

# **BRIGHTON ALLSTON COMMUNITY COALITION**

## **A Brief Survey on Housing-Related Issues**

- 1. Please describe your past involvement, if any, in housing-related issues in Allston-Brighton. (For example, have you served on an Impact Advisory Group, joined a housing-related community group, written letters to the Boston Planning and Development Agency related to specific housing projects or attended community meetings related to housing developments?)**

I regularly attend community meetings related to development in the neighborhood whether an abutters meeting, general community meetings, or sitting in the audience during impact advisory groups meetings. As an executive board member of the Allston Civic Association, I have the opportunity to meet with developers, large and small, to express the concerns I have heard from neighbors regarding comparable projects.

I have also met with various developers one-on-one to push for expanded community benefits. I always lead conversations by telling them that the neighborhood desperately needs deeper affordability and deed-restricted homeownership opportunities to avoid the swooping up by investors who do not have our communities in mind. I choose to use my voice to amplify the concerns, needs, and desires of our housing activists and families.

- 2. Community residents, including members of the Brighton Allston Community Coalition (BACC), have criticized recent housing development in Allston-Brighton for the lack of affordable housing units and for the lack of owner-occupied units. Do you agree or disagree with this criticism? Please explain your response.**

I think we are mostly all on the same page regarding keeping developers in check and trying to mold their developments to fit the needs of our neighbors and neighborhood.

The vast majority of the projects we have seen pop-up in Allston-Brighton are not intended for the current residents. Many of these projects are luxury rentals which lack the opportunity for homeownership, much to the chagrin of almost every neighbor I've encountered. I have seen countless building proposals which are fiscally inaccessible to the bulk of Allston-Brighton's residents.

As more development comes into the neighborhood, we need to press developers to keep in mind that Allston-Brighton's area median income is less than half of what HUD lists for the city as a whole. Our inclusionary development policy cannot be offset by the incomes of those living in luxury units in the Seaport District, Back Bay, and Charlestown. It doesn't help if the affordable units are being built at 100% of the area median income of Greater Boston.

**3. Do you support the BACC's position that 20 percent of residential units in new large developments in Allston-Brighton should be affordable? Please explain your response.**

There is an urgency that must be addressed with a mayoral executive order changing Boston's IDP to 20%.

Right now, if we as a community start the conversation at 20%, we will ultimately negotiate a percentage between 13% and 20%. I am very happy that many of the current City Council candidates around the district, as well as around the city support *at least* 20% for all new developments. If elected, I will work with fellow city councilors to call on Mayor Walsh to change this on a citywide basis.

**4. Prior to this survey, have you publicly advocated for the position that 20 percent of residential units in new large developments in Allston-Brighton should be affordable? If so, when and how did you advance this view? Please also identify each of the development projects on which you have taken such a position.**

I have frequently made public statements at community meetings and in talking with developers asking for at least 20% affordable housing and deed-restricted owner-occupied units. In interviews with the Boston Globe's editorial board and Boston Neighborhood Network News, I have supported a 20% minimum in new developments. Since Cambridge adopted 20% in 2016, I have felt it necessary that Boston at least match that, if not increase it even further.

**5. Do you support the BACC's position that new large residential developments in Allston-Brighton should include a substantial**

**number of condominiums or other homeownership opportunities, and that the vast majority of any such condominiums or other homeownership units should be restricted for sale to owner-occupants rather than investors? Please explain your response.**

New developments offer a great opportunity to create homeownership. These units must remain places for people to live, not simply an investment opportunity. It is no secret that buildings like Continuum are being used as short-term rentals. This is a worst case scenario, where our units are being used for profit rather than homes for young professionals and families.

It is hard, if not outright impossible, for millennials to own property in Allston-Brighton unless they make over six figures or come from money. This is why a lot of young people push back against condominiums, yet the truth of the matter is that Allston-Brighton is a landlord's paradise with the lowest percentage of owner-occupied units in the city. We need properties that are out of the hands of management companies and absent landlords. We need properties back in the hands of the people who live in them.

This is why I support having deed restrictions put in place to make sure new condominium units aren't flipped or turned into short-term rentals. I don't want outside investors using our neighborhood as a revenue stream as more and more neighbors are priced out.

**6. Do you support the BACC's position that Boston University and Boston College should help relieve Allston-Brighton's housing crisis by housing their undergraduate students on their campuses? Please explain your response.**

The cost of living on campus must decrease and the amount of beds increase. The major factor in off-campus living is cost. Plain and simple, it's cheaper to split an apartment than it is to live on-campus. If universities are not taking seriously their responsibility of creating desirable and affordable on-campus housing, students will continue to rent housing not only in Allston-Brighton, but across the city. These units are then in turn taken out of the hands of families and renters.

**7. Community residents, including members of the BACC, have criticized the Boston Planning and Development Agency for its lack of**

**comprehensive planning relating to residential development in Allston-Brighton, arguing that the BPDA tends to evaluate each proposed residential development in isolation. Do you agree with this criticism? Please explain your response.**

It is no secret that planning is done without a full contextual understanding of the community and the other projects in the area. This results in a patchwork of development. This is most obvious along Guest Street, where the Lantera building (17 floors) looms over another new project standing on Hichborn Street (5 floors). It is this type of development that exemplifies the lack of planning around our neighborhood.

**8. Are you satisfied with the planning and review process used by the Boston Planning and Development Agency and the Walsh Administration for developments in Allston-Brighton in recent years? If not, what steps do you plan to take to change that process or to influence the Boston Planning and Development Agency and the Walsh Administration to change that process?**

As I have stated above, I feel that many of the projects that have popped up across the neighborhood lack a vision for creating rental and homeownership opportunities that are truly and deeply affordable. We need to elect a City Councilor who has first-hand experience in searching for affordable housing in the district, and knows the stress that it takes to find safe, reliable, stable housing. We deserve a City Councilor who will take seriously the need to work with developers to deliver housing that is intentionally planned to be inclusive rather than displace our neighbors.

**9. Community residents, including members of the BACC, have pointed out the need for improved public transportation given the wave of residential housing development in Allston-Brighton. What specific plans do you propose to address this need?**

West Station must be built during the first phase of the I-90 Realignment Project. It is abhorrent that the Commonwealth does not understand the impact this project will have on efficient public transit as well as decreasing greenhouse gas emissions that cut through our district every day. Boston Landing already sees high ridership during peak hours. It is critical that the frequency of trains is increased.

We should also be expanding our dedicated bus lanes to make sure that bus riders and cars are getting around the district faster. If we expand our dedicated bus lanes, it has to be coupled with a significant public education initiative. Many residents do not understand the purpose of the lane and are confused where and when they can drive in the lane. The purpose of a dedicated bus lane is to streamline traffic, and make it possible for busses and cars alike to move faster without the bus pulling in and out of traffic.

I will work with State Representatives and Senators to secure funding to improve our transportation infrastructure in and around Allston-Brighton.

**10. What other policies or programs do you plan to advocate for in an effort to increase affordable housing and owner occupancy in Allston-Brighton? If applicable, what policies or programs have you supported in the past?**

Boston should be in control of setting its own linkage policy to funnel more money from wealthy developers towards affordable rentals and owner-occupied units. I also support Lydia Edwards and Kim Janey's efforts to implement a 6% transfer tax on multi-million dollar properties and implement a 25% secondary flip tax.

I think we need to fund educational programs for first-time homebuyers and find ways to secure fair loans and mortgages that make sense for young families who are still paying off loans or are overworked.

I support giving a tax credit to property owners who retrofit their buildings to today's climate-resilient standards. I think we also need to find a way to incentivize capital improvements to rental units in the district.

**The BACC thanks you for responding to this survey.**

