AT-LARGE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE: Henry Santana

1. What letter grade would you give Mayor Wu at this point in her tenure? A-

Mayor Wu has worked to deliver bold change for Boston residents and families across our city’s neighborhoods. The City is doing all it can to address our housing, climate and transit crises yet there is still an urgent need to do more. I’m proud of being endorsed by Mayor Wu and look forward to working closely with her to tackle the big challenges ahead and address current gaps in the City’s efforts to make Boston the best city to live across generations. Bostonians want a City Council that actively works together with each other and the Mayor to address the urgent challenges – housing affordability, rising costs of living, worker rights, public safety across our neighborhoods – facing our families. As a City Councilor, I will advocate for the City to continue to take bold action on housing, public safety and climate justice while partnering with residents to ensure we are meeting this moment through increasing investments to the City’s Office of Participatory Budgeting.

2. What’s the best thing the council did this term, and what’s the biggest mistake it made?

The City Council played a strong role in advocating for increased investments for the City’s summer youth jobs program – a foundational program for our young people and families that connects them to opportunity and empowers them to grow and reach their full potential. All residents should feel and be safe in their neighborhoods and we need City Councilors who will roll up their sleeves and work closely across government and community to address public safety beyond hearings. As the Director of the Office of Civic Organizing, I went to every neighborhood to not only speak with residents about a variety of issues, including public safety, but bringing critical resources around violence prevention and intervention & wrapar around supports to the community directly to impacted families. As a Black man who has grown up in Mission Hill and a product of youth summer programs, I will bring a bold voice to continuing to build up our City’s infrastructure to support and empower our young people and take action to keep our communities safe.

3. What’s the first piece of legislation you'd file next term?

Public housing provided my family and I the opportunity to stay in Boston, build here and thrive. Every Bostonian deserves that opportunity and deserves to live in safe, healthy and green buildings. My first priority as a City Councilor At-Large will be to focus on exploring ways to best support the City in adding to our public housing stock while ensuring that we are making investments to boost housing affordability across neighborhoods and building true pathways to homeownership.
4. Do you support building a new recovery campus at the edge of Franklin Park? 
There is a clear, urgent need here in Boston and across Massachusetts for more safe, stable 
housing that is connected to critical treatment services and recovery supports. I am supportive 
of a new campus that has programming to address gaps in this crisis, however there needs to 
be a more deliberate effort to ensure that Boston is not being overburdened by a statewide 
issue, especially our Black and Brown communities in the city. I look forward to working with 
local residents, organizations and all stakeholders to ensure that the site is best used and 
aligned with community needs.

5. Is there anything the city should be doing differently to address the intersecting crises at 
Mass and Cass? 
The intersecting crises of mental health, substance use, and unsheltered homelessness in the 
Mass & Cass area is a humanitarian issue at a huge scale that has been impacting so many 
residents and families across the city for years and will take even deeper coordination between 
city, state government and community partners. City workers have done a lot to address this 
crisis but we need to continue taking a people first approach that prioritizes access to low 
threshold housing, provides ample treatment services and more pathways to permanent 
housing for unsheltered individuals on the ground. The ordinance recently adopted by the City 
is an immediate step towards making sure that everyone is safe and healthy and that critical 
workers across city agencies and partners who are supporting every day in the area are able to 
stay safe while connecting people with housing and delivering services. We need to continue to 
work with urgency and care to address this crisis holistically, along with our partners at the 
State level, so that everyone can live in safe, healthy conditions especially as we get closer to 
the colder months.

6. Do you support plans to move the John D. O'Bryant to West Roxbury? 
Boston's young people and families deserve transformative, state of the art schools with high 
quality education in every neighborhood. I'm excited to see the John D. O'Bryant get the 
attention it deserves and that at the same time revitalizing Madison Park is on the front of 
mind for so many students, families and residents. As this process continues, I look forward to 
seeing the community input surrounding this plan continue to develop and that feedback is 
incorporated into any final proposal considered.

7. Was the council's approval of $3.4 million in grant funding for the Boston Regional 
Intelligence Center the right move? 
We need to continue to support our Boston Police Department whose officers and staff's 
service is absolutely critical to keeping our communities safe each and every single day. While 
at the same time, the council's approval of the grants at the time had serious concerns around
accountability that I believe should have had more time for engagement and feedback. As a Black immigrant man growing up in this city, I know firsthand the nuances of what keeps people safe and know that we have to balance all of our efforts with the goal of delivering true safety for every resident.

8. The council has become increasingly acrimonious in the last two years. Who or what is responsible?
The City Council needs to get back to focusing on ideas, legislating and advocating on behalf of Boston residents and families rather than being bogged down by a recent culture of infighting and controversies that has hurt the body's credibility. Throughout my campaign, it's clear that Bostonians want a City Council that is effective, that takes pride in getting things done and actually works together day in and day out, no matter our views, on the challenges facing our residents and families. As the City's inaugural Director of Civic Organizer, former City Council staffer, and former youth program director in Mission Hill, I am bringing a deep understanding of how city government works, department-by-department, that will allow me to hit the ground running on issues that matter most to Boston residents from Day 1.

9. What else should voters know about you?
I'm running for Boston City Council At-Large to bring a bold, progressive voice to the City Council, help focus a body that desperately needs to zero in on making a difference in people's lives and to fight for residents and families so everyone has what they need. I was born in Bani, Dominican Republic, and immigrated to Boston as a child. I grew up in Mission Hill living in the Alice Taylor Boston Housing Authority apartments and attended Boston Public Schools. I am a product of this city and have dedicated my career to giving back to the city that raised me. As a renter in Dorchester and someone currently working overnights to get by as prices rise, I have lived and still live the challenges residents and families across our city face on a daily basis. We are in an urgent moment to boldly address housing, environmental justice, public safety and transportation - we need a City Council that will represent residents and lead on the issues that matter. As an At-Large City Councilor, I will focus on every neighborhood through prioritizing excellent constituent services, work in partnership with community to truly address housing affordability in our communities, and bolster civic engagement so that all of us can play a role in the present and future of Boston.