



## **What is your vision for creating a more sustainable and resilient Cambridge?**

*The responses below are from 16 Cambridge City Council candidates, to a questionnaire circulated by the KSA to all 19 candidates in the summer of 2021.*

**Burhan Azeem:** Housing policy is climate policy. This means reforming out-of-touch policies so that green, smart housing can be built. Building dense housing in Cambridge means less sprawling, carbon-intensive suburban development, fewer vehicle miles traveled, and more use of transit and active transportation (and, by reducing commute times, increases quality of life). Another, under-appreciated, aspect of this is that this policy gives the City the ability to ensure that even more units of housing are fully electric and decarbonized, again assisting in meeting our climate goals.

**Dana Bullister:** Climate change is an existential crisis that intersects many issues at the local level, including housing, public health, technology, and energy use. Cambridge, as a hub of innovation, has the opportunity and resources to enact smart, sustainable policies that model what it means to do our part. The projects mentioned above comprise sterling examples of how Cambridge can channel its creative and technological assets toward leading solutions. I believe that, in addition to private innovation, there is ample opportunity for further partnerships that bring together private, governmental, and research organizations to explore joint initiatives in urban agriculture, energy use, and more.

Additionally, I believe the city should invest in a small, agile civic research team that experiments with, or simply facilitates local partnerships enabling exploratory pilot initiatives in areas like smart infrastructure, new green technologies, and efficient mobility.

I also support moving the city toward net-zero carbon emissions, expanding our tree canopy, and expanding permeable surfaces. Sustainable transit options and housing policy also feed into a comprehensive vision for a responsible city.

**Dennis Carlone, incumbent:** True Sustainability and resiliency is much broader than just being focused on individual buildings and should include Community, Cultural and Economic Sustainability and Resiliency. Each must be considered to create a healthy city. Kendall Square is a dynamic part of Cambridge but its links to all four levels vary in intensity and the square's impact on the surrounding neighborhoods can always be improved. I know KSA has kept us informed of much that your members do for society. I suggest you study how and what members contribute and highlight it in a newsletter/report each year. This would include reaching out to the city, neighborhoods and non-profits for their input.

**Robert Eckstut:** I support the Green New Deal Zoning Petition for Cambridge.

Many media outlets, personalities, or think tank pieces love to paint the vision of sustainability being a personal decision/choice/challenge. And yet, commercial interests are responsible for more than 90% of the problem. I see the Green New Deal Zoning Petition as a small piece of the puzzle—movement in the right direction.

Bigger picture, we need a local government that will hold those entities responsible for the solution. Emissions fees is the bare minimum; it's wonderful that KSA members are committed to solving the challenge, so as councilor/mayor I would challenge them to put \$ where their public statements are. The best way for commercial interests to support green/resiliency/etc. is through funding public transportation. One of my core policies is for Cambridge to lead the way in public infrastructure nationwide; KSA could join in and support this. (Monetarily)

**[Tonia Hicks](#)**: One of the key pillars of my campaign is Environmental Justice. Obtaining environmental justice for residents in Cambridge requires connecting advances in climate technology with those who need it the most. The companies in Kendall Square have done an amazing job incorporating sustainable technologies on their own campuses and buildings. I would like to see the benefits from these advances shared with other areas of Cambridge, particularly those residents who can least afford to buy into these technologies on their own.

**[Alanna Mallon](#)**, incumbent (Vice-Mayor): My vision for a more sustainable Cambridge is to change the conversation around sustainability from an “or” framing to an “and” framing. Too often, the needs of the environment are pitted against other top priorities, like affordable housing or workforce development, but they are all, and should be, intertwined. Kendall Square is not only the leader in biotech and other types of innovation, but can also be a leader in sustainability. Utilizing green building techniques like LEED Platinum, geothermal wells, and rooftop solar, Kendall Square can be a hub for technology as well as a hub for sustainability. Additionally, Kendall Square attracts thousands of workers to our city every day—and many of these workers want to live in close proximity to their jobs. Helping to create additional housing will aid sustainability on many fronts: reducing the amount of “through traffic” that comes through the city due to commuting, encouraging walking, biking, and MBTA use, and reducing our overall carbon footprint and waste-generation, as urban living is significantly more sustainable than suburban living. By paying an increased linkage fee, Kendall Square will be a greater contributor in preserving much-needed affordable housing, while increasing the number of units available to those who want to move to Cambridge.

**[Marc McGovern](#)**, incumbent: Although Cambridge and Kendall Square have made some important steps, we know that the battle against climate change is ongoing. We need to continue to build housing and services so that people can live and play closer to where they work. We need to work with the state to improve our public transportation system. We need to continue to build out our network of dedicated bike infrastructure. We need to continue to require sustainable buildings, passive house construction and address our fossil fuel needs and declining tree canopy.

**Joe McGuirk**: Housing is key to creating a sustainable and resilient city, as we countenance climate change and enact climate policy. While prosperity has lifted many in our city, it has not come to all. I believe that creating more housing, both at market and affordable housing, is important so that we do not displace current residents. Our city is fortunate to have the means and resources to mitigate climate change for its residents. But as housing costs continue to rise, we are at risk of creating climate refugees if we do not make every effort to allow lower income residents to remain, as well as allowing new residents of every economic background to have an opportunity to live here.

Furthermore, increasing housing density will have positive impacts on reducing our carbon footprint, as denser housing is more energy efficient, and will reduce the use of carbon producing transportation, as people can use other modes of transportation to get from their homes to work. A mode shift in how we commute is important as we face a changing climate.

To that end, I believe Cambridge should develop a robust green municipal mass transit system. Reducing carbon emissions and reducing traffic congestion are both needed. A municipal mass transit system would allow us to reach neighborhoods that are underserved by the MBTA and encourage the use of mass transit by more of our residents and visitors.

Cambridge must continue the efforts to get to net zero emissions, but we must speed up the timeline. Requiring our local food industry to compost is a goal of mine as one of the many ways we will have to adjust as we face the impacts of climate change on our society. Installing green roofs, creating green spaces in our densest neighborhoods, and making the Blue Bike system available to Cambridge residents free of charge are other ways we can countenance climate change.

**Patricia Nolan, incumbent**: My vision is that Kendall Square helps Cambridge become a model climate city. We need your help! For too long, Cambridge has had fantastic visions and plans—and yet the city as a whole has failed to meet our climate goals. Despite successes like Biomed and other KS successes, our city's GHG emissions are unchanged over 15 years. We are far behind our goals—we had pledged to reduce them by 20% by now. WE changed the goalpost—instead of taking a deep dive into WHY we failed. I count on KS entities—companies, MIT and organizations—to help us change that.

Climate action is one of the significant reasons I'm running for another term on the Cambridge City Council. I was recently named by the Mayor as the Chair of the Climate Crisis Working Group [CCWG] which was created since the recent Net Zero Action Plan 5 Year Review concluded that the city needed to ramp up our climate work TWENTYFOLD over the next FIVE years! The CCWG has the input guidance and expertise from numerous climate leaders to provide a centralized and systematic process to enact meaningful, measurable policies to ensure we reach our climate goals.

The best way Cambridge can strive to battle climate change is to become a model-city for implementing as many mitigation actions as possible to lead the way on how to lower greenhouse gas emissions in every municipality. And we need KS to push, guide and help us. If

elected to another city council term I will be able to continue my work. Already in just this term I have been able to have real impact—and I hope to continue my work if re-elected. AS painful as the transition will be—we cannot delay implementing policy recommendations into meaningful, impactful legislation—at the local and state level. We need KS to push and demand a transition to clean energy with justice included at every step.

The only path to fossil fuel free is electrification—one reason the substation project is so exciting. And yet, we need to reduce energy need, especially in labs, so our grid can handle all buildings being all electric. And have as much on-site renewable as possible—or the grid will be insufficient to meet demand.

Climate justice = environmental justice. The impact of the climate crisis, like most crises, are experienced disproportionately by our most vulnerable residents—KS companies understand that connection and can help us address it.

My vision is for accountable, clear leadership in this critical area—our single most important challenge. Nothing else will matter if we fail to meet this need.

**[Sumbul Siddiqui](#)**, incumbent (Mayor): I am dedicated to understanding and combating the substantial challenges posed by climate change. As Mayor, I appointed a climate change working group to help guide policy going forward. I have committed to the Net Zero Action Plan, which aims to make Cambridge carbon neutral by 2050, and have encouraged investment in energy initiatives and green technologies to make this possible.

Complimenting technological solutions, I have also supported the City's Tree Protection Ordinance, which promotes a healthy tree canopy as an effective tool to combat climate change and mitigate the urban heat island effect. Trees are a crucial aspect in ameliorating the heat risks we face.

Prevention is crucial, but certain risks are unavoidable, and we must prepare. The Resilient Cambridge Plan offers a roadmap for the city to mitigate some risks while preparing for inevitable ones. Kendall Square is among the areas at highest risk for flooding, and many mitigation strategies are already being implemented.

The Plan calls for better buildings, stronger infrastructure, and a greener city: as KSA has made clear, all of these strategies are being successfully employed in Kendall Square. I am committed to working with the community to best mitigate and prepare for the challenges posed by climate change.

**[E. Denise Simmons](#)**, incumbent: The City has made great strides in setting standards for addressing our climate crisis, and I commend the work. But there have been blind spots—there has not been adequate attention paid to those who are among our most vulnerable, least-affluent members of the community? How do we work to ensure that they are part of the solution, how do we make it easier for them to participate (for example, through strengthening our network of public transportation options, or creating more affordable housing so that people can live within walking or biking distance to their jobs)? How do we address the needs of our

local small businesses, many of whom are struggling to survive during this pandemic era? These are critical questions that need to be raised—and answered—not just in Cambridge, but statewide and at the federal level. I will continue pressing for these items to be more thoughtfully addressed, working with my colleagues on the City Council, with our local congressional representatives, and with our partners on Beacon Hill.

**Theodora Skeadas**: The 2021 Resilient Cambridge Plan, and the 2015 & 2017 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments for the City of Cambridge have affirmed what we already knew: climate change is already impacting our city, and the impacts will become much more severe in the future if we do not take immediate action. I believe actions on climate must both lower our carbon footprint to reduce future harm and make Cambridge more resilient to the impacts from the damage that's already been done. This includes moving the city to net-zero carbon emissions by adopting building electrification requirements, increasing green building design requirements, pushing for adopting the Net Zero Energy Stretch Code, and reviving the Cambridge tree canopy by investing in its protection and expansion.

It is also critical to recognize the intersection of housing, racial justice, and transportation with the environmental crisis. Climate change disproportionately impacts minority and lower-income communities, and Cambridge is no exception. We must ensure that communities and workers most affected by climate change lead the transition to a green economy.

You can read my full plan for creating a sustainable and resilient Cambridge here:

<https://www.votetheo.com/policy-priorities/environmental-action>

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler**, incumbent: Cambridge should improve the city's sustainability and resiliency with policies that also improve racial and economic equity in the city. We need Green New Deal policies that recognize that communities most impacted by climate change are the ones who are also struggling in our economy and dealing with the impacts of structural racism.

Public transit is both one of the most sustainable methods of transportation and serves a disproportionate number of low-income residents and people of color. Cambridge should help improve bus travel with dedicated bus-lanes and signal priority, especially on routes that have both high ridership and high delay like the #1 bus. Fare-free buses are also a way to both improve equity and speed service, since riders paying while boarding delays bus travel.

We must also work to ensure that environmental justice sites are restored to provide habitat and green space for residents. One such site is Jerry's Pond in North Cambridge, which is currently fenced off and contaminated with asbestos next to one of the largest affordable housing sites and immigrant populations in Cambridge. With the recent sale of the site to a new owner, there is a significant opportunity to push for restoration.

**Paul Toner**: My views are in alignment with the Cambridge Development Department's report Resilient Cambridge Plan, released in July of 2021. I especially like that strategies focus both on physical and social resilience through the categories of Closer Neighborhoods, Better Buildings, Stronger Infrastructure, and Greener City. It was developed with significant input from the

community and experts in the area. As a Councillor I would work with City Staff, Councillors, Businesses and residents to move forward with implementation. As a city we should be modelling best practices and transitioning our own buildings and fleets of vehicles towards environmentally friendly alternatives. With regard to private business and construction we should be working to support them with this transition as well and using the tools of zoning, building regulation and infusions of federal infrastructure dollars to move buildings and transit into the future.

**Nicola Williams:** The City of Cambridge has made some progress in advancing our climate action goals, but it is clear that we must do more to ensure that we are carbon net-zero as soon as possible. We need to build with net zero emissions and have our buildings ready to exist as such; we need to invest in our transportation to disincentivize the unnecessary use of cars. We also need more protected bike lanes but with all of the stakeholders, pedestrians, business and cyclists involved. We must incorporate green jobs vocational training in our schools to prepare students for a greener and cleaner economic future.

A pressing issue pertinent to Cambridge is the rapid decline of our tree canopy that has exacerbated the effects of climate change. Our tree canopy has declined 18% in the last decade, worsening the heat island effect that particularly impacts our seniors and low income residents. I have fought for the environment in Cambridge for decades, particularly around protecting our tree canopy. As a community organizer, I urged the city council to pass our tree-cutting moratorium in order to stem this tide and study its root causes. I've also advocated for and supported our green and solar roof scapes policy and the Cambridge Green New Deal to help end the climate crisis.

We also must utilize efficient designs to expand net zero ready building requirements for new construction for not only municipal development, but also for private development. I will advocate to ban fracked gas consumption to rapidly reduce its carbon emissions. As a city councillor, I will monitor our city's investments to ensure there is no support for fossil fuel companies. Our current climate crisis demands that we build a city that is a model for how to address climate change, and provide a healthy environment for our people. As a city councilor, I will continue to be an advocate for the environment and environmental policies that promote the full inclusion of people of color and low income residents to ensure a livable and sustainable environment as demonstrated by my commitment to sustainability, diversity and localism.

**Quinton Zondervan, incumbent:** As chair of the Health & Environment Committee, I've been working towards achieving net zero emissions, climate justice, and zero waste by reducing building emissions, strengthening our Tree Protection Ordinance, expanding urban agriculture, and eliminating single-use waste items.

Large commercial buildings are the biggest contributors to emissions in our city. They make up more than half of our emissions profile, while residential buildings account for just 8%. Despite our adoption of lofty climate goals like "net zero by 2050", city emissions have only increased over time. And the commercial growth driving that increase has left behind our most vulnerable residents.

This year I introduced the Green New Deal Zoning Petition. This zoning petition proposes that we collect a fee based on the emissions a new commercial building will produce over its lifetime, using the money to do energy efficiency projects and fund green jobs training programs with direct benefit to low income and minority communities. We have an opportunity to socialize our zoning code by redistributing wealth in order to green our city and create economic opportunity for those closest to the pain. And in doing so, we will truly begin to break from our zoning code's historical and perpetual use as a tool of oppression.

The City Manager has taken too long to implement sustainable building standards. For example, something as basic as the adoption of LEED gold as the floor, which was initially proposed as part of the net zero zoning petition back in 2013, but was delayed for 6 years after that. By the time we passed it, LEED gold had become the de-facto minimum for most large commercial buildings already.

As a major proponent of net zero I think we absolutely need to pursue that strategy and accelerate it. What I disagree with is the slow-walk to net zero. There is NO reason to allow ANY new fossil-fuel dependent construction in Cambridge. Technology and economics fully support net-zero construction TODAY and it's high time we fully implement that standard.

We need to do way more to protect our tree canopy and expand it in a just and equitable way to protect our most vulnerable residents from the increasing dangers of heat and flooding from climate change. I plan to continue leading on that effort if re-elected.

We also need to reduce waste and the proliferation of dangerous chemicals including plastics, PFAS and pesticides that are poisoning our natural environment and destroying vital ecosystems that help protect us from future climate changes. I will continue to work with our city staff and state delegation to reduce waste and regulate these chemicals.