

Tito Jackson

Affordable Housing

Increasing the supply of affordable housing through the conversion of existing housing stock is a far more sustainable approach to development than is overbuilding new housing into limited available space. The City of Boston recently made Federal Stimulus funds available to convert unsold foreclosed homes into energy-efficient affordable housing for low-income and homeless families. While sustaining intact communities by keeping residents in their homes is always a first option, when this is not possible, conversions provide an excellent opportunity to develop housing that is more affordable.

As a board member for Heading Home, a group dedicated to transitioning homeless families to permanent housing, I see the needs of low-income families first-hand. As City Councillor At-Large, I would ensure that families most in need of affordable housing get access to these converted properties by connecting effective programs such as the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance to existing City efforts to develop housing.

Development

There is a tremendous opportunity to replicate the success of The Brewery project. Converting currently-vacant brewery facilities located across Jamaica Plain into mixed use facilities can improve the quality of life in the neighborhood and strengthen property values.

I would also propose working with neighborhood associations to revive stalled development projects, such as the MBTA-owned property along Washington Street in Forest Hills. This area has the potential to be a small version of Centre Street, with florists, coffee shops and other neighborhood conveniences.

In addition, I would encourage greater transparency and neighborhood input into the Jackson Square project, which has the potential to improve the economy and the quality of life in Jamaica Plain, if resident needs and concerns are adequately addressed.

Environment and Energy

Sustainability should be a top priority for the City of Boston and its residents. To support this, I would propose:

Open Space Development

Open space plays a critical role in sustaining effective communities. I would support a policy, to be applied at

any licensing or permitting hearing, that requires developers to study, present, and be prepared to implement viable alternatives to lost lands as part of their permit applications.

Smart Growth

Greenhouse gas emissions produced by commuters can effectively be reduced through creating better jobs for Boston residents that are closer to home. I propose to do this by supporting training for jobs in converting existing residential and commercial space towards the efficient use of energy in all of Boston's neighborhoods.

Recycling

The City of Boston can do more to encourage recycling. I would support a mandatory residential and commercial recycling and composting program, phased in over 2-4 years, and legislation to prohibit the use of city funds to purchase bottled water. I would moreover encourage City workers to use re-useable containers.

Youth Violence

Two of the major drivers of youth violence are lack of economic opportunity and "lack of integration".

I will secure funding for summer youth violence prevention programs based on Boston Police Department data for violent "hot spots".

I will also promote year-around job training programs for youth and recruit businesses to participate.

Youth in the City of Boston are our children, and my vision follows out of this simple observation.

Accountability, Transparency

In my campaign I have used social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Linked In to provide residents with information and to solicit their feedback. I would continue to use these tools as City Councillor.

I would also support holding City Council meetings in Boston's neighborhoods, rather than exclusively in City Hall. This change would increase access to the meetings for residents across the city and reinforce the importance of neighborhood issues.

My third suggestion to improve accountability would be the creation and publication of performance metrics for City Councillors. Residents have a right to know how effective their City Councilors are in receiving and resolving their concerns.

Education

Public education isn't just about investment in schools, it's about investment in neighborhoods. My proposal for resolving the bussing issue is to first make every Boston neighborhood a great place to live and learn.

Jamaica Plain youth face significant challenges when it comes to education. While nearly 90% of neighborhood youth are enrolled in Boston Public Schools, 30% come from homes headed by a single parent and 35% live in homes where English is spoken as a second language.

I believe mentoring can play a powerful role in improving the educational performance of young people in Jamaica Plain and across the City of Boston.

As City Councillor At-Large, I would advocate for providing every Boston school student with a mentor. One-third of Boston residents are between the ages of 18 and 34, a major source of potential mentors. Program volunteers to serve as mentors would be recruited from across the city. I serve on the advisory board for One in Three Boston, a group dedicated to volunteerism and civic engagement among these young adults. As a volunteer program, a BPS mentoring initiative could be implemented in partnership with groups such as One in Three, without requiring any significant City of Boston resources.

Despite the daily efforts of many dedicated teachers, the Boston Public Schools face major challenges in educating our youth. To improve the performance of our schools, I would propose 1) Public forums inviting parents of Boston school children to contribute their ideas and suggestions for alleviating teacher workload; 2) A review of the teacher's aide program for greater participation by parents; 3) Launching a civic education campaign promoting the public schools as "Your Schools" for voters and residents. In fact, about half of Boston's residents have grown up in this city.

Human Services

I would advocate for increased support for Boston's existing 25-plus community health centers scattered throughout the City's different neighborhoods. These health centers have exemplary, culturally-competent programs that address specific gender or race-related health issues. Two excellent examples are the Brookside Community Health Center and the Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center.

Transportation

Public Transportation is the most effective, green and cost efficient way to move people around in a well developed urban center like Boston. The MBTA must look at ways to meet the high need, maintenance and service issues that have plagued the system especially in areas like Jamaica Plain. I would work with the T Riders Union and other advocacy organization to hold the MBTA accountable for meeting the needs of all the riders. The MBTA can implement efficiencies and services to meet the needs of the most densely populated areas and highest ridership to continue to make the MBTA the most viable option for transportation in Boston.

Jobs and Labor

I would support a policy that mandates that construction jobs in the city of Boston hire members of the community that are within a 3 mile radius of the job site. The local workers policy would ensure that people in the city of Boston and in particular people in largely minority communities would have the opportunity to get good paying jobs. In addition, it would be important that partnerships are created with trade unions so that we can continue to diversify the unions and ensure that minorities are receiving the training needed for them to advance in their trades.

Race and Diversity

As an employer, the City of Boston can provide great jobs by employing a diverse workforce. A diverse workforce is not only more likely to access the best talent available in the Boston community, but is also more likely to find innovative solutions to challenging problems. Despite possible restrictions imposed by the recent Supreme Court ruling, we must continue to work toward eliminating practices that have disparate impact for women and people of color.

While identified disparate impact for women and people of color may no longer be sufficient for taking direct remedial action against a given employment practice, transparent documentation of employment and promotion rates can still be an effective tool in improving the diversity of the City workforce. In addition to this, I would encourage the use of a wide set of evaluation tools in employment and promotion practices, including oral examinations, assessment centers, and prior performance appraisals.

Budget Policy

The tools currently available to the Boston City Council to promote a progressive revenue policy are both few and relatively blunt. While property taxes are the largest revenue component, raising the property tax rate would likely most substantially impact middle-class families in Boston who, in the current economic crisis, already face enough difficulty making ends meet.

One indirect way to implement a more progressive revenue policy is to ensure that non-profit organizations making Payments in Lieu of Taxes are being effective community partners. World-class schools, hospitals, universities, museums and other non-profits are among the features that make Boston such an attractive place for residents and visitors. As an At-Large City Councillor, I would promote efforts to make sure that organizations that are able to take advantage of PILOT provide benefits and services to all Boston residents, specifically to low-income employees and residents.

When it comes to funding, my top priorities will be creating jobs, making housing affordable and ensuring first class public education. Budget cuts can lead to reductions in services that are valuable to their respective constituencies. Before recommending any changes to currently proposed budget allocations, my first step as City Councillor At-Large would be to work with each of the departments to identify more efficient, lower-cost ways of achieving stated department goals. For instance, one third of Boston residents are aged 20-34. That represents a pool of 200,000 young people who could serve as volunteer mentors for Boston students, helping them to receive a truly first-class public education without placing undue stress on the budget.

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**