

# Michael Flaherty

## Affordable Housing

As a city, we need to bolster our commitment to affordable mixed-income housing by strengthening current policies, implementing new ones, and imposing a greater level of accountability upon developers and city agencies, including the two new ones that I would establish — Department of Planning and Department of Economic and Workforce Development (DEWD) — to replace the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). As Mayor, I will increase our supply of affordable housing by making the city’s inclusionary zoning policy part of our zoning code so that it is more efficient and predictable. I also realize that high condo fees are preventing many families from pursuing a unit in the city’s affordable housing program. That’s why I will work with professionals in the legal and real estate industries to explore amending the state’s condominium statute, if necessary, to ensure that high monthly condo fees do not remain a barrier to affordable home ownership.

## Development

**Diverse Development:** Residential development should have an affordable housing component to ensure that families of all incomes and backgrounds continue to be welcomed to this neighborhood, while commercial development opportunities should give priority to local businesses. Both strategies will help ensure that the original character and cultural distinctiveness of JP is preserved.

**Green Development:** We must build sustainable communities that are based on sound environmental principles and utilize green materials. We also need to incorporate “smart growth” practices, i.e., transit-oriented development as a way to reduce traffic congestion and make JP a more accessible and healthier place to live.

**Open and Inclusive Development:** JP residents must be empowered by the city to advocate for the best interests of their neighborhood. We need to end closed-door discussions, open up the planning process and ensure that community benefits promised are community benefits delivered.

## Environment and Energy

We need to better understand the effectiveness of the measures we’re taking to fight global warming. That’s why I would ensure greenhouse gas emission inventories of our municipal buildings are conducted annually and their results are constantly informing next steps.

I would increase the city’s recycling rates by: immediately expanding our single-stream recycling pilot program to the entire city; mandating the recycling of all construction and demolition debris and special event materials; directing local restaurants to provide their compost-able material and kitchen trimming/scrapings to neighborhood gardens and city parks in exchange for reduced hauling fees.

I would improve the city’s efforts to educate businesses and residents about how they can become more energy efficient by welcoming programs like “Energy Smackdown” and launching a “green” city website that provides residents information about energy tax credits, local weatherization services and basic tips to reduce energy use.

## Youth Violence

The street worker program, as operated during the 1990s Boston Miracle, effectively tackled youth and gang violence. Since then, the city has dramatically reduced the street worker program to just 26 workers and four “senior” street workers. In 2003, the program only had 12 street workers! In addition to hiring more street workers, we need to get them back out on the streets — especially during the late evening hours when crime is greatest. We also need to put them back into our schools so they have an opportunity to diffuse student conflict before it escalates into street violence. And when deemed appropriate, we must allow for workers with criminal records to become street workers again. With their intimate knowledge of the streets, they served as vital partners to the BPD and provided them with critical intelligence that resulted in successful efforts to break cycles of gang violence.

Our youth represent our future generation of community leaders, activists, teachers and business CEOs, making it essential that we invest in them at their earliest of ages. I envision a Boston where quality, public early education is available to all families and our public schools fail no child, especially one with barriers to learning. A college education can be pursued and acquired by all of our BPS students. Under my plan for youth, all teens will have access to a summer job and year-round employment opportunities, especially our older teens who need to be off the streets and in a job the most. With many opportunities stemming from the emerging green economy, I want to ensure that our young residents have access to a green vocational school within BPS. The greater the investments we make in this generation today, the stronger our city will be tomorrow.

## Accountability, Transparency

I have called on the city to adopt several measures to bring greater accountability and transparency to its government, including the implementation of annual performance reviews, the government management tool called CitiStat, online budgeting that is constantly updated and available to the public, and web-streaming meetings held by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the city’s Zoning Board of

Appeals (ZBA) and the Boston Employment Commission. By making government data and information more accessible and transparent, we hold public officials accountable to making sound financial decisions and make it easier for residents to inform themselves about how we are spending their money and what decisions are being made about their neighborhoods and communities. Through these strategies, we can earn the public's trust again.

## **Education**

I did not support the 5-zone proposal. Yes, I have always supported the idea of children going to a school near their home, the idea that families could walk their kids to school and be involved with their school community. I believe our schools become stronger when they become a real part of the neighborhood. However, I also strongly advocate for equal educational opportunities and right now, a return to a neighborhood school system will not achieve such equality because there are too many underperforming schools in Boston. What we need to work towards is a school system where everyone's neighborhood school is their number one choice school. But that won't happen overnight and our success will certainly require bold leadership, collaboration among all parties and the incorporation of best practices working in other urban school districts across the country.

We can turn around our failing schools through bold reforms such as shifting to a school-based management system where principals are given greater authority to make decisions that best meet the needs of their particular student population. Under such a system, teachers and parents would also be more empowered and involved in discussions about budgeting and programming. At the same time, we need to welcome more charter schools so that we can replicate successes seen at schools like MATCH and bring in those charter schools that have demonstrated success elsewhere, such as the national KIPP schools. With the greater autonomies that we afford to both charter schools and our traditional public schools, we must also demand greater standards for accountability, making all schools responsible to provide a quality education and graduate all students — not just those without barriers to learning.

An April 2009 study released by the Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy Institute of UMass Boston affirmed that the fastest growing achievement gap in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) is between English Language Learners (ELL) and mainstream BPS students. Meanwhile, the Boston Foundation's Boston Education Pipeline report card maintained that the greatest achievement gap in Boston is between mainstream students and students with linguistic or physical/cognitive challenges. Both reports underscore the point that our ELL and special education programs are in dire need of reform, especially since these student populations are also at greatest risk for dropping out.

To improve these programs, we need to improve communication between parents and BPS, and give them more options. We also need to improve assessments and better train both specialized and regular classroom teachers. Equally as important, we need to tie these programs to comprehensive support services.

## **Human Services**

To address our persisting gang and youth violence, I would increase the funding for the city's street worker program so that we could increase the number of workers on the street during the late evening hours when crime is most prevalent. During the Boston Miracle, the city had 45 street workers which largely contributed to the city's crime fighting success in the previous decade.

I would also increase the funding for the Boston Youth Fund to get more Boston youth off the streets and in a job during the summer when crime often peaks. With additional funding, we could provide jobs to older teens who often need a job the most, but are currently excluded from the program.

Lastly, I would provide additional funding to the city's substance abuse prevention and recovery programs as addictions are at the roots of many criminal acts.

## **Transportation**

Exerting a greater leadership role for Boston in MBTA discussions would be a top priority as many Boston residents need the MBTA to remain affordable and accessible. A strong MBTA is also critical to our efforts to develop our economy and reduce pollution.

Increasing MBTA's ridership also requires a greater investment in secure bike storage areas and developing walkable communities that deliberately place affordable housing near public transportation.

I would also invest in measures to relieve congestion and make it easier to get around the city, including the implementation of mobility corridors for the city's most densely populated neighborhoods, an initiative that should be driven by ridership patterns and demographic data. The city should support these projects by better enforcing traffic regulations around these designated mobility corridors.

## **Jobs and Labor**

The emerging green sector presents an enormous opportunity to stimulate our economy and put people back to work. Most importantly, the green sector is creating a wide spectrum of jobs that require a variety of high and low skill sets and must be filled locally, not abroad. I have proposed that the city establish a Green Jobs Corps, similar to the one established by Oakland CA, where training programs are developed for those residents facing the greatest barriers to employment, including at-risk youth, immigrants, limited English-proficient populations, formerly incarcerated individuals and those with little education.

Implemented responsibly, a Green Jobs Corps will help break down social inequalities and achieve a higher degree of economic equality for all Bostonians. As Mayor, I will only champion those green jobs that provide quality working conditions, advancement opportunities and family-sustaining wages and benefits.

### **Race and Diversity**

Fortunately, our city has the “Boston Residents Jobs Policy” (BRJP) on the books, which stipulates local hiring requirements for resident, minority and female workers in the construction industry. Unfortunately, we have inexcusable, abysmal compliance rates. That’s why I have repeatedly called on the city and the BRA to adopt strategies that will achieve and surpass the stipulated requirements. In fact, I believe that the emerging green jobs sector underscores the importance of figuring out how to make the BRJP work in the way it was intended so that residents, minorities and women are properly represented in today’s new workforce. As Mayor, I would improve recruitment efforts and hold oversight agencies accountable for compliance rates by requiring that the compliance rates for each project be regularly posted online, which would then inform community-based job placement organizations about where they should be targeting their placement efforts for minority and female workers.

### **Budget Policy**

Our budget strategies must be two-fold: we must determine how we can trim spending and we must identify measures to bring in more money. Conducting annual performance reviews will help us to reach both of these goals. Certainly, the city could bring in more revenue if it held itself more accountable for collecting unpaid tickets and property taxes. Reports have indicated that the city is owed millions. Another strategy to bring in more city revenue would be to modify the tax exemption status of our colleges and universities so that they are required to pay some portion of prop-

erty taxes. The current system — which consists of voluntary payments — is not a reliable source of revenue, especially during an economic downturn. Other strategies that would free up city dollars are to eliminate high-paid consultants, put city workers on the state’s health insurance program and enroll city retirees into Medicare.

Through annual performance reviews, my administration would be able to make informed decisions about which city programs should be improved, consolidated or eliminated. Such a review would enable us to become a more efficient government and expunge wasteful spending and abuse. One area ripe for reform is the city’s Transportation and Public Works departments. Supposedly, they were merged over two years ago, and yet we still have a Chief of Public Works & Transportation, a Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, and a Transportation Commissioner on our payroll, with no savings or improved city services to show for it.

Savings identified through a more genuine consolidation of these two departments would allow me to put more money into our public safety departments and our Boston Public Schools (BPS). In addition, a shift to school-based management would redirect money from the BPS central office to our classrooms and students.

### **Lightning Round (Yes or No)**

*Many workers in Boston are organizing to form unions, especially in the hospitals. Will you publicly support their efforts to organize?* **Yes**

*Do you support the death penalty?* **No**

*Do you support same sex marriage?* **Yes**

*Do you support anti-discrimination laws that protect someone from being fired, or denied housing, education, or access to public facilities (including bathrooms) based on their gender identity?* **Yes**

*Are you pro-choice?* **Yes**

*Would you support a state constitutional amendment implementing a progressive income tax?* **Yes**