



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Katelyn Holappa**

Office Sought: **Ward 6 Salem City Councillor**

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

Safe & Connected Streets – I know too many people in Salem whose lives have been impacted by a serious vehicle collision. I am committed to improving safety for everyone, regardless of how you choose to get around our city, by listening closely to residents, leveraging new opportunities, and making data-driven adjustments to our existing infrastructure.

True Affordable Housing - Under-investment in our city's housing supply has increased the cost of housing for all and even forced out lifelong neighbors. I support building new housing that will respect our community's character, create walkable neighborhoods, and increase affordable housing options for mixed incomes. We need more than just luxury condos.

Sustainability & Climate Resiliency - Our city is combating several challenges at once: drought, forest fires, and coastal flooding. I will prioritize infrastructure improvements to protect our most vulnerable neighborhoods and advocate for sustainable policies that lower emissions and reduce our climate impact for our future.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I am not a career politician and I have no interest in being one, but I do have a passion to serve my community. I have been involved in local advocacy and community service from a young age as the town I grew up in continually cut the public school budget to minimize tax increases. I joined the Scouting program and I earned my Eagle rank in 2012. In Salem I regularly help grow food at Mack Park Community Farm and I support our LGBTQ+ community and youth with NAGLY and I consistently attend our City Council and Bicycle & Multi-use Path Committee meetings.

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

One of the most simple but impactful policies we could adopt is to completely eliminate minimum parking laws. These outdated requirements facilitate poor land utilization that could be better used for housing, they induce demand for traffic into our downtown core, they isolate neighborhoods and make it more difficult to navigate our city without a car, and they create a hotter, louder, and generally less pleasant city to live in.

(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 think there are 2 important questions here for Salem specifically. What can the city do to raise revenue, and what services can be subsidized by tourists? Public transit is a great example of a service that could be leveraged by both residents and tourists in a way that would facilitate the service existing in the first place. If we can create a network that is useful to residents and workers, but also attractive to tourists, we may be able to afford it in the first place. We could also reduce congestion by spreading the tourists out over a larger distance without requiring them to drive.

I also believe that we should encourage more trips to be taken into the downtown by walking or cycling by increasing the hours we charge for parking, and implementing dynamic, market priced parking on street and central surface lots to both collect additional revenue and encourage drivers to park in our parking garages rather than circle the block and create additional traffic.

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

My top priority on this issue is ensuring that the new Salem High School project is funded and that the city votes to move forward on executing a debt exclusion plan to pay for it, along with funding from the state.

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

Salem has a “Sanctuary City” ordinance on the books that seeks to address this, but it is not particularly strong. The concern I have in this moment is that strengthening it may place a target on the city’s back and create a bigger problem than we currently have. I’m not sure what the best path forward is, but what is clear is that as a city, we need to be prepared to assess any new threats and act quickly to address them in order to protect our community members.

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?

With regard to climate resiliency, and not sustainability, the city must continue to work to address the significant threat of coastal flooding. We need to ensure that we are able to better store rain water during storms, and ideally use it during times of drou. With the existing coastal resiliency overlay district in place in Salem, I believe most relisiancy efforts will not be focused on policy, but on infrastucture projects & funding efforts. We need to ensure we are prioritizing the most susceptible areas and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all of the residents who live there.

Sustainability is a different issue entirely, and one that the city has opportunities to improve with policy. The two biggest contributors to climate change that can be addressed relate to buildings and transportation. Salem has already adopted a “Green Building Ordinance” for municipal buildings and we have adopted the Specialized Code for all buildings as well. There are significant improvements that could be made to reduce transportation emmissions by encourageing walking and cycling, encouraging mixed-use developments in strategic areas, and investing in public transit options. This change on focus will especially benefit lower income households in Salem who have less access to transportation given the cost of car ownership. Currently 15% of households in the city do not have access to a car, which are disproportionally lower income households.

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 would like the city to expand the Salem Skipper and invest in a few fixed route, but not necessarily fixed stop, micro bus transit. These routes should be strategically placed and adjusted to ensure that there is good network connection to protected walking and bicycling infrastructure and key places throughout the city.

I also strongly support codifying road design changes into ordinance, as suggested by the Safe Streets for All Action Plan.

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?

At the core of the housing affordability issue is our outdated and arbitrary zoning. I fully support sensible changes to our zoning to allow for a larger, market-driven, diversity in our housing market. I also support creating mixed-use neighborhoods with every level of residential housing & light commercial like cafes and small, family operated restaurants.

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

Salem has several zoning districts where multi-family housing is permitted, but I would like to see this expanded and allow sensible 2-3 family units to be built in more neighborhoods.

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

I believe the most important factor is that we need to be able to respond quickly. Part of the President's strategy is to move fast and overwhelm the opposition. We cannot allow this strategy to be successful.

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

I plan to continue to publish a newsletter, keep folks up to date on social media, always be clear about my opinions on policy, and I'm not afraid to pick up a phone or meet with people to have an open and honest conversation.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? YES/ NO

Generally NO, I have equity concerns

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**

YES

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**

We have already, and yes!

4. **Do you support fare-free public transit? YES / NO**

YES for income restricted residents – my priority is that these services can exist and be affordable in the long term. That may mean fare-free for some groups and not for others. We should subsidize these with revenue from policies that charge more to people opting to drive & park (and thereby not taking transit) such as parking benefit districts.

5. **Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? YES / NO**

YES

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**

YES

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

YES I would support a home rule petition & examination on the expected impact of implementing such a policy

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**

YES

(D) Additional Comments

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

I have spent my engineering career solving complex problems, leading diverse teams, and building systems that work — on time and with care. I am running to represent Ward 6 because I believe that city officials should respond quickly, communicate clearly, and build trust through action.