



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Etel Haxhiaj

Office Sought: Worcester City Council District 5 Councilor

Website: etelforworcester.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/EtelForWorcester

Twitter: https://x.com/Etel_Haxhiaj

BlueSky: [@etelhaxhiaj@bsky.social](https://bsky.social/etelhaxhiaj)

Instagram: [instagram.com/etel_haxhiaj/](https://www.instagram.com/etel_haxhiaj/)

(A) Your Candidacy

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

- a. Cleaner neighborhoods
- b. Responsible development
- c. Neighborhood safety and traffic

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I have been a community organizer for a long time working professionally in areas of housing and homelessness policy and advocacy, climate change, public health, and youth development. I am completing my second term during which I have successfully served my constituents, pushed forward several policies like Inclusionary Zoning, Safe Zones, 25 mph speed limit, traffic calming projects, fire prevention and responsible development. I listen to my constituents and have worked hard to make sure marginalized communities are heard and supported. I love my city and my community and want to work more to make sure that everyone has a chance to succeed and live here.

3. What is the one policy you've seen pioneered in another city that you'd most like to adopt locally?

I am a signatory on the rent control ballot measure. I have long been a huge proponent of opening our zoning code to allow for middle housing to be built in areas not zoned for multi family housing.

(B) Open-Ended Policy Questions

1. Given state law, municipalities in Massachusetts are limited in their taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue to support essential city services?

I was part of local efforts to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) which brought extra tax dollars to be used towards parks, housing, and historic preservation. I have supported giving TIFs to projects to increase our tax base and still hold developers accountable to our responsible development ordinance. And, I have advocated for the transfer fee enacting legislation which would bring extra dollars for affordable housing.

2. What are your top priorities for ensuring that all students in your city can receive a high-quality public education?

While the City Council does not have purview over school matters, I have advocated the City of Worcester to increase its minimum contribution to the schools. I have advocated for financial support toward our school facilities master plan so students can learn in healthy school buildings. As Chair of the Standing Committee on Education, I have made public my support for LGBTQIA+ students, youth, staff and educators whose rights are under attack federally. And, finally, I also advocated for adjusting extra for inflation in fiscal year 2025.

3. What can your city do to help protect immigrant communities under attack from ICE and ensure genuine community safety?

I have been part of discussions taking place between police department and immigrant rights groups on the ground to ensure that when ICE agents detain Worcester residents that their identity is confirmed. I have clearly demonstrated that I will stand for all our immigrant communities under attack through my actions during the detainment of my constituent on Eureka Street. I will not be afraid to speak out against armed masked men snatching our neighbors off our streets. Finally, I have been advocating for the Worcester State Retirement board to divest any future dollars from any companies or subsidiaries that take part in any ICE operation. I will continue to monitor any efforts to implement detainment agreements and work with the City Manager and the Chief of Police to ensure that all immigrant communities are protected.

4. What are your top three policy priorities for making your city climate-resilient, and how would you ensure that equity is at the center of any such efforts?

- a. I worked to get the Worcester City Council adopt the Specialized Stretch code.
- b. I will work with climate organizing groups for the Worcester City Council to vote for a home rule petition for Worcester to participate in the Fossil Fuel Free demonstration project
- c. I have asked the City Manager to submit a tree reform ordinance which would prohibit the cutting of trees in private developments.

5. What steps would you take to reduce dependence on cars and better facilitate the ability of city residents to safely get around by walking, biking, or public transit?

I have worked with the Zero-Fare Coalition to keep the WRTA fare-free. Worcester is proudly the longest zero-fare city in the United States. I will continue to support the work of the riders and advocates to make the WRTA more connected and frequent. I have also been working with our Department of Transportation and Mobility to implement Vision Zero strategies, like reducing travel lanes, adding protected bike lanes and connecting our bike network. I successfully got the City Manager, Mayor, the Worcester City Council and the Board of Health to declare traffic fatalities and injuries a public health emergency.

6. What policies will you advocate for to ensure that your city can be a place that is affordable for residents to live at any stage of life?

I have been a relentless advocate for housing affordability and safe housing for all residents. Recently, I brought forward a few orders that push the City in that direction: I asked the City Manager to establish an office of housing stability to address homelessness and housing affordability, I asked the Manager to give the City Council frequent reports on the status of evictions, as well as track where they are taking place, I also asked for 12-18 month emergency homelessness plan to address the increased number of unhoused individuals and families. I have testified several times to the legislature on rent stabilization/

7. [If relevant] How would you assess your city's MBTA Communities Act rezoning efforts so far?

Our MBTA rezoning efforts are going well. Because Worcester had already been ahead of the curve in multi housing development around transit downtown, our plan was easily approved by the State. We have to keep a close eye on the development of affordable housing through inclusionary zoning,

and thus far, that policy has not been harmful to our efforts to build as much multifamily housing through the MBTA Communities Act.

8. What strategies would you employ to resist federal overreach from the Trump Administration while protecting critical services and funding for residents?

This is an area that I don't think a lot of municipal leaders are very clear. Obviously, we have a great state delegation that I believe will stand up to Trump Administration's overreach. As a municipal leader, I know that I will not stand by quietly if threats of cuts come on the backs of our most vulnerable residents. I have been having discussions with our nonprofit partners on the ground as to what I can do to support them in case that happens. I will continue to band with others like-minded officials to push back in whatever way we can.

9. How would you model transparency and accountability if elected?

I have been modeling transparency and accountability as an elected leader by being transparent about my beliefs, actions and policies. When necessary, I've taken accountability by accepting responsibility for any oversight that has taken place.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES/ NO**
2. Do you support the creation of an unarmed, community-based emergency response program, separate from the Police Department, to respond to mental and behavioral health crises? **YES/ NO**
3. If your community has not already, do you support adopting the new specialized stretch code, which would require new construction and major renovations to be built to a very high-efficiency standard with all-electric (as opposed to fossil fuel) heating and cooling systems? **YES/ NO**

*already adopted at my request

4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **YES / NO**
5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES/ NO**

6. Would you support a home rule petition to establish a small transfer fee on high-end real estate transactions to create dedicated funding for affordable housing production and preservation? **YES / NO**

7. Would you support a home rule petition to enable the city to stabilize rents? **YES / NO**

8. According to the American Library Association, in 2022 there were at least 45 attempts to restrict access to books in MA schools, disproportionately books that speak to the experiences of LGBTQ students and students of color. Would you oppose such book-banning efforts if they occurred in your city? **YES / NO**

(D) Additional Comments

(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)

I have been a staunch progressive leader in my community, taking risks to protect my residents against ICE agents, fighting charges from the Worcester Police Department for protecting my residents. I am committed to equity, racial justice, and have stood up for our LGBTQI+ community, youth and educators, while facing constant harassment, death threats and MAGA attacks. I would be proud to be endorsed by Progressive Massachusetts.