

2021 WALTHAM RESIDENTS SURVEY

Conducted by Rep. Thomas Stanley

Survey Results

Conducted Summer, 2021

Surveys were mailed out to over two thousand randomly selected Waltham households.

Recipients were asked to fill out the survey and return it by mail or fax to Rep. Stanley.

Sincere thanks to the hundreds of residents who sent in their completed surveys.

Participants were asked to check box of all statements they agreed with and were also given space to add their own additional comment/opinion/suggestions on Q.1-Q.5.

Participants were also asked to name their top 3 issues of concern on Q.6 open-ended question.

Q 1. How can state and local government best help provide needed services to older citizens?

Positive responses in order of preference

- 1 Ensure older adults can receive services at home and in their communities.
- 2 Increase state and local inspection of nursing facilities to ensure best practices are in place
- 3 Give property tax rebates to citizens over 70 years of age
- 4 Make Workforce Investments in senior health delivery to expand senior health and home care work force.
- 5 Increase funding for elderly congregate housing and retirement communities.
- 6 Increase funding for mental health services to older citizens

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDERS:

- Increase oversight of Veteran's hospital and facilities
- Base any tax rebates on income not just age
- Increase training for home caregivers
- Require means testing for elderly housing/retirement communities
- Give tax rebates to all renters not just elderly
- Simplify health care paperwork
- Raise limit for MassHealth
- Use census data to notify all elderly of available services
- Explore Newton's 2Life Plan; enforce utilization before spending money
- Promote programs that keep at-home elderly connected to outside world
- Scrutinize nursing homes with regular inspections and oversight
- Increase pay levels for home health care workers
- Expand wheels on Meals
- Allow elderly to keep pets in nursing homes
- Permit family member caring for elder parent to take leave from work
- Increase recreational and transportation services to seniors

Q.2. Increasing Affordable Housing is a 2021 Priority. What are best ways to create more affordable housing?

Positive responses in order of preference

- 1 Require Building Developers (of over 35 units) to increase % of affordable units on site
- 2 Remove zoning restrictions that inhibit creating affordable housing
- 3 Allocate 5% of annual building permit fees to the Municipal Housing Trust Fund.
- 4 Legalize Accessory apartments in private residences
- 5 Adopt the Community Impact Fee (3%) on short term rental properties and earmark for affordable housing.
- 6 Allocate 100% of Community Impact Fee for affordable housing

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDERS:

- Focus on middle class affordable housing as well as low income and luxury housing
- Establish "micro" apartments in private residences
- Don't allow developers to put all affordable units in one building
- Use vacant municipal buildings/property for conversion to affordable apartments
- Put public/affordable housing near public transportation routes
- Charge AirB&B with Community Impact fees
- Don't need new high school, do need more public housing
- Allocate 10% permit fees to Municipal Trust Fund
- Clearly define what constitutes "Affordable" housing in zoning laws
- Restrict Bentley and Brandeis students from living off-campus
- Keep accessory apartments limited to family and caregivers
- Don't let developers "deal" their way out of affordable housing requirements
- Survey all Waltham residential apartment rents to determine what is affordable
- Require developers to include affordable units percentage in all buildings
- Don't do anything, let market control rental costs
- Give tax rebates to developers who increase affordable housing units
- Stop development on streets like Lincoln St that have too much traffic already
- Require impact study of every proposed development to determine traffic and density impacts
- Remove zoning restrictions on market rate apartments
- Short term rentals should not include a 1 year lease
- Require 10 % or 15% affordable housing units in 5 or more unit projects
- Donate town/city land and rehab. municipal buildings for affordable public and senior housing
- Take abandoned property by eminent domain to build affordable housing
- Establish program where low income can buy not rent affordable housing
- Reinstitute rent control
- Require proof of citizenship to qualify for affordable housing
- Require inspections on all accessory apartments
- Increase scrutiny of public housing superintendents, stop bullying

Q.3. Massachusetts has a severe shortage of workers in trades and technology. How can Massachusetts address the shortage of vocational education opportunities for our students seeking these career paths?

Positive responses in order of preference

- 1 Expand vocational programs at high schools and community colleges to meet the shortages in the building trades and health care fields
- 2 Enact Governor's expansion plan to quadruple state funding for Vocational and Technical High Schools
- 3 Increase funding of Science-Technology-Engineering-Math courses in K-12 grades
- 4 Fund State Career Technical Institutes to train and retrain 20,000 new workers over a 4 yr period

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDERS:

- Increase communication to students and parents about trade school offerings vs college
- Make Community Colleges free of tuition
- Increase art and music and humanities programs K-12
- Promote trade school offerings for girls/women
- Create apprenticeship programs
- Teach the US Constitution, require Civics at all levels
- Establish more scholarship opportunities
- Bring back Home Economics and Industrial Arts at middle school level
- Utilize union training facilities
- Introduce STEM curriculum to all students

Q 4. Local Public Building Projects are financed by the state's Massachusetts School Building Assistance program. Large contractors compete through a bidding process. Massachusetts has wage and labor laws that insure fair wages and health benefits. Some large bidding contractors skirt the law by hiring out of state subcontractors. **What should be done to insure our tax dollars will go to Massachusetts contractors and local construction workers?**

Positive responses in order of preference

- 1 Give selection preference to bidding contractors who employ Massachusetts subcontractors to keep local construction jobs
- 2 Require large bidding contractors to adhere to Massachusetts prevailing wage and benefits requirements for all of their subcontractors

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDERS:

- Require all contractors to meet MA prevailing wage law
- Charge fees to developers who employ out of state workers
- Incentivize contractors to hire more women
- Consider 2nd lowest bid when warranted
- Break up internet monopolies

- Use local contractor to keep jobs local
- Waltham is over built already, slow growth
- Waltham does not need a new high school
- Union workers have proven skills and training, work quality better
- Pass Medicare for all
- Use only MA contractors or set a specific % of contracts for MA contractors
- Stop government building projects, let market determine projects
- Only fund “green projects”, protect environment
- Increase school building finances
- Bidding laws are flawed, consider sub bid bill to correct
- Enforce theft laws and worker misclassification violations
- Establish list of local contractors, give preference
- Fair wages for all qualified workers
- Diversify contractor’s work force
- Keep jobs local when possible, local taxpayers’ money
- Union workers are more expensive and could increase project costs
- Keep student internet free
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Q. 5. During the COVID Emergency there were many temporary measures taken to help individuals, families and businesses make it through the crisis. Which ones do you think are worth keeping in place during the recovery?

Positive responses in order of preference

- 1 Allow TeleHealth doctor/patient visits on-line to be covered by insurers.
- 2 Continue restaurant permission for outdoor dining
- 3 Permit local and state Public Hearings and Meetings to be conducted on-line.
- 4 Continue gas, electric and water utilities shutoff moratorium until July.
- 5 Continue eviction moratorium with link to federal Care Act funds
- 6 Allow the sale of beer and alcohol with restaurant take-out orders.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDERS:

- Keep student internet services free...covid or not all students need internet today
- Live stream all public meetings and post tapes on local town website
- Telehealth is not substitute for quality care
- Give union contractors preference
- Help landlords pay bills incurred while rent moratorium was going on
- Owners of 2 and 3 family homes struggle to survive with no rents being paid
- Get people back to work and to school asap
- Public meetings should be in person, taped and on-line
- Give extra points to contractors who employ diverse work force
- Increase mass transit and local shuttle options
- Reduce payments to Dr.s for Telehealth visit, on-line is not equivalent to office visit
- Help individuals and landlords pay moratorium/covid debts

- Return to pre-covid conditions/policies asap
- Don't shut state down again
- Small landlords should get relief, not major companies

Q. 6. What are your top three issues of concern? What do you want your local and state government to prioritize this year?

RESPONSES SORTED BY TOPIC AND IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY/PREFERENCE:

1 HOUSING:

- Increase affordable housing availability
- Build affordable housing for "middle income" people, too
- Increase housing for low income individuals/families
- Improve housing options for homeless and mentally ill
- Stop abusive behavior and harassment at public housing
- Increase tenants' rights and input at public housing
- Increase elderly housing units
- Enforce restrictions on public housing, protect veterans
- Restrict AirB&B's from using vacant apartments as short term rentals

2 ENVIRONMENT

- Climate change- prepare for future, strengthen laws, address problem locally
- Reduce fossil fuel use
- Control density: Restrict building projects
- Reduce pesticide use
- Increase "green" space and open space
- Increase solar energy use
- Improve and maintain Central Rail Trail
- Have a local composting program
- Initiate and enforce "green" building codes
- Pass and Enact federal Green New Deal components in MA
- Increase recycling programs
- Ban plastic bags in all local stores
- Continue energy saving rebates
- Protect wetlands and wild life

3 ELDER SERVICES

- Increase affordable housing for seniors
- Increase financial assistance, property tax rebates and services to elderly
- Lower internet fees for seniors
- Improve elder health care delivery system
- Increase oversight, regulations of nursing homes
- Open and fund senior center, expand programs
- Protect Social Security and Medicare

- Provide shuttle service/mini-bus transportation to medical appts for elderly and disabled
- Pay a living wage to direct care and at-home caregivers of elderly and disabled
- Expand Wheels on Meals program

4 HEALTH CARE

- Give financial aid/compensation to family caregivers
- Advance health care for all
- Increase mental health services
- Alzheimer patients need long term care plans
- Keep telehealth option available and covered
- Mandate covid vaccinations for all
- Lower prescription costs
- Provide more mobile services
- Lower medical, hospital, provider costs to patients
- Enact affordable Single payer health care

5 EDUCATION

- Increase education funding
- Create new Vocational/Trades/Technical high school
- Make public colleges more affordable
- Create more affordable child care for working parents
- Fund free school breakfast and lunch for all students
- Increase community recreation program options: after school, summer
- Create youth job programs
- Expand trades education in local middle and high school
- Pass Teacher Retirement bill
- Fund school improvements equally

6 PUBLIC SAFETY

- Stop gun violence- strengthen enforcement of gun control laws
- Put higher taxes on gun and ammunition sales
- Toughen background checks regulations and gun purchase enforcement
- Police reform: increase officer response training, promote social justice, revoke total police immunity
- Fund addition of mental health professional to public safety department
- Have more police visible out on roads, in neighborhoods
- Hire civilian/student flaggers at road construction sites instead of police
- Require body cameras for all local, state police while on duty
- Increase fees/taxes on guns, ammunition and body armor sales
- Increase police and fire salaries

7 INFRASTRUCTURE & TRAFFIC

- Fix roads, bridges, sidewalks and water system
- Expand, increase public transportation, bus service (15)

- End Mass Pike tolls
- Decrease train horn noise
- Make “private” roads public to stop deteriorating roads
- Reduce traffic and pollution is causes
- Increase commuter rail service hours
- Build more “sound reduction” wall next to highways
- Reduce bike lanes: rarely used and create traffic hazards on roads made too narrow for cars
- Enforce no parking on sidewalks regulations
- Limit road repair crews to one per street at a time, creates tie ups

8 COMMUNITY

- Promote equality and unity: reject racism, anti Semitism, anti-Asian in all forms
- Expand and support Food Pantry
- Increase library funding
- Better parks maintenance
- Establish programs to train/connect new workers for open jobs; work force development
- Improve downtown with smart growth and support for improvements
- Help undocumented immigrants

9 BUILDING, GROWTH and DEVELOPMENT

- Increase restrictions and rules for builders
- Limit large business and housing developments
- Fernald Property resolution needed
- Require landlords to maintain property or be fined
- Eliminate restrictive, out dated zoning regulations
- Public building contracts should require prevailing wage for contractors and use in-state contractors

10 TAXES

- Estate Tax Reform needed- increase exemption limit
- Increase state and local taxes on wealthy
- Increase gas tax to pay to fix roads, bridges
- No more gas tax increases
- Stop all tax increases, lower fees and property taxes
- Eliminate estate taxes

11 GOVERNMENT

- Open City Hall offices and department business hours
- Increase transparency: report committee votes, video stream, post and archive meetings
- Implement zero-based budgeting
- Improve city Building Dept. communications
- Investigate MBTA corruption and mismanagement, foreign equipment failing
- Help local small businesses and restaurants survive covid recession
- Keep voting accessible: no excuse absentee voting, early voting, drop box, mail-in voting

- Allow transfer of Death Deeds
- Simplify homeowner permitting
- Institute term limits for elected officials at state and local level
- Elected officials compensation should not exceed median income of workers in MA
- Require voter ID as we do driver's license

12 MISCELLANEOUS

- Stop covid unemployment payments to people who are able to work
- Bank and financial services reform
- Reform social media and internet censorship
- More pet care options
- Legalize non-addictive drugs
- Legalize sports betting in MA
- Restrict unsolicited phone calls and emails
- Restrict illegal immigration, enforce laws