MICHELLE WU Jon BOSTON CITY COUNCILOR-AT-LARGE

POLICY AGENDA • OCTOBER 2017

Hi D'm Michelle

In addition to being your City Council President, I am a mother, a daughter of immigrants, a cyclist, and a passionate fighter for progressive change.

Growing up as the oldest of four children, I saw through my immigrant parents' eyes the invisible barriers – language, cultural, social, and economic – that families face. I worked hard in school and got the opportunity of a lifetime when I received a scholarship to study at Harvard. As a college student, I fell in love with Boston and spent most of my free time volunteering in Chinatown. After graduation, I moved to the North End and started working as a consultant in the Financial District.

But my life as a carefree young professional changed suddenly when my mother began to struggle with serious mental illness. At the age of 23, I became primary caretaker for my mom and two younger sisters in Chicago. To help support our family, I opened and ran a small family restaurant. Eventually, I was admitted to Harvard Law School and brought my family with me back to Boston. While I was in law school, my mom benefited from the world-class health care in Boston, my middle sister went off to college, and I became legal guardian for my youngest sister, who later graduated from Boston Public Schools.

Boston has given me so much – my education, family stability, and a home for life. My husband Conor and I are so happy to be raising our two boys in Roslindale. We're even happier to live upstairs from my mom, who is doing much better now that she gets to see her two grandsons everyday.

But even in the two years since we bought our two-family home, we've watched housing prices go up so fast that we wouldn't have been able to buy into our neighborhood today. It gives urgency to my work on the City Council to make sure all families can afford to stay in our city and thrive: the family in Roslindale that's been growing vegetables in their backyard for six generations; the refugees and immigrants who just recently arrived; the Dorchester Girl Scouts who are advocating for a Boston free of plastic bag waste. There are so many reasons to love Boston, and so many reasons to fight for the people who live here.

In today's world, with politics too focused on division, the death toll from climate change rising, and civil rights under attack, we need leaders who stand for people. I strive to be that leader, and I commit to doing everything in my power as City Councilor to:

- Expand opportunity and create shared prosperity for all Bostonians;
- Ensure equity and inclusion of our most vulnerable and historically marginalized residents;
- Plan proactively for the sustainability and livability of our city, our planet, and the futures of our children who will inhabit it; and
- Keep our democracy strong by making government as accessible and transparent as possible.

Serving you in office has been the greatest honor of my life. I ask for your continued partnership to help shape the future of our city – our shared home – Boston.

Sincerely,

Michelle Wu



WHAT WE'VE DONE TOGETHER

The strongest policies and most effective change come from civic engagement and partnership with community. Here's some of what we've been able to do together so far:

INVEST IN PEOPLE

Paid Leave – We secured six weeks of paid leave for new parents working for Boston city government, inclusive of all family situations and birth or adoption.

Healthcare Equity – We prohibited discrimination based on gender identity in health care coverage for City employees.

Teen Jobs – We worked with a host committee of young professionals throughout the city to raise money to maximize the number of summer jobs available through the City's SuperTeens Program for 13- and 14-year olds to have a paid summer experience.

ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY TO CITY SERVICES

Communications Access — We ensured translation, interpretation, and assistive technology for equitable access to city services, regardless of English language proficiency or communications disability.

Universally Accessible Council Chamber — As Council President I oversaw the first major renovation of the Boston City Council Chamber where we hold weekly meetings and hearings, to include full access to the floor for those with mobility challenges, wheelchair-friendly seating, acoustic treatments so everyone can hear, and LED energy-efficient lighting.

Bringing Council Business to You — We implemented a program to allow public testimony at City Council hearings online via video conference for those unable to testify in person, and we improved our off-site hearing capabilities to host more hearings outside City Hall in the neighborhoods than ever before.

SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES

BYOB – We ended the ban on BYOB in Boston and created a new way for small restaurants to expand their business.

Streamlining Permitting – We held a small business listening tour throughout the city and consolidated the feedback into the first ever Council Report with recommendations on how to streamline permitting and licensing, much of which has been adopted.

Acoustic Live Performances – We eliminated burdensome restrictions that prevented small businesses from hosting live entertainment acts.

MAKE BOSTON LIVABLE AND SUSTAINABLE

Community Choice Energy - We unanimously passed an order for Boston to begin a process of using bulk purchasing power on behalf of residents and small businesses to set a higher percentage of renewable energy that would be equivalent to taking 6,400 cars off the road.

Reducing Plastic Waste – We are working to reduce plastic bag pollution in the City of Boston through an ordinance that would ban single-use plastic checkout bags and encourage reusable bags.

Streets for People – We convened the first ever Boston City Council policy briefing series focused on transportation policies and how to ensure that cycling, walking, and public transit are safe, convenient, and affordable transit options.

Greening City Hall – We have begun a process to reduce the carbon footprint for City Hall and other municipal buildings for public health, cost efficiency, and sustainability.

MICHELLE'S VISION

ENSURING ECONOMIC MOBILITY

The promise of the American Dream is that in this country, no matter where you were born or who your parents are, if you work hard you can find opportunities for your family to thrive. In a time of national uncertainty and growing inequality, Boston should be the city to deliver on that promise. We must dismantle barriers that segregate by income and background. We must support working families with access to good jobs and policies to make work-life balance possible. We must focus on affordability to build stable communities. Most of all, we must invest in the next generation with quality education and training, from birth to retirement.

ACHIEVING RACIAL EQUITY

We are at our strongest as a city and a society when we draw on every talent in the community and include every voice in decisionmaking. For a city of opportunity, it is unacceptable to see stark racial disparities reflected in education, employment, criminal justice and health outcomes. We must empower entrepreneurs of color to build wealth in our neighborhoods. We must gain and maintain the trust of black and brown residents through transparency, accountability and community engagement from law enforcement and government more broadly. We strive to be a city that is home to all, with diversity reflected in leadership across all sectors.

FIGHTING FOR CLIMATE

The impacts of climate change range from disruptive to destructive, and they grow more urgent each season. As weather patterns change due to greenhouse gas emissions, it's not enough to be resilient, to wait for the next hurricane or flood or drought and then marshal relief efforts. The harms of severe weather and heat fall disproportionately on residents and communities least able to adapt — low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, babies and seniors, and the medically vulnerable. For the safety and health of all our residents and future generations, we must fight climate change. We need to change the physical and economic reality by taking every possible step to reduce emissions and transition as quickly as possible to 100% renewable energy. ACHIEVE AFFORDABILITY AND SHARED PROSPERITY THROUGH A FAIR AND STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

Our city is at its strongest when every person can succeed and every family can afford to call Boston home.

Fair Work Week – Employees should be given advance notice of their schedules and priority for filling open shifts.

Minimum Wage – No one should be living in poverty despite working full-time or more. A \$15/hour minimum wage would get us closer to stability for working families.

Affordable Housing – The City needs to continue strengthening policies that spur the development of affordable housing, especially near transit hubs. Policies such as density bonuses for workforce housing and regulating accessory dwelling units should be explored.

Paid Family and Medical Leave – All workers should have access to paid parental and sick leave to take care of themselves and their families.

Protections for Freelance Workers – A changing economy requires us to expand the way we think about worker protections as the nature of work changes.

Procurement Reform – We need to direct taxpayer dollars back into the community by ensuring that businesses owned by people of color, women, and Boston residents have a fair shot at winning City of Boston contracts.

Supports for Entrepreneurs of Color – In combating historical economic exclusion, we need to better equip entrepreneurs of color with programming and resources to promote their success.

Neighborhood Small Business Growth – Small businesses anchor communities. We should focus our efforts on supporting these key partners for jobs and community growth in our neighborhoods, including requiring community input into potential expansion of formula retail, also known as "chain stores."

Short-Term Rental Market – The City should enact legislation that protects against displacement, rising housing prices, and public safety issues by closing commercial loopholes in the short-term rental market.

Corporate Tax Break Transparency – Bostonians deserve greater transparency around corporate tax breaks to guarantee a positive return on the City's investment.

CREATE A CONNECTED, SAFE, AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK FOR LIVABLE STREETS

Addressing our city's transportation needs will help safeguard our personal, environmental, and economic health.

Safe Bike Lane Network – Safe cycling infrastructure opens up biking as an affordable, convenient, and healthy way to commute. Bike lanes should be interconnected, clearly designated, and physically separated from motor vehicle traffic.

Transit Priority – Decreasing transit delays and moving more people on our streets more efficiently requires coordinating traffic signals in the city to prioritize trains and buses, as well as designating dedicated bus lanes in the most congested corridors.

Pedestrian and Driver Safety – The City needs to continue demonstrating a commitment to ending traffic fatalities by making creative, road-specific changes to traffic signals, crosswalks, and lane sizes.

Parking Management – We should charge a fee for on-street residential parking permits and invest that revenue source in safe streets infrastructure, incentivizing those with off-street parking options to free up street space and reduce emissions from circling to find a spot.

Harbor Transit Network – We need to establish affordable public water transportation options with an Inner Harbor ferry system on Boston Harbor to better connect waterfront neighborhoods and ease the traffic on our roads.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure – Along with making other modes of transit safe and accessible, the City needs to promote existing charging stations and provide future infrastructure for drivers to choose electric cars over greenhouse gas emitting vehicles as the costs come down.

Congestion Reduction – Traffic is bad and getting worse. The City should explore variable tolls at high-traffic times of day to manage demand and ease trips.

Fair Skies – The recently narrowed flight paths that concentrate airplane noise and pollution over certain communities in Boston must be addressed for quality of life and public health.

Equitable Commuter Rail Pricing – Residents in Boston neighborhoods without direct access to subway service should not be discriminated against with split-zone pricing that charges unaffordable rates to travel a short distance to the subway connection.

PLAN FOR INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Fighting climate change and fighting for climate justice will secure our city and our planet for future generations.

100% Renewable Energy Commitment – To reduce the City's carbon footprint and save taxpayer dollars over time, Boston should set an ambitious timeline for transitioning to 100% renewable energy. We can start by taking immediate steps to switch City Hall and other municipal buildings onto 100% renewable energy for electricity usage.

Community Choice Energy – We must work to quickly implement the recently passed order for community choice energy, the fastest way to significantly and seamlessly increase the consumption of renewable energy across the city.

Parking Requirements – To encourage active transportation and decrease fossil fuel emissions, the City should eliminate off-street parking minimums for new developments, establish maximum ratios, and unbundle parking from the cost of living units.

Meaningful Community Input – Community voices matter. The City's development review process should ensure that community input in development plans is valued, and there should be complete transparency on any financial incentives given by the City.

No New Fossil-Fuel Infrastructure – To meet the City's sustainability commitments, we need to forgo building new fossil-fuel infrastructure, such as natural gas pipelines and fossil-fuel power stations.

Net Zero Building Energy Codes – Boston should be the most energy-efficient city in the nation, with full enforcement of building energy reporting requirements and net zero development requirements.

Diminishing Urban Heat Islands – We must reduce the amount of heat trapped in Boston by exploring cool paving technologies, green and reflective roofs, and increased biomass.

City Trees – Increasing and maintaining Boston's urban canopy reduces heat islands, improves neighborhood aesthetics, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Curbside Composting – Boston residents and private companies should have the option to responsibly dispose of their organic waste.

EMPOWER AND INVEST IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE CITY

Our city is only as strong as our people, and our investments should reflect that.

Voting Reform – We need to expand and encourage voting in local elections by removing barriers to voter registration such as implementing same day and automatic registration. We should also explore making Election Day a holiday, granting non-citizens a vote, and implementing no-fault absentee voting.

Right of Free Petition – Residents should have a direct way to influence the Council agenda. We are fighting to enable Boston residents to secure a City Council hearing on any issue, by submitting a petition with signatures from at least 250 residents interested in the issue.

Tenant Empowerment – We should require landlords to distribute information about voter registration and landlord-tenant laws to ensure that everybody is eligible to participate in our democracy and aware of their rights.

Municipal ID – We can remove barriers to obtaining formal government-issued identification and spark civic and cultural engagement by continuing to plan for a municipal identification card. This card should be available to all, regardless of immigration status, homelessness status, or gender identity, while also balancing privacy protections.

Fostering Arts and Culture – The City should continue to increase funding and partnerships for arts and culture. We can expand the ParkARTS program, cultural district designations, and other initiatives so that Bostonians in every neighborhood have access to free, year-round opportunities to create, both indoors and outdoors.

Protecting Residents Experiencing Homelessness – To ensure that everyone is treated equally, no matter their background or identity, the City should amend our Human Rights Ordinance to prevent discrimination based on homeless status and place of residence or business.

Participatory Budgeting – The City should empower Bostonians to participate in allocating City funds by recommending and voting on City projects.

Standing Strong on Equality – Boston should continue to stand up in the face of federal policies that discriminate against LGBTQ+ residents and demonstrate that a more equal community makes for a stronger city.

FOSTER SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Every person in Boston should feel safe and be supported by City departments and services.

Youth Jobs – The surest way to combat community violence is opportunity. We need to invest in our youth and ensure access to paid summer jobs and opportunities during the school year. The City should expand its Superteens program and lower the eligibility age for youth summer jobs to 14 years of age.

Local, Fresh Foods – Bostonians from every neighborhood should have access to locally grown, nutritious food to benefit both their health and the local economy. We should expand urban agriculture and partnerships with farms across the state.

Ending the Opioid Crisis – We need to fund treatment on-demand, work with health care providers to prescribe pain medications safely, and ensure that everyone has access to Narcan to prevent overdose and save lives.

Mental Health Reform – We should increase funding for mental health services and rethink how we approach mental health care. By treating those most in need, we will make our communities safer and reduce strain on our emergency rooms and criminal justice system.

Closing Racial Health Disparities – We must address the disparities in infant mortality, chronic diseases, and other conditions disproportionately affecting communities of color in Boston.

Removing Harmful Materials – The City should not be using taxpayer money to buy polystyrene products, plastic bags, and bottled water, which pose environmental and health risks. We should also explore policy tools to discourage their use in Boston.

Police Body Cameras – In order to ensure the safety of our police officers and civilians, the Boston Police Department should use the lessons learned from the pilot program to develop a permanent and comprehensive body camera program with community input.

Progressive Civil Asset Forfeiture – Residents of Boston deserve due process of law, and the process for recovering personal property seized by law enforcement should be transparent and navigable.

Decreasing Surveillance Technology – The City should be transparent in its use of surveillance technology and balance public safety with citizens' right to privacy. For full accountability, law enforcement should have written policies developed with community process in place before implementing any new technology.

Trauma Supports and Services – Too many of our neighbors, especially in communities of color, are living with untreated trauma. We need to prevent violence with peace education in schools and interrupt the cycle of violence by providing survivors with supportive services.

ENSURE COMPREHENSIVE, HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS Our children deserve an education that prepares them for college, careers, and civic

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Universal Early Education and Childcare – All children should have the chance to get a head start through universal affordable, high-quality early education. This includes increasing access to community-based and on-site workplace child care.

High-Quality Schools – To ensure that all children receive a high-quality education, regardless of their residence or educational background, we must guarantee that educational quality is consistent across all Boston Public Schools.

Vocational Pathways – In order to make good-paying jobs more accessible, we need to create more direct pipelines to opportunities in the trades and other industries that do not require a four-year degree.

School Safety Surveys – To ensure the safety of our children, the City should work with BPS and other local schools to expand the BPS Climate Survey and make results publicly accessible.

BPS Budget Transparency – The City should have complete transparency around how funds are allocated and how programs are evaluated in the Boston Public Schools. BPS should have multi-year budgets that give school leaders and teachers more predictability in planning programs.

BPS Principal Pipelines – We need to ensure that we are preparing teachers to take on positions as leaders, especially in turnaround schools.

Healthy, Tasty School Lunches – We want to ensure that all Boston Public Schools receive healthy, fresh, and locally sourced food for school lunches that taste good and include culturally diverse cuisines.

Social and Emotional Supports – All students in the Boston Public Schools should have access to a well-staffed support team of nurses and guidance counselors.

Arts Education – To enable every child in the city to receive a well-rounded education, the City should partner with local nonprofits and cultural institutions to implement robust arts and culture programming in the Boston Public Schools.

MORE ABOUT MICHELLE

Michelle Wu has been a voice for accessibility, transparency, and community engagement in city leadership. First elected to the Boston City Council in November 2013 at the age of 28, Michelle is the first Asian-American woman to serve on the Council. In January 2016, she was elected President of the City Council by her colleagues in a unanimous vote, becoming the first woman of color to serve as Council President.

Michelle got her start in City Hall working for Mayor Thomas M. Menino as a Rappaport Fellow in Law and Public Policy, where she created the city's first guide to the restaurant permitting process from start to finish, and was also a driving force to launch Boston's food truck program. She later served as statewide Constituency Director in the U.S. Senate campaign of her former law professor, Elizabeth Warren.

As a former restaurant owner, legal services attorney, and legal guardian of her younger sister, Michelle understands firsthand the barriers that families and communities face. She has a background in community advocacy, having worked at the WilmerHale Legal Services Center in Jamaica Plain, providing legal advice to low-income small business owners, as well as at the Medical-Legal Partnership at Boston Medical Center on immigration law cases for survivors of domestic violence.

In 2016, Councilor Wu was honored as one of Ten Outstanding Young Leaders by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, and among Marie Claire magazine's New Guard: The 50 Most Influential Women in America. In 2017 she received the Massachusetts Democratic Party's highest honor, The Eleanor Roosevelt Award.

Michelle Wu graduated from Harvard College and Harvard Law School. She is fluent in Mandarin and Spanish, and lives in Roslindale with her husband Conor, her two year-old son Blaise, and her newborn son Cass.

CONTACT ME





MichelleForBoston.com







MichelleforBoston

Email me: info@michelleforboston.com Sign up for my weekly Council meeting notes: www.michelleforboston.com/sendmenotes

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