



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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### (A) Your Candidacy

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

My top three priorities have been and will continue to be making Northampton more affordable, equitable, and accessible.

During my first term as Mayor we have made progress on all three of these priorities. Here are some examples:

In 2023, we officially launched the [Division of Community Care](#) (DCC), our unarmed emergency response and support initiative that has assisted nearly 1,300 individuals experiencing houselessness, emotional distress, difficulty meeting basic needs, struggles with substance use, and conflict. Other communities have created alternative response teams but still attached them to traditional public safety departments. In Northampton, I evolved our Health Department into the Department of Health and Human Services, and our alternative response is public health-led with a person-centered and trauma-informed approach to provide emotional support, de-escalation, collaborative problem solving, advocacy, and resource connection.

We increased annual funding to Northampton Public Schools by 32% since Fiscal Year 2022.

We supported 282 new units of affordable housing, either completed or underway.

We boosted Senior Center programming and brought back senior transportation services.

We increased property tax exemptions for income-eligible older adults and veterans.

We more than doubled participation in the tax work-off program, in which seniors and veterans perform community service that aligns with their interests and the hours of which count towards a property tax abatement.

We worked with Gateway Fiber to bring affordable competition to Northampton's broadband market.

I issued executive orders to uphold immigrant, transgender, and gender-diverse rights, and to protect those seeking reproductive health care.

We awarded \$4 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act [ARPA] Community Recovery Project funds to expand housing and shelter services, address food insecurity, support small businesses and nonprofits, strengthen healthcare access, support early education and childcare, and invest in arts, culture and recreation.

We advanced the Picture Main Street redesign, which will leverage \$26 million in state funding to further revitalize our downtown—as well improve safety, accessibility, walkability, and bikeability, and replace over 100 year old infrastructure—with the project going to bid next year.

We created stabilization funds for special education and climate crisis mitigation.

We established the Climate Action and Project Administration Department, ensuring all projects move us towards our decarbonization goals and already reducing municipal energy use by 5.3%.

We launched Valley Green Energy for competitive electricity rates and better access to renewable energy options.

We secured increased funding for roads and sidewalks as part of our five-year Capital Improvement Program, with the next round of paving projects beginning this summer.

## **2. What qualifies you to hold this office?**

I have served as Mayor of Northampton since 2022. Previously I was a City Councilor for eight years, including serving one term as City Council Vice President and my last term as City Council President, before being elected to serve as mayor.

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

I would like to find a way for our municipal cemeteries to offer green burial services. We have four municipal cemeteries, two of which are still active burial grounds. In my next term I would like to establish a green burial section in one of them, or start an additional green burial cemetery.

**(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?**

Since 2013 Northampton has adhered to a "Fiscal Stability Plan," which is designed to earn public support for periodic property tax overrides and raise revenue above the Proposition 2 ½ property tax cap. The cap prevents municipalities from keeping up with rising costs.

The Fiscal Stability Plan, effectively enacted upon passage of the 2013 override, created a Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund. In addition to seed money from that override, the fund is maintained with portions of the city's annual surplus, also known as "free cash." The fund is used to support increases in recurring expenses on a temporary basis between periodic override referendums. When the fund gets too low, the next override referendum is called. The plan seeks to space out overrides in at least four-year intervals, though my predecessor was able to wait seven years before calling for an override in 2020. (The referendum was successful, though the higher tax levy was not implemented until Fiscal Year 2022 due to the start of the pandemic.) By spacing out override referendums, we are far more likely to win the necessary support for overrides from constituents, and raise sufficient revenue to support essential services.

I have maintained support for the Fiscal Stability Plan during my tenure. While I have been able to avoid calling for an override so far, I have routinely and forthrightly communicated to constituents that we should expect an override referendum ahead of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

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

As mentioned above, I have increased the city's annual appropriation to the Northampton Public Schools by 32 percent since Fiscal Year 2022. I also created a Special Education Stabilization Fund, which has created a new revenue stream for critical special education services. In a challenging time with school budget deficits across the state, I have worked to squeeze every sustainable dollar out of our budget to direct to the public schools. In the four budgets I have created as mayor, the Northampton Public Schools have received over a 5% increase, with last year being 9.8%. This is the first time in at least the last 50 years that there has been four consecutive years of annual increases of 5% or more.

I will continue to prioritize every dollar I can for public education, so long as those dollars come from identifiable and sustainable recurring revenue streams.

But with the needs of the current student population so high, Northampton also needs reform of the state's school funding formula which has shortchanged our community for decades. Two decades ago, Northampton Public Schools had one-third of its budget covered by state funds, now it's one-sixth. This is untenable and must change.

Northampton Public Schools also lose significant funds from charter sending tuition. I urge state government officials to revisit the charter school funding system so charter schools no longer undermine district public school budgets.

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

Northampton has a safe city policy in which local law enforcement and other officials do not cooperate with federal immigration officials in the enforcement of federal immigration laws. In November, I released a [statement](#) reaffirming our policy that was also signed by our Police Chief and Health and Human Services Commissioner.

**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?**

During my first term as mayor, I created a Climate Action and Project Administration Department (CAPA), which took our existing Energy Sustainability Coordinator and Chief Procurement Officer positions and added a Climate Action director to oversee the department. Since its creation in 2023, CAPA has been working to meet our decarbonization goals and has already reduced municipal energy use by 5.3%, and is implementing over \$1.3M in grants we have received for energy efficiency projects.

CAPA is also piloting a city-vehicle shared motor-pool with leased EV cars and ebikes.

Northampton is also collaborating regionally for better aggregated renewable electricity pricing, and is sharing a grant-funded Energy Advocate with two neighboring communities to help residents, small businesses, and low-moderate income folks with no cost energy assessments for weatherization and energy efficient heating and cooling upgrades, including heat pumps.

I was named as one of three municipal elected officials to the [Energy Transformation Advisory Board for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#) to help guide and advise on the work of the state executive Office of Energy Transformation (the first of its kind in the nation on transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy). The board advises on the work on delivering an equitable, affordable, sustainable, and just gas-to-electric transition and electric grid readiness in the Commonwealth.

In my first term, we also created a Climate Change Mitigation Stabilization Fund initially seeded with ARPA funds, and we will be using this fund to leverage and support climate mitigation capital projects.

The [Picture Main Street downtown redesign](#), a state Department of Transportation project heavily shaped by Northampton community input and our [Sustainable Northampton Comprehensive Plan](#), will also support our decarbonization goals by making it easier to access the downtown by foot, bike, and wheelchair. The project is expected to go out to bid in 2026. The design includes:

- separated bike lanes
- significantly widened sidewalks to allow groups of people to walk or roll side by side
- The addition of 36 trees—more than doubling the existing amount—to create a cooling canopy and help offset the heat that is typically elevated in downtowns.

We also brought back the Pioneer Valley's regional ValleyBike bikeshare program, after a previous vendor went bankrupt. Making bicycle transportation affordable and accessible not only supports environmental sustainability but also equity, helping all residents get where they need to go.

Northampton also worked to be part of the state's [Municipal Fossil Fuel Free Building Demonstration Program](#) and has adopted the Massachusetts Municipal Opt-in Specialized Stretch Code

**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?**

See above.

**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?**

As mentioned above, during my first term we supported 282 new units of affordable housing, either completed or underway. We have amended zoning to allow for denser housing by right, as we work to encourage housing production at every level to increase housing stock. We supported anti-poverty efforts when dispensing federal ARPA Community Grants. We increased property tax exemptions for income-eligible older adults and veterans. We more than doubled participation in the tax work-off program, in which seniors and veterans perform community service in exchange for a tax abatement.

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

Northampton is not an MBTA Community.

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

During my term, I have responsibly maintained a system of stabilization funds which exist in part to fund essential services when experiencing an unexpected loss in revenue. I have maintained a AAA bond rating, which is proof of my sound fiscal management practices. We are prepared to lean more heavily on our reserves in the event of abrupt losses in federal funds.

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

Northampton's budget, capital plan and other key financial documents are very detailed and available online. The budget lists every full time city employee, the hours they work a week and the funding source of their salary. Our financial policies are available on our website, and we use "Open Checkbook" so the public can track all expenditures. An advisory committee reviews all capital projects and makes recommendations to the mayor. All of

our planning files and applications are available on the website in a laserfiche “public file cabinet.”

(C) **Yes/No Policy Questions**

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES, and I have actively done so with resolutions as a councilor and school committee member, and testimony to DESE as mayor.**
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, and we have already done so with the creation of the Division of Community Care, see above.**
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, and Northampton has already adopted the specialized stretch code, and is a participant in the [Municipal Fossil Fuel Free Building Demonstration Program](#).**
4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **YES, and I support it as a member of the board of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority.**
5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES, and we are planning to install such lanes downtown as part of our big Picture Main Street redesign project.**
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**
7. Would you support a home rule petition to enable the city to stabilize rents? **YES and I am co-sponsoring a resolution to be considered by the Northampton City Council in support of such a home rule petition and the state bill.**
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,**

**absolutely. As the chair of the School Committee would I vehemently oppose that attempt at censorship.**

**(D) Additional Comments**

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