

Kevin McCrea

Affordable Housing

Actually, there is lots of space available, especially for “regular-people” housing, which is what we need and have not been building for decades.

The BRA and City of Boston own hundreds of parcels that should be out on the private construction market. We have to get it sold for productive use.

There are also many opportunities for building housing above the one-story commercial blocks all over the city’s neighborhoods. These housing units were originally intended to be built, after the owners accumulated some money, with several floors of housing above shops, an ideal development model for vibrant neighborhoods with reasonably priced neighborhood housing rather than the downtown luxury towers the BRA encourages.

We can accommodate thousands of housing units, and we should create new public transportation, for convenient and environmentally sound neighborhood living. The City of Boston used to have 800,000 residents in the same footprint, there is plenty of room for growth.

Development

1. Public transportation (e.g., the Arborway) should be restored and expanded.
2. More housing for “regular people” — working people, families, etc.
3. The youth center that was identified as an urgent need several years ago.

Environment and Energy

Get more public transit investment in the city from MBTA by leveraging our annual contribution to the T. We need to expand service, not slash it.

Annual energy audit for all City buildings, and a public program for audits for private building owners; post statistics for all to see if we’re making progress

Resource recovery — trash collection, materials recycling to very high level (now a low 13%)

Youth Violence

Plan a city system of neighborhood schools that would serve as child, family and community support centers.

Enforce job hiring requirements for public and private development, which currently fall well below targets for resident and minority hiring.

Use federal, state and city economic development loans for local business development, directly involving school drop-outs, “gang” members, returning inmates, etc. I

I believe our youth can accomplish all that children elsewhere do. I don’t want to talk about them as “at-risk” — I want to see in them their full potential and inspire them with hope and expectation for a successful future.

We need to identify their special problems, and give them the support they may lack due to poverty, language, family issues, etc. We have many youth programs, but many youngsters are not being reached, and services aren’t coordinated enough.

School teachers should work in teams with counselors and other support staff, to let youngsters grow into productive, self-reliant individuals and community members.

We need to let kids know about the many programs available to them, and work with local institutions such as sports teams, museums, and other arts and culture groups to involve and interest our local kids in what they are doing.

Accountability, Transparency

I’d establish a Sunshine Commission, like San Francisco’s, to create and enforce a strong City Open Meeting Law; the state Law and enforcement options are not reliable. And I’d post all public records on a searchable web-site; until that’s done, the Sunshine Commission should create and enforce a City Public Record Law. In short, I want to install what I call the Total Transparency System: all income, all expense, all contracts, all bids, all salaries are available online for any citizen to see. With today’s technology we have the capability to return to the New England Town Hall form of government where all the citizens have access to all the information in order to make informed decisions about our future. Anything less is second rate, and for me Boston should not be a second rate City.

I’d promote charter reform to improve checks and balances between the legislature (Council) and executive (Mayor). We need to make more competitive political races, by reducing signature requirements, instituting term limits, campaign finance reform, media requirements for public service programming, and campaign requirements such as candidate debates.

I’d eliminate the Boston Redevelopment Authority, prohibit eminent domain except for public uses, and create a planning and zoning department accountable to City Council, as it is elsewhere. Any activities done by the BRA lack public accountability.

Education

We need to make a network of walk-to neighborhood schools that can serve as multi-purpose community centers. We need a city plan that sites schools where they are needed. We don’t have a school system, we just have a random scattering of schools and a “lottery” that works for a few connected people and frightens the rest. This planning has

to include parents and teachers as well as administrators. As busing is phased out, the money can be redirected into real educational uses.

The achievement gap is the result of the family, resource, housing, support, language, confidence, and expectation gaps. We have to make up for those gaps, instead of writing off our youth and hiring more police to fill the school-to-prison pipeline. The solution will not be the charter formula mixing privatization, union-busting, and teaching to a test. We need to invest in our kids, give them what all kids need and they don't have: time, attention, discipline and a real path to success if they are willing to do their part. Further, we can afford it if we stop squandering our money on tax breaks, land giveaways, crony hiring, no-bid contracts, unfair pensions, etc.

First, we need to rethink the word "failing." MCAS test scores are not the only goal of education, and not a good basis for comparison because student populations are so varied. We should examine more qualitatively what schools are doing well, and what needs to be fixed. I'm much more worried about the drop-out rates than the test scores.

I'll create parent-teacher-student councils to plan a school system, identifying and serving each community's specific needs. I'll work with the teachers to help them help our kids.

I'll focus especially on young children, in the formative years. I'd create a "Make first grade first-class" program; school drop-outs can already be predicted by 3rd grade, and we should work with children and families in the first and second grades so they don't fall behind.

I'll add elected members to the School Committee for more broader representation and accountability.

Human Services

I'd identify mother and child services that are needed to support poor, broken, homeless and immigrant families. The community health centers may be good locations for that.

Transportation

Boston contributes more money to the T than any other municipality, and we have very high-transit-use populations. We can also build the most transit-oriented development. We should leverage that power to demand better service for this city and environs, with lower fares.

Further, we should advocate with the governor to get the T's debt transferred to the state; transit riders shouldn't bear the burden of that debt alone. I endorse an increase in the gas tax, with that additional money going to public education.

Jobs and Labor

The most important thing I would do is to enforce the Boston Jobs Policy, which suggests that 50% of Boston jobs

go to Boston residents, 25% go to minorities, and 10% go to women. I've studied the hiring practices in Boston and we don't come even close to those goals. For example, at the Ferdinand building in Dudley Square, a building Menino promised to rebuild in 2005 and recently shelved, only 34% of the construction jobs went to Boston residents.

I'd initiate a plan for a new kind of economy, based on green manufacturing, retrofitting, transit construction, urban agriculture, and other environmentally progressive industries. When the BRA is eliminated, it will liberate a tremendous amount of land and money, and allow us to do this kind of planning.

I'd use a large part of our economic development funds to support "micro-lending," business consulting and technical assistance to small, locally oriented businesses. What I would NOT do is what Menino is doing: giving our money to big corporations to build luxury condos, hotels, office towers and parking garages that don't hire minority construction workers, but will hire poor people in dead-end, non-livable-wage service jobs. Trickle-down economies increase the wealth gap, and leave low-income people with no economic security.

Race and Diversity

I'd check the figures on minority hiring in the City, to see if it is representative of minority population proportions in Boston and equitable among salary levels. I'd reduce the crony hiring of "temporary employees" and institute more civil service exam hiring, to give qualified people an equal chance at good jobs. I'd make sure that job openings are posted in minority neighborhoods; I know many jobs that are filled through personal connections before anyone has a chance at them.

Budget Policy

Property taxes are inherently progressive, but the residential exemption, which seems progressive, is regressive, hurting renters. Yoon's sales tax and Menino's meals tax are regressive. People in poor neighborhoods often can't get fresh food and depend on fast food. Menino even calls his meals tax a "hamburger tax."

But we don't need to be figuring out how to tax ourselves more. The little-understood fact is that Boston is not struggling financially. Because we are vastly over-taxed, our treasury collects more money than the politicians can burn. And we waste hundreds of millions a year on developer tax breaks and BRA give-aways. I'd reform our budgeting and taxation systems. I'd institute zero-based budgeting, where each item has to be proposed and justified every year, instead of just upping every department's funding by some arbitrary percent. Reform first; then, I expect, we won't need more revenue.

I'd eliminate the BRA, which is not a City department but deprives the City of hundreds of millions of dollars every year. That would liberate billions of dollars worth of

property that the City could sell or lease, and at least \$17 million a year in cash flow — about the cost of the entire Parks and Recreation budget — for other uses.

I'd go through the staffing of every department to clean out the phantom jobs (funding but no hiring) and the make-work jobs.

I'd phase out school busing, which would provide tens of millions for education, if we need it after cleaning out all the no-job jobs in the school department.

I'd increase funding for Parks and Recreation, which Menino has slashed over the years.

I'd increase funding for the Finance Commission, an excellent fiscal watchdog. Menino stripped their funding to the bone, to disable their investigations.

I'd invest in the Transportation Department, which is just a traffic and parking division, and start planning for some city-operated mass transit (while we wait for T reform). We are going to strangle in traffic otherwise, and development will grind to a halt. I would increase the development of

biking lanes and making Boston friendlier for pedestrian, bicycle, moped and other alternative transportation devices.

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?

If it's done democratically, by confidential votes, just as our political elections are done to protect the citizens from retribution.

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