



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Lydia King**

Office Sought: **Salem City Council, Ward 5**

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

My top three priorities for Ward 5 in Salem are Affordable housing, Traffic, and Coastal Resilience.

Affordable Housing: I would push for Salem to invest in developing affordable units, increase pathways to ownership, and invest in anti-displacement measures so our neighbors can stay in their community.

Traffic: I will prioritize traffic calming measures and the punishment of stop-arm violations for school buses. I also support protected bike lanes, increased MBTA bus lines, and long-term projects like the South Salem Train Station.

Coastal Resilience: We need to invest in projects like sea wall infrastructure and pump stations to mitigate the impacts of climate change for our Community.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I have spent the last few years as a community organizer for Solidarity Rising and non-profit leader for the Salem Education Foundation. I also am currently the vice chair of the Salem democratic city committee and have revived and now chair the Massachusetts young democrats labor caucus. I have spent this

time doing base building for issues our community has chosen as its top priorities. These issues have included advocating for and giving direct aid to our immigrant neighbors, fighting for affordable housing and zoning reform, standing with workers in their fight for fair benefits and working conditions, and advocating for children and schools to have appropriate funding.

Professionally, I work today in the Healthcare/Medicare space, and am all too familiar with the difficult decisions that so many households are forced to take: between life-saving care and crippling debt. This is why I strongly support Medicare for all.

My background is in statistics, economics, and data science, so I have worked to develop the skill of crafting a compelling story to support policy and help educate the public on specific policies, cutting through disinformation and using narrative combat to ensure we center working families, seniors, and vulnerable populations in our priorities as a community.

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

Multifamily zoning by right is a very exciting policy that has been implemented in cities across the US, like Minneapolis, MN, and Austin, TX. In these cities, it's been shown that this increased density has brought real dollar (adjusted for inflation) rents down for one and two-bedroom apartments. We have some logistical issues we would have to address to make this policy work in Salem, but it could be a great tool in our toolbelt for addressing the housing crisis.

(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?

In Salem, we have a few ways we can increase our revenue. In terms of traditional October tourism, I would focus on programs like surge pricing on parking and applying for tourism tax increase options through the state. These types of programs put more of the cost burden on tourists than locals.

Second, I would focus on increasing our year round commercial and industrial tax base. We need more people to come to Salem year round for

non-halloween events, and we need to spread out that foot traffic into more parts of Salem so that other businesses can benefit.

We also need to court more industrial and office businesses to Salem, with many in-person offices moving away from the high rents of Boston, we have an opportunity to be a trendy, fun place for a company to headquarter their offices.

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

My top priority regarding this area is the building of the new high school project, which I know will have a tremendous benefit for Salem's students.

My other priorities focus on health and wellness for students, including adequate school nursing staff, mental health resources, and free breakfast, lunch, and snack programs for all students. This makes school a place where students feel safe and are ready to learn.

Finally, I would also like to see more language justice in our schools, further development of our sports programs, and continued funding for arts and music.

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

I would love to see the city of Salem take a more proactive and informed role in how we assist our immigrant community. I would love to see a public commitment from our city police against working with ICE. I would also want to see more professional immigration resources offered by city hall, with proper training (similar to the "immigration assistance offices" we've seen in other cities). Finally, I'd love to be able to make additional assurances to our parents and students regarding their safety when at school.

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?

My top three priorities are sea wall infrastructure, pumping stations/drainage, and bringing our municipal buildings up to greener energy codes. It's critical that we center the conversation on our most at risk communities in the Point neighborhood, who are also at the center of critical flood plains. Equitable planning will only happen if community meetings happen more often, and we must partner with community groups even more than we have in the past.

Meetings also need to have language justice, food, and childcare to ensure we are able to include our whole community.

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?

In ward 5, slowing down traffic is a big part of ensuring people feel safe to walk and bike. Traffic calming like speed humps, lit pedestrian signals, and lights are critical to slowing traffic. Enforcement of our traffic and parking laws is something that can also ensure safer roadways for all.

Protected, bike lanes have the dual benefit of both slowing traffic and making bikers safer, so I would love to see those as well.

In terms of public transit, the creation of the South Salem train station is probably the single biggest action we can take as a community to reduce our reliance on cars. I am a strong proponent of this project.

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'm strongly in favor of reducing the barriers to development like reducing parking minimums and strategically upzoning regions of Salem.

I would also be in favor of policies that increase renter protections (like condo conversion protections and rent stabilization) and policies that increase pathways to homeownership.

Finally, I think it's also important we set aside funds specifically for affordable housing through tools like the real estate transfer fee.

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

Salem was luckily one of the first communities to comply with the MBTA communities act due to our already existing density.

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

It's important we work with lawyers who are experts in federal preemption as it pertains to Trump's specific powers. While Trump's favored tool is the executive order which is easier to push against, supreme court rulings and federal laws present more difficulty in protecting our community.

We need to codify into law at the city and state level the rights that we hold most dear, and be ready for the fight if a federal law or action starts to muddy the waters with federal preemption.

I also think it's important we proactively protect funding for programs most at risk by thoughtfully arranging how we spend our city budget in 2026.

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

I will have a weekly newsletter focused on community events, infrastructure updates, opportunities for public comment, and policy summaries. I will also hold some recurring office hours as well if elected.

I will make myself as available as much as possible as I do now, with my email and phone number publicly available, and I am always willing to meet or talk with anyone.

That said, I also welcome more official transparency measures, like more publicizing and lead time for council meetings, and voting systems that empower transparency in our democracy like all-party primaries and rank choice voting.

(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**
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.)