



What work does Cambridge need to undertake to become an antiracist city?

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: Cambridge is dividing into a barbell city - lower income residents on one end and very high income on the other. We cannot be anti-racist until we tackle this massive wealth inequality. I have put forth many plans to build a large number of affordable housing, pass tenant protections, provide municipal broadband and universal pre-k.

Dana Bullister: Cambridge, despite its reputation as innovative, struggles with racial inequality. The complexity and intersectionality of this issue make racial justice a difficult undertaking, yet one that is both urgent and necessary. Providing adequate and integrated affordable housing options is core to creating a community that has truly equitable access to local, geographically based community resources. Zoning policy supporting integrated access ensures that city funding cannot be selectively directed toward some, uniquely advantaged neighborhoods at the expense of struggling residents. We need affordable housing options in every area of our city.

Investment in similarly universal and wide-ranging transportation options is another ingredient to providing equitable access to jobs and thus economic mobility. Those who rely on just one or two forms of transportation should have the quality infrastructure to support them, regardless of where they live in our community.

Public safety is another domain in which we must ensure an anti-racist mentality. I believe we should continue the ongoing discussions around two separate proposals for rethinking our policing to promote equity, especially that of the HEART proposal. Black voices should be a sought-out, centered part of this process toward building a city that is truly safe and welcoming to all.

Providing universal pre-kindergarten and equitable access to high-speed internet are two other critical means by which the city can help ensure all residents, regardless of background, have an opportunity to thrive here. Finally, we must continue educating ourselves on issues of racial injustice, listen to concerns among Cambridge's black residents, and amplify black voices. These are just some of the measures comprising the substantial work to be done in becoming an anti-racist city.

Dennis Carlone, incumbent: We, the city, need to partner with successful entities to focus on those in need including the development of Universal Pre-Kindergarten for 2-5 year olds (providing space on the first floor of new buildings where retail will not work), after school and summer programs, long-term mentorships, training programs, and corporate/civic/institutional

long-term commitment to under-performing schools, etc. Equally important, push the city to do more by offering to partner in innovative, proven programs and projects.

Robert Eckstut: The idea of anti racism in a vacuum is wonderful. Everyone should support it. I would be shocked if any fellow candidates don't make every performative (and hopefully, legitimate) gesture in this direction. That said, the current trend of pseudo-sociology that is being practiced—such as the professionally developed program above—does nothing to actually help or address systemic racism. This type of program is what cities, businesses, special interests groups, etc. do to showcase how anti racist they are, thereby satiating public-facing good will.

Unlike most politicians, I've read the theory. I know what works. These types of programs are not the answer. Funding social programs, addressing wealth imbalance/inequity, and meeting people where they are - not where you want them to be - is what works.

In order to do that? We need to increase the city budget on necessary items (infrastructure, education, training, rental assistance, etc.) and diminish the city budget on unnecessary items (such as training courses above). That's how you achieve an anti racist city.

Tonia Hicks: The Inclusion Drives Innovation program provides a good start to bringing antiracist awareness to select leaders of companies located in Kendall Square. Unfortunately, most Cambridge residents do not work in Kendall Square-based companies and therefore cannot benefit from this program. To become an antiracist city, Cambridge needs to commit to more community conversations about racism that help citizens understand the impact of systemic racism and the resulting negative impacts. While building awareness, the city needs to begin to introduce policies to rectify racist wrongs so that teachings result in tangible action—for example, reparations, job development programs, home ownership programs, sealing eviction records, etc.

Alanna Mallon, incumbent (Vice-Mayor): In order to be a true anti-racist community, every resident must acknowledge the disparities between white residents and residents of color, and evaluate our individual roles in remediating them. One of the most stark disparities in our region is the famous statistic in the Boston Globe that white net worth is over \$230,000.00 while Black net worth is \$8.00; but a contributing factor to this is the earnings discrepancies between our Black and white residents. Cambridge Community Foundation's recent "Equity and Innovation" report divides the City into five economic quintiles. While the City's first economic quintile is the most diverse, it is also the least wealthy, earning an annual income of just \$13,000 compared to the \$343,000 earned by the top quintile. Cambridge has also become less racially diverse since 2000, especially in the Port, and as our partners, Kendall Square institutions must ask themselves about the role that rapid innovation and development has played in this. I am in strong support of Kendall Square's international leadership in R&D, but we need to not only ensure that these opportunities are available to everyone in our city, and that the wealth and resources that come with them do not displace our long-time residents. One of the actions I've taken to prevent this is to work with my colleagues Mayor Siddiqui and Councillor McGovern to pilot Cambridge RISE, a guaranteed basic income program to assist 130 families in the lowest

quintile. I advocated and voted for the groundbreaking Affordable Housing Overlay, which has already added 350 affordable homes to the pipeline. Along with Mayor Siddiqui, we are working to reform our HomeBridge program, to allow participants to build equity and pass their homes to the next generation. A broad internship partnership needs to be forged between our City's High Schools, and the Kendall Square businesses to provide opportunities to our students who might otherwise not know these careers are available to them. Kendall Square institutions can be part of all of this work - whether it's ensuring that the City has adequate funding for these initiatives, developing community outreach efforts to mitigate the opportunity disparities between white students and students of color, or committing to hiring from existing workforce development programs. We can't just march for Black Lives, we need to encourage an equitable City by creating opportunities for anyone to be able to build a life here, create new generations of prosperity in the process, and invest in better educational outcomes, and close opportunity gaps for Black and brown students.

Marc McGovern, incumbent: One of our biggest issues in Cambridge is that we think we are above race and class issues. We're not. I've lived in Cambridge my whole life. Many of the issues we are battling today are the same ones we were battling when I was a kid. Our country is built on a racist foundation. It is all around us and we all drink the water. Thankfully, I think we are taking that first step in becoming an antiracist city by admitting we have a problem. But being an antiracist city isn't easy and doesn't happen just through trainings (although they are a good first step). You have to be intentional. Who do you hire? How do you ensure that you're truly connected to the community and not just in superficial ways? What training programs do you offer? How do you hold people accountable? What is your financial commitment?

Joe McGuirk: Foremost, for Cambridge to become an antiracist city, it must recognize the exclusionary policies that created racist zoning codes which still exist. We must stop proscribing housing density in areas that would help alleviate the housing crisis. Affordable housing is necessary to ensure that lower income people, who are disproportionately BIPOC, have an opportunity to remain in Cambridge. Increasing density, emphasizing affordable housing, in areas that are close to mass transit, is a first and necessary step. Furthermore, our schools should offer programs that will help all our students succeed, and more fully support those students who may not have the means or desire to continue their education after high school. Strengthening our technical and vocational programs at our schools should be a priority.

Since systemic racism through municipal actions has hindered certain communities from succeeding, we must now focus energy and resources to aid those communities, and reparations is one avenue. I would encourage Cambridge to investigate how we can create reparations programs.

A few other ideas would be:

- re-allocate our budget away from policing and code enforcement to services focused on social welfare, health, education, and employment.
- remove fees for residents participating in recreational, city run, activities.
- remove fees for public transportation.

[Patricia Nolan](#), incumbent: Cambridge—and many of the residents—need to think deeply about how it is that we contribute, mostly unconsciously, to racism and perpetration of bias. Many residents live this every day—I don't, since I am white, identify as white and present as white. The work of seeking to understand how to be an anti-racist is unsettling, hard, uncomfortable, and yet also affirming and rewarding. Kendi's book is one of the better ones I've read on the topic. Several other books I find lacking in nuance, deep understanding and thoughtful analysis of the problem. Kendi's I recommend.

The Cambridge community took a necessary and useful step toward becoming an antiracist community with Cambridge Digs Deep in 2018. The first round of conversations engaged our entire community and provided impactful and meaningful perspectives and experiences about racial discrimination and the traditions that drive systemic thinking. From those dialogues the city formed a framework of guiding principles and expectations for our institutions and identified key community leaders and groups to help implement change.

As I learned in my years of service on the School Committee—it is one thing to talk of equity—and another to walk the walk we need to bring accountability into the work. WE need to consciously set goals, include the community in setting goals and a plan—and then monitor progress. We need Kendall Square's brain trust to help with our work—including data analysis, data gathering, and formulating plans and programs—all with an equity lens. AS we use data, we have to be aware of over surveillance in many communities having been abused—we must ensure that the data isn't inadvertently used inappropriately.

The key is to use an equity lens in every area—ask, probe, and make sure that for those of us who are white we are not asking others to do the work for us—we need to take it on. Currently we are establishing and identifying measurable goals and policies that can work toward eliminating racism in our community such as our cannabis equity policy, guaranteed income program and my recent policy proposal to institute reparations. One important next goal is to ensure that all of our residents have access to the high paying jobs generated by the city's investment in our tech industries by ensuring our students are well educated and that skills training matches the needs of these new employers. There is still so much work to be done—it's important to ensure that all community members stay invested and committed to real change.

[Sumbul Siddiqui](#), incumbent (Mayor): I believe in the transformative power of community engagement and action to further the cause of diversity, equity, and inclusion. That's why last term I worked alongside former Mayor Marc McGovern to launch Cambridge Digs DEEP (Disruptive Equity Education Project) as a forum to spur these important conversations. This initiative provided the requisite community involvement and education needed to effect real, lasting change and progress toward equity. Next time, I hope to continue this work.

I've also supported efforts by the city to correct historical wrongs. Recently, city council has taken two actions worth mentioning:

First, we unanimously approved the renaming of the Agassiz neighborhood to Baldwin. The impetus of the change was a CRLS student, Maya Counter, who discovered in her AP US

History readings that the namesake of her neighborhood, Louis Agassiz, was a strong proponent of “scientific racism”. This is a great example of the power of community engagement to help us learn from our history and chart a better path forward.

Second, city council unanimously passed orders on the use of cannabis tax revenue: one providing restitution for Cambridge residents harmed by drug prohibition, the other exploring reparations to address slavery and discrimination. Finally, my office has led Cambridge RISE (Recurring Income for Success and Empowerment), a first of its kind guaranteed income pilot, and members of the KSA community, like MIT, have been involved to assist in this work, which is connected to designing programs and policies for people at the margins of society.

We must ensure that future progress goes beyond “equality” and reaches equity.

E. Denise Simmons, incumbent: Cambridge prides itself on being a progressive, diverse, and inclusive city - but too often, people question whether our rhetoric truly matches our reality. What we have seen (in the aftermath of the April 2020 George Floyd murder in MN, for example, or during the acrimonious debates around whether to adopt a policy order tied to the BDS movement) is that Cambridge has significant amount of work to do in truly reaching out to ALL members of this community and making people feel like they are valued and respected, no matter their background, the color of their skin, or their socio-economic status. There are no quick fixes available, but I believe that a strategy of having the City rethink our approach to civic engagement and outreach, for creating a standardized method of reaching out to all corners of our community, of cultivating relationships with "neighborhood ambassadors," meeting people where they are, speaking **with** people as opposed to speaking **at** them, and centering our most historically-marginalized voices in our conversations would be important first steps. This is not the kind of work that can be done overnight, it must continually be re-committed over years, and anyone that does promise a quick fix simply does not understand the depth of this matter.

Cambridge does have a progressive reputation, but there is still a long way to go to eradicate racism and other forms of prejudice. Cambridge must engage in the deep economic empowerment of our communities, especially those that have been historically marginalized. Small business ownership is the primary vehicle for upward economic mobility for working Americans, especially for immigrant, minority, queer, and women business owners. However, these groups routinely face discrimination and are left severely underfunded. As a City Councillor, I will advocate for policies to increase access to opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups such as BIPOC, the LGBTQ+ community and women via improved access to credit and support for community banks.

I want to help foster meaningful public dialogue around reparations for racial injustice and make sure racial equity is centered when making policy decisions around topics such as housing, education, and the environment. Any long-term plan to solve the current housing crisis must ensure the replacement of segregated living patterns with fully integrated and balanced neighborhoods with equitable access to educational, economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities. As a City Councillor, I will advocate for new zoning based on Boston’s Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Rule that requires cities to provide new housing

opportunities while considering impacts on local communities that have historically been discriminated against.

The education system's role as the foundation of an equitable democratic society also marks it as the foundation of societal inequities, including in our beloved Cambridge. At the grade school level, outcomes for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds - estimated to be around 28% of students in the Cambridge school system, or around 1,800 children - are still failing to match those of students from more privileged backgrounds. While Cambridge has the resources, allocation remains inequitable. I intend to level the playing field by ensuring free universal preschool offerings at Cambridge Public Schools to benefit the children of working parents, advocating for municipal broadband, and creating easy-to-use informational resources to help parents make informed choices about their children's education and navigate public schools' school choice and lottery systems.

You can read my full plan for fostering racial justice here:

<https://www.votetheo.com/policy-priorities/racial-justice>

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Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler, incumbent: To become an anti-racist city, Cambridge must work to address our housing crisis with the urgency it demands and recognize that our relative financial stability as a city has not reached all of our residents. The median cost of a 1-bedroom apartment in Cambridge is more than \$2,200/month, the median condo cost is more than \$750,000, and the median single family home costs \$1.7 million. Thousands of residents have been displaced as housing prices have surged, and even as Cambridge's population has grown overall in recent years, it's Black and Brown populations have shrunk in some neighborhoods as they have gotten more expensive.

Cambridge must end exclusionary zoning, which dates back to the era of red-lining and racial covenants designed to keep diversity out of certain areas by banning most types of multi-family housing there. And we need to invest massively more in affordable housing, which Cambridge has the capacity to as a community that's significantly below its Prop 2 ½ levy limit. We need to combine ending exclusionary zoning with a robust public response in terms of funding, tenant protections like rent stabilization, tenant opportunity to purchase, and right to counsel, and community responses like a Cambridge Community Land Trust.

Cambridge must also work to address the racial and economic inequality in our economy. As the recent report from the Cambridge Community Foundation, "Equity and Innovation Cities: The Case of Cambridge" makes clear, there are huge gaps between the top and bottom quintiles of Cambridge in terms of educational attainment, housing cost burden, and access to well-paying innovation jobs in the city. One way Cambridge can address this is by creating a "Cambridge Promise" scholarship program to help ensure debt-free higher education at colleges and trade schools for all public high school graduates, similar to what New Haven has created, and improve our network of internship and job placement programs for Cantabrigians.

Paul Toner: First, I applaud the Kendall Square Business Association for taking on the proactive role it has to support its businesses and leaders.

Being an anti-racist community starts with developing relationships among our residents and having challenging conversations regarding our present and past so that we can develop an anti-racist future. The City Council can lead in this area by modelling this behavior and supporting these conversations throughout the city. It also involves looking at how the government represents and interacts with residents. This means viewing local policies through the lens of racial equity, regularly meeting with community organizations to discuss issues, and ensuring that our government officials respect the rights and dignity of all people. It also needs to focus on real measures of success like reducing income inequality through providing every child and resident with the tools, skills and opportunities they need to develop a meaningful

career path for themselves, beginning with expanding access to high quality early education and care for all.

Nicola Williams: I believe in a Cambridge for all residents, regardless of their race, income, or documented status. I am running for City Council in Cambridge because I am truly dedicated to making a community I've called home for over 30 years more inclusive and equitable. Over the last decade, 17 percent of African-Americans have been displaced from Cambridge, the lack of affordable housing has pushed low and middle income families and individuals out of the city, and corporate developers are increasingly eliminating outdoor spaces for low-income communities in Cambridge, leading to more environmental devastation in our city.

We also need to address closing the racial achievement gap in our schools. Early gaps in academics have a lasting impact on our children and limit our children's participation in an economy that demands increasingly higher levels of education. As of right now, only 44% of Black third-graders meet or exceed grade-level expectations in reading, compared to 80% of white and Asian students. I would prioritize investing in vocational programs in our schools to invest in our youth and the real "missing middle" --young adults ages 18-25 who are low income and jobless and unfortunately, often resort to violence to fill those gaps. I would also like to see the expansion of the mayor's summer program to a year round fellowship so students can see the possibilities that lie ahead of them post secondary education.

Increasing affordable housing and pathways to homeownership for low and middle-income residents is necessary for retaining our continued racial and economic diversity in our city. The wealth gap has widened between the have and have nots with Black and Brown communities most affected. My housing plans centers on empowering communities to

1. build wealth through homeownership programs, cooperatives, community land trusts, and innovative down payment programs
2. create pathways for families that allow them to accept promotions without risking their housing and without strings attached; and
3. change Cambridge's ineffective homeownership program to allow families to be able to build equity and pass along their homes to their families.

I have advocated for strong environmental policies to protect our planet but also to protect marginalized communities who are at most risk of environmental injustice. Unfortunately, environmental injustice has drastically changed the way of life across Massachusetts, especially in my city of Cambridge. I am greatly concerned about Cambridge's need for affordable housing, greener and more accessible modes of transportation, and education. All of these issues must be addressed if we are to have environmental justice, but they cannot be addressed by Cambridge alone. That's why I'm committed to working with municipal leaders in neighboring cities to create a regional approach around housing and transportation.

Quinton Zondervan, incumbent: Cambridge's Black population has been declining alarmingly as a result of gentrification and displacement driven by commercial development.

Profound race-based inequalities are well-documented in Cambridge and need to be intentionally addressed. I have published an oped outlining various initiatives the city could invest in today to support the Black community and become a more anti-racist city.

A tone-deaf housing proposal earlier this year was withdrawn after opposition from the NAACP and The Black Response Cambridge. Everyone involved in policy discussions in Cambridge needs to educate themselves better on the ongoing racist history of the United States, and the fact that Cambridge is neither immune from this history, nor somehow beyond it. We are right in the thick of it, as has been laid painfully bare by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which is disproportionately impacting the Black community here as elsewhere in the country. To become more anti-racist we need to acknowledge the racism that exists in our systems of laws, customs and structures, and actively root it out.