits, civic associations, and political groups.

I'm first and former Executive Director of the Toussaint Louverture Cultural Center, the first Haitian Cultural Center in Boston. I previously served as an elected member of the JP Neighborhood Council.

5. What in your experience to date will most help you to be an effective leader?

Each and every one of my roles has prepped me for effective leadership.

In the Marine Corps, I've led humanitarian missions across Latin America & the Caribbean, playing a key role in disaster response and security cooperation in Haiti.

As Chair of the Toussaint Louverture Cultural Center, I turned a 20-year vision into reality, securing a rent-free space in Boston's West End and raising nearly \$300,000 to create a hub for Haitian culture and community.

As co-owner of Ula Café, I and my wife Beth have fostered connection by hosting local artists, events, and providing meals for those in need.

As a member of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council, I co-chaired the Housing Committee, advocating for affordable housing and equitable development.

6. What are the three accomplishments you're most proud of?

My most proud accomplishments are:

- My work with the Toussaint Louverture Culture Center: Being able to spearhead and secure a space in the West End that's free for 25 years and \$300,000 from the City of Boston has provided a place for community connection and cultural understanding for and by Haitians in Boston.

- The humanitarian aid I was able to provide through my role in the Marine Corps: I helped coordinate and lead medical outpost programs that supported over 1000 rural Guatemalan and Guyanese farmers & residents with medical, dental, and farm animal veterinarian support, which they would have otherwise had to travel hours to access. After the 2021 earthquake in Haiti, I helped coordinate over 125,000 pounds worth of water, food to people impacted by the earthquake.
- My work with Massachusetts Executive Office of Veteran Services: As Deputy Chief Engagement Officer, I optimized the Executive Office of Veteran Services (EOVS) Constituent Services, so within a year we addressed over 1500 cases in the commonwealth –including education, employment, finance, medical, and housing cases, helping benefits get the benefits they earned.

7. When not on the campaign trail, how do you relax?

I love going for walks around the neighborhood and in Franklin Park, running and working out, and playing with my kids.

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

1. What is your party affiliation and how would you characterize your political ideology?

I'm a Democrat, but not someone who's a political insider. I'm someone who's not all about labels, but about doing what's best for the residents of Boston.

2. Please name up to three (and at least one) of your political role models? Please feel free to explain your choices.

I'm inspired by Mayor Menino's dedication to getting to know residents from every neighborhood and being truly omnipresent at community events, as well as his ability as an "urban mechanic" to find solutions to problems and get the basics of city services right.

I am also deeply inspired by Mel King's passionate advocacy and message of love, hope, and unity.

3. What would you do to increase voter turnout in the city of Boston, especially for local races?

I'd focus on civic education and voter pre-registration in schools and colleges. Peer-led campus groups and social media campaigns can engage young voters. Participatory budgeting programs empower all residents by involving them in city decisions. Lowering the voting age to 16 or 17 for local elections could also increase turnout. Creating a strong culture of civic participation through families, schools, and community groups helps everyone feel their vote matters. Together, these strategies can significantly raise overall engagement and turnout.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected? How would you use your role as a city councillor to help address or accomplish it?

Housing affordability. I'll fight for more affordable rental units and expanded first-time homebuyer programs by taxing greedy out-of-town developers profiting from displacing hard-working Bostonians. We need to pass rent stabilization at the state house, and do more to subsidize deeply affordable units. We also need to tackle real zoning reform to improve predictability of the building approval process. Finally, we need greater transparency into the process through which projects are approved.

2. Is there a specific city agency you see as in need of urgent reform? If so, please explain.

I believe that the Boston Public School system needs to take a new approach to ensure that we are providing an excellent education for all of our students. This will require investment, structural reforms, and improvements to physical school infrastructure.

3. What is your position on residency requirements, i.e. requiring people hired by the municipal government to live in the city of Boston?

I'm in support, as it promotes personal investment in providing quality city services. Living in the city of Boston, talking to neighbors and other residents, also provides a means of real-time feedback. We just need to ensure we address the affordable housing crisis we are currently in, so these people can live comfortable in our communities.

4. Do you favor a return to an elected School Committee? Please explain.

Yes, the people have spoken on this at the ballot box, and we should listen to them.

5. Boston is facing a housing shortage that is impacting the affordability of living in the city. Separately, the Wu administration is pursuing zoning reform to spur development in certain areas and wants to see a return of the city's population to 800,000. What is your assessment of this target — and what would your office do to balance growth with the concerns that many have about displacement in neighborhoods?

This target is reasonable, given current population trends and efforts for continued development.

To encourage growth while protecting against displacement, I'd support strong affordability requirements and anti-displacement measures, such as just-cause eviction and tenants' opportunity to purchase.

6. Do you support the City's current Inclusionary Zoning policy, which was

revised in 2023? If not, what changes would you make?

Yes, I support the current rate. I would look to find other ways to help encourage development without lowering the rate if possible.

7. What is your position on rent control?

I'm in favor of rent control. As someone who grew up in a rent controlled apartment I know the impact that relatively stable rent can have. I'll also fight for more affordable rental units and expanded first-time homebuyer programs by taxing out-of-town developers profiting from displacing hard-working Bostonians. We also need to tackle real zoning reform to improve predictability of the building approval process. Finally, we need greater transparency into the process through which projects are approved.

8. What is your assessment of the Wu administration's overall performance?

Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer.

B, has set a solid foundation with a couple missed opportunities.

9. The August 2024 closure of Carney Hospital left a huge hole in the city's public health sector. What would you do as a city councillor to address this problem and what is your position on how the Dorchester campus of Carney Hospital should be re-purposed or re-developed?

I'd follow the recommendations of the [report](#) generated alongside healthcare industry professionals and politicians across the political spectrum, to invest and continue having the site be used for healthcare with a blend of added services, all with a mission to increase access of care to the community.

10. What are your plans to address traffic congestion, commuter safety and transportation needs? Please discuss bike lanes as part of your answer.

I'll champion a fare-free MBTA with reliable service and expanded routes that connect neighborhoods. Pedestrian safety and enforcing the rules of the road will reduce traffic and make streets safer.

I'd continue the development of our bike lanes by utilizing the data provided by the February 3 ordinance related to delivery apps, alongside resident input on where bike lanes are needed most. Since the data from the report largely reflects activity in higher-income areas, it's important to recognize its limitations and ensure that underrepresented neighborhoods are not overlooked. Understanding each neighborhood's needs, and securing community support and buy-in for bike lane-related initiatives is essential to its success.

11. How will you approach the issue of gun violence in our communities?

I'd champion a holistic approach of reducing guns on the streets through gun buy-back programs and strengthening our gun laws, while also addressing the root causes of gun violence. We must provide much more widespread youth mental health services, access to jobs and opportunities, and ensure that there are enough mentors and engaged community members surrounding young people to help them avoid paths that lead to violence. I look to the model of the "Boston Miracle" and recent efforts that have led to success.

12. How would you confront the drug epidemic, safety, and sanitation issues affecting residents near Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard?

The crisis at Mass and Cass has been a true policy failure. The lack of mental health resources, housing supports, and addiction treatment services has led to a crisis. The approach of “clearing” the area only pushes the problem to other communities within the city, it does nothing to solve the problem.

This requires a multifaceted approach that uses all available solutions. There have already been passionate healthcare professionals who are dedicating their lives to this issue, advocating for solutions that put the victims of this crisis first. They’ve seen that different patients respond differently to different variables—some respond better to medication before considering housing with the city, and others respond better to stable housing first. We should expand low-barrier transitional & supportive housing, and ensure stable funding to prevent closures. We should maintain & strengthen harm reduction programs and foster community-based collaboration. We should align public safety with public health, enhancing community cleanups and open space management without displacing vulnerable people and moving the problem to other areas. Decentralizing resources citywide would also ease pressure on the area and improve access to services.

By weaving together housing, harm reduction, compassionate public safety, sanitation, and local governance, Boston can create a more effective, humane response—one that not only addresses immediate cries for safety but also supports the path to stability for those most in crisis.

13. According to DESE’s most recent data, 40.4% of Boston’s public schools were classified as ‘requiring assistance or intervention. In June 2022, Boston Public Schools entered into an agreement with the state to make improvements to the state of the Boston Public Schools.

As the agreement expired in June, how would you work to ensure continued accountability for the City’s schools, close achievement gaps and ensure that all BPS students receive a quality education?

In your reporting there was one line that stood out about how “This kind of designation is really, I think, more effective at increasing a sense of urgency than it is on actually solving the problems.” “But the good news is it appears that the Boston Public Schools have responded over the past couple of years and put in place some of the mechanisms to deliver on higher performance. And we still need to hold the system accountable for that performance over time here, because it’s not enough to put in place the infrastructure; you actually have to execute. And students have to learn at higher levels, but we have to be smart about how we measure that learning.”

When looking at the available information, such as how MCAS test scores are 50 to 70 points lower than the state average in 2023-24, with the context of the unique challenges BPS faces, this is more a testament to the resiliency of our educators and our schools. That being said, your reporting does mention good work, and real considerations on how to move forward in the

city. One is de-emphasizing MCAS results given that the state has already removed it as a requirement for graduation.

I'm a parent of three, with two children in BPS, and I see firsthand what our schools are going through. In just four years, my daughter has had three different principals. That kind of leadership turnover is disruptive—it impacts school culture, the trust families build, and ultimately the quality of education our students receive. And when those principals leave, it's often because they've found "better opportunities" or places where they feel more supported. That says something about the system they're leaving behind and the need for significantly more investment in our schools. We're seeing gaps in resources, outdated facilities, and continued disparities based on income and access. Too many families—especially in low-income neighborhoods or those navigating the system in another language—feel left out of key decisions.

What I'm looking to enact as councilor is increasing STEM and vocational programs that are pipelines to good-paying jobs, and a curriculum that includes financial literacy, civics, social-emotional learning, and the arts. My plan includes revamping Vocational-Technical Excellence (VTE) programs that will prepare our youth for green jobs of the future—educating on new infrastructure such as geothermal heat pumps, the current novel use of increasing efficiency through decentralized computing to capture excess heat for consumer use.

14. 81.6% of BPS students are classified as high needs, compared to 55.8% at the state level. Do you believe that BPS is adequately serving high needs students, including English language learners and special education students, and if not, what can be done to improve their approach?

We must ensure that the investments are distributed throughout the neighborhoods of the city, and that decisions are made based on both data and reflecting on community impact and input.

I don't believe BPS is adequately serving "high needs" students, but we improve this by both investing in their development and by contextualizing this information. The definition of what classifies as "high needs" is English learners, students being low income, and students with disabilities. First, students who can facilitate second language adoption in our classrooms can be used as a benefit for improving international appeal and opportunity for our students. Being low income is a symptom of larger issues including housing instability, access to opportunity, and increasing wealth disparities. These are core issues I intend to address in office, starting with housing. All of which will help facilitate our ability to improve the quality of instruction being granted to everyone, and maximize participation by our students with disabilities to have schools reflect the city that it is for and built by all.

15. Most of Boston's revenues come from property taxes, and robust new growth in recent years has enabled substantial budgetary increases, an average of 5.4% over the last decade. However, new growth in FY25 was \$90.5M, 25.7% less than FY24, and a slowdown in new construction in the city may impact future proceeds from the new growth that drives the City's budget.

How will you approach these budget challenges and balance the needs of residents and commercial property owners?

I'd seek to address root issues that are underlying the existing imbalance between residential and commercial units, such as a lagging commercial use whose conversions could address the existing housing issues, or examining how to most effectively use commercial spaces, therefore shifting the economy. Addressing these issues while making sure to work with the owners of the units along the way will balance the needs on both sides.

Thank you for participating in the Boston Municipal Research Bureau/Dorchester Reporter questionnaire. Please send the completed document as a PDF or WordDoc to dhalky@bmr.org by Friday, Aug. 15, 2025.