

# **HOMES FOR ALL IPSWICH QUESTIONNAIRE**

Kristin Kassner - State Representative 2<sup>nd</sup> Essex Response

Dear Representative Kristen Kassner and Mr. Mark Tashjian,

I hope this email finds you well. We are reaching out on behalf of Homes for All Ipswich, a grassroots housing advocacy group dedicated to addressing housing issues in Ipswich.

As the candidates for state representative in our district, we invite you to participate in a survey focused on housing-related matters. Your responses will help inform our community about your positions on these important issues.

Your responses will be shared with our community in the following ways:

- Posted on our website ([homesforallipswich.com](http://homesforallipswich.com))
- Shared with our mailing list of over 100 engaged citizens
- Provided to the Ipswich Local News for potential publication

We believe your perspective, insights, and policy ideas on housing issues are valuable to our community members as they make informed decisions in the upcoming November 5th election.

Please find the survey questions attached to this email. We kindly request that you return your completed responses by October 14.

If you have any questions or need additional clarification, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation. We look forward to sharing your views with the Ipswich community.

With gratitude,

Deedee Schiano and Lindsay Randall  
Homes for All Ipswich

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**How have your experiences, prior to or outside of seeking elected office, shaped your views on housing in the 2nd Essex?**

My experiences as a professional planner have given me years of insight into housing needs – and how to tackle them. I also served as the President of the American Planning Association

Massachusetts Chapter, where we focused on land use legislation in the mid 2000s and beyond, including many housing policy topics including, [inclusionary zoning](#), [40R](#), [Subdivision Control](#), [Congress for New Urbanism \(CNU\) form based codes](#), and [Open Space Residential Design \(OSRD\)](#). In the 2nd Essex, I served on Hamilton's Master Plan Committee, which explored housing trends, economics, and housing needs of people in this region in all stages of their lives.

**If elected, what will be your top priority to address the broad range of housing issues facing your constituents, and residents across the commonwealth?**

We all understand the need for different types of housing in our district. We need housing for first-time homebuyers, downsizing seniors, and workers who serve our communities. The question is how to create opportunities for that housing in a way that is appropriate for each town. I have filed legislation that address this issue: [H3822](#), "Massachusetts Next," would create an inventory of the existing buildings to assess how we can use that for future housing and commercial development; [H3551](#) codifies Site Plan Review, standardizing the review process while retaining local control, so that communities can quickly and accurately assess whether a project works for their community and condition accordingly, and [H3553](#) requires training for people serving on land use boards so that they know what they can and cannot apply to a project. Several of my other [bills](#) and amendments focus on addressing economic development, housing, and permitting issues to the benefit of our communities.

**Restrictive and exclusionary zoning is proven to constrain housing production, exacerbate racial segregation and inequality, and increase home prices for everyone. What policies or initiatives would you support at the state level that eliminate or reduce local zoning barriers to new housing?**

In our history, it was thought that we could solve social ills through aggressive land use policy. This was seen in the 1950s-60s urban renewal in Boston's West End, where people were displaced and the community fabric destroyed. As a planner for my entire career, I know this was wrong. We cannot control through land use. Instead, we must recognize that people and nature define a community and work together to chart our path forward. Housing policy has evolved, but we still have a long way to go to ensure that housing is in reach for all people. However, the rhetoric of late - making broad statements about past exclusionary practices - is divisive and does not recognize the efforts of planners and others working hard against many hurdles to meet the needs of people in our community. Zoning is complex - zoning is not one-size-fits-all. Zoning can provide opportunities. But zoning does very little alone, without factoring in other regulations, economic conditions, infrastructure, and the environment. Only taken together, and within local government structure and budgetary constraints, can we begin to break down these hurdles and truly meet our housing needs.

We must provide support through funding and legislation to help communities navigate the complexities to achieve outcomes that are good for all of us. This is why I favor strengthening local control (Board Training and Site Plan Review) giving communities the tools they need to

build the housing that is right for them, which would include state help with infrastructure needs. I serve on the North Shore Water Resiliency Task Force and support regional sharing efforts in our region to address our basic water and emergency supply needs.

There has been a large shift in how many of us work, post covid, leaving vacancies in traditional office space. We should work to repurpose these spaces to uses that will stabilize our local economy and provide housing. I support technical assistance and capital funding to repurpose existing office space into other uses for arts, culture, green economy and housing, within our existing built environment.

**Which land use and housing policies do you support that balance the need for more housing in the 2nd Essex District and the desire of residents to maintain the natural landscapes of the district?**

Through a community planning process, we can determine what we cherish, what we need to provide, and where we want to grow. Through public engagement and feedback during a comprehensive planning process, we identify areas to protect (unique and open spaces) in line with the character of the community, and target other areas for redevelopment (commercial and a mix of housing).

There are many existing programs: local 40A zoning, including section 3A, Open Space Residential Design, 40R Smart Growth Zoning (not to be confused with 40B), and Subdivision Control, that can be used to implement housing goals within a community's plan. The recent legislation passed in 2021, Chapter 40A, Section 3A, is one of many tools meant to help us to meet our housing needs, but it has flaws, especially when it comes to implementation. I was a town planning director when this was passed, and I, too, had questions about implementation locally, the required unit count, and concerns about infrastructure availability to realize production. However, 3A does give community control over the district location and dimensional criteria under the zoning and protections through wetland, stormwater, water, and wastewater laws in the Commonwealth, which gives the community more control than over a 40B development.

We have been very successful in the first term in securing millions in funding for our communities for transportation, water, education and public safety. Under the current law, many of these funds become inaccessible for communities that do not comply with Section 3A. It is a myth that communities are not getting these funds; I can attest that in my term, funding has added up to millions to our district; Rowley alone has received over \$1.5M in funding from these programs. I want to ensure that together, Senator Tarr and I can access critical funding for our communities to ease the burden on our local budgets and our households. We need to be having a conversation looking at the big picture, where we have control, and make sure that our overall land use and zoning match our future community goals. During my entire career, I have fought for state policy and regulation *that works for our communities* and, as your State Representative, will continue to do so, including aspects of Subdivision Control and zoning, to create housing that aligns with the needs and character of the community.

The legislation I filed this session to codify Site Plan Review and help educate Planning and Zoning Boards will help local leaders make better decisions about housing and other projects in our communities. Additional state support for capital and infrastructure projects and technical assistance for planning would address long-overdue infrastructure improvements in our communities to tackle water treatment and distribution issues, stormwater, and wastewater, and allow our towns to undertake a comprehensive planning process to create long-range plans that work for our communities.

**Cities and towns often struggle to raise funds for local subsidized housing developments. What tools, mechanisms, or policies do you support that would fund affordable housing development in the 2nd Essex?**

Our region is fortunate to have nonprofits like Harborlight and Habitat for Humanity building affordable housing that fits into our landscape. If these projects need help with expensive infrastructure upgrades, I believe the state should offer grants for those upgrades. For example, in Rowley, Harborlight is building a small facility near Route 1, but they need expensive intersection improvements to access the site. In the Housing Bond Bill, I secured \$2 million to support capital needed to improve the roadway for area housing development. I continue to support the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and those communities that have adopted and worked to increase the amount of state match similar to levels in the programs early days to provide communities more revenue toward affordable housing.

**Public housing in Massachusetts and across the country has been chronically underfunded for decades. The Affordable Homes Act authorizes record borrowing to support the capital needs of the state's supply of public housing. How will you ensure that state-run public housing gets all of the resources it needs to support its residents and maintain operational stability?**

I voted for the Affordable Homes Act and support the line item in the Affordable Homes Act which funds renovation and repair of existing public housing. I agree that the preservation of affordable units should be a priority and that housing authorities should provide housing for the most in need. Providing funding for rehabilitation is one of the fastest ways to increase the availability of units, and make them accessible and livable for the long term.

**A major barrier to new housing development is accessing affordable financing options. Given high interest rates and increasing labor and material costs, how can the state better provide financial resources to support new housing development?**

It's true that costs are increasing, and the state has a limited budget and bonding capacity. High interest rates have also been an obstacle in recent years. One bright spot in the Housing Bond Bill is the Momentum Fund, which was proposed by the Healey Administration to provide lower-interest loans to housing projects that were not able to get off the ground due to higher federal interest rates. Programs like this and others like the state tax credit program allow the state to

subsidize the growing cost of construction and help provide the financial resources needed to build housing. Modernizing permitting at the local and state levels can also help to ensure housing is in line with the community's needs and state permits receive coordinated and efficient review will help to get projects off the ground.

**How will you use your position as a state representative to support unhoused residents, both to guarantee temporary shelter and as they transition to permanent housing?**

The Right to Shelter Law guarantees shelter for families with children and pregnant women. I have supported funding this law in the past two budgets, as we cannot have children living on the streets. I also believe that the state can do a better job in controlling the costs of these programs, by assessing what they pay for shelter and for food and ensuring that they are supporting local economies.