

Newton City Council Candidate Climate Action Questionnaire

This questionnaire is submitted to all candidates by a coalition of climate and environmental organizations including Green Newton; 350 Mass, Newton; Mothers Out Front, Newton; Newton EV Task Force; and Bike Newton. We look forward to your responses and will share widely with the public. This is NOT an endorsement questionnaire.

juliaannemalakie@gmail.com [Switch account](#)

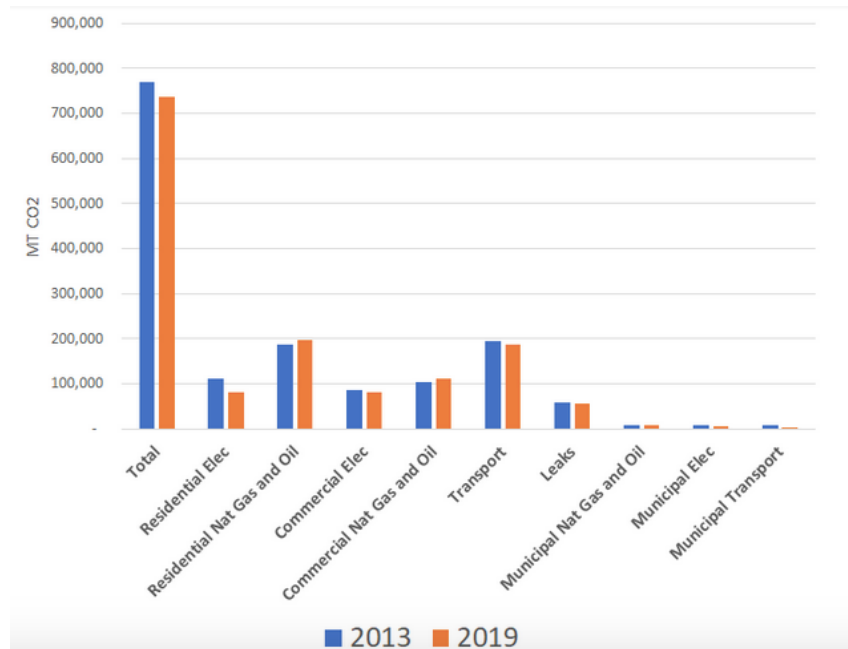
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malakieward3@gmail.com

Newton Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, prepared by the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy



The most recent IPCC Report is devastating. It confirms our extreme weather is directly linked to climate change. The latest Newton Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory shows that since the 2013 inventory we have not done nearly enough to reduce our carbon emissions. We are way behind meeting the targets set two years ago in the Newton Climate Action Plan, which was unanimously adopted by the City Council. Newton Power Choice is a success story: it reduced our greenhouse gas emissions from electricity by 5% of total Newton emissions (25% reduction from electricity alone), and put Newton well on its way toward meeting the 2025 goal of 100% renewable electricity supply. However, about half of these gains have been offset by increased emissions from heating residential (+5%) and commercial (+8%) buildings. At 27% of total, the residential sector continues to be the largest single source of our greenhouse gas emissions, followed by transportation (24% of total). This questionnaire asks City Council candidates about their commitments to Climate Action.

Your answer

CLIMATE CRISIS: 1. Do you agree that Newton has a responsibility to contribute to global greenhouse gas emission reductions? *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

CLIMATE CRISIS: 2. Do you agree Newton needs to do more to reduce greenhouse carbon emissions to meet our climate action goals? *

- Yes
- No

CLIMATE CRISIS: 3. Do you support the Newton Climate Action Plan passed by the City Council and required outcomes? *

- Yes
- No

CLIMATE CRISIS: 4. What action are you committed to take - committing to new resources, both regulatory and financial, to the challenge to produce outcomes that match the urgency of the crisis? *

I support making 100% renewable the default for Newton Power Choice, with continued disclosure to customers of price differentials each time rates change. I support passing the home rule petition to enable Newton to require non-fossil fuel heating for all new buildings and major renovations, with fossil fuel backup if required such as NWH.

I was pleased that this year's new police cruisers are hybrid, and will support a switch to fully electric when this can be done without compromising public safety.

HERS ratings are helpful but are relative to the size of houses. In addition, to listing HERS ratings, the Assessors Database should include a rating that combines HERS with square footage to better reflect actual energy usage that could be expected. I support increasing setbacks to both reduce the excessive size of houses, and allow more space for trees to provide shade and reduce air conditioning needs in summer, and buffer wind in winter.

BUILDINGS: 1. Buildings are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Newton. The Newton Citizens Commission on Energy's emissions inventory shows that relying on voluntary action produces extremely slow progress. We want to meet our residential carbon emissions reductions goals. What can Newton do to remove barriers such as high costs, inadequate electrical service, or lack of information, for property owners who need to improve insulation, air sealing and retrofit homes for electric heat, hot water and all appliances? *

Continue to publicize the energy coach's services. Waive 'white goods' collection fee for gas appliances that are being replaced by electric. Income-based subsidies for switching from gas to heat pumps.

BUILDINGS: 2. Do you support mandates to require large commercial, industrial, educational and health institutions to meet specific emission standards for greenhouse gases such as those being developed by Cambridge and Boston (BERDO)? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

BUILDINGS: 3. Large new homes in Newton contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Several Massachusetts municipalities have adopted ordinances to stop the proliferation of so-called McMansions. Should Newton consider an initiative to put limits on the size of homes or in other ways disincentivize larger home construction? *

- Yes
- No

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT: Transit oriented development reduces carbon emissions, reduces the need for private cars and benefits a large number of people, increasing ridership on public transit and improving the economic and financial viability of the system.

- Agree
- Disagree

Clear selection

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT: 1. Do you support zoning changes to allow and incentivize more multifamily buildings around our village centers and transit points and mixed use developments that encourage living, working, playing and shopping in neighborhoods as an alternative to commuting? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Other: While transit-oriented development may reduce the need for cars, incr

CLEAN HEAT/CLEAN AIR: The state legislation calls for phasing out all fossil fuels. Gas is an explosive, polluting, unhealthy, heat-trapping fossil fuel. Newton has an old degrading pipeline system with hundreds of dangerous and wasteful leaks. There are electric, non-explosive technologies that don't create the health and climate hazards caused by gas, oil, propane, and other fossil fuels. *

- Agree
- Disagree

CLEAN HEAT/CLEAN AIR: 1. What would you do to incentivize renewable energy infrastructure instead of extending the use of the outdated and dangerous gas infrastructure? *

Once the home rule petition is approved, require electric heating and cooling for all new construction and major expansions, both single and multi-family, but provide for backup heating measures/shelters in the event of a sustained widespread power outage (e.g. ice storm). Require solar roofs on medium and large developments as in Watertown. Require higher percent of parking spaces with charging stations, and wiring for 100% of spaces.

CLEAN HEAT/CLEAN AIR: 2. Will you support Newton's home rule petition and ordinance requesting authority to require electrification of all NEW construction and major renovations to protect residents from the risks and legacy costs of dependence on gas, oil and other fossil fuels? *

Yes

No

ELECTRIC CARS: 1. While acknowledging that walking, biking, public transit, and car sharing are better options, how can Newton accelerate EV acquisition and installation of charging stations? *

Walking, biking, transit and car sharing are not better options for everyone, particularly older seniors, mobility impaired, families with children, or people whose jobs are not easily reached, nor for anyone in extreme weather conditions. But Newton can, during a period of transition, offer free or preferred parking to EVs, and as noted above, require charging stations in private lots and developments, and provide more charging stations in public lots.

ELECTRIC CARS: 2. In addition, EVs need to be attainable for low and medium incomes and people in apartments and condos need access to chargers. 'Right to charge' would require that residents in multi-unit buildings and homes without driveways have access to chargers. Would you support a 'right to charge' policy of some kind in Newton? *

Yes

No

Maybe

Please feel free to share any additional comments, explanations and ideas regarding climate action that you would like voters to consider. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical and urgent challenge, and to your consideration of how you see your role and the role of the City Council leading and facilitating on carbon emissions reductions in the next few years.

One of my priorities next term (whether reelected or not) will be to push for stronger tree protections for tree canopy. Current regulations based on caliper inch-for-inch replacement, and only for 8" or greater trees, do not adequately recognize the cost of lost canopy now, and its effect on heat islands and stormwater. I also support universal organics recycling to get kitchen waste out of trash and incinerators, and into large scale composting facilities.

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